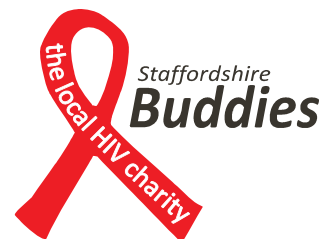


# Positive Lives



## We won!

I am delighted to say that Staffordshire Buddies has won a new three year contract to deliver services for people living with or affected by HIV in Stoke and Staffordshire.



This is fantastic news and it means that Staffordshire Buddies will be able to continue to provide and further improve our excellent range of services.

For many years our services for people living with or affected by HIV have been separately funded by Stoke Primary Care Trust (commissioning for both Stoke and North Staffordshire), South Staffordshire PCT, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council. These four

funders recently decided to pool their budgets and commission services under a single jointly commissioned contract, but due to the amount of funding involved it had to be put out to competitive tender. If we had failed to win this tender our services for people living with or affected by HIV would have ceased in October and a new service would have been launched by someone else.

I'm glad to say that after a considerable amount of hard work by Staffordshire Buddies staff and volunteers and more than a few anxious moments we were recently told that we have won the new contract and we will therefore be able to continue our good work for the foreseeable future. We now have a degree of stability and financial security that we have lacked for several years, which will enable us to make our services even better, Positive Lives will keep you informed of service developments.

**Andrew J. Colclough**  
Director

### Also in this issue:

- Extended Drop In**
- The Chlamydia Project**
- National Long Term Survivors**
- Drayton Manor Park**
- Aging with HIV**
- You being you**
- Maurice's Angle**

## Positive Lives

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People living with or affected by HIV/AIDS  
(published anonymously)

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### Cover photograph:

Cover Photograph by Maurice Greenham features Andrew Colclough (Director) Rosie Jackson (HIV Services Manager) Wendy Cashmore (Chair) and Ian Mason (Treasurer) with the Tender that won the new contract.

## "You Being You"

Conference, Thursday 24th June, 2010.

Organised by the LGBT-Disability Link Project this was the first conference that directly addressed issues faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people with physical or mental disabilities. Apart from a couple of unintended musical interludes from the other side of the partition, the Grand Ballroom of the Moat House Hotel on Festival Park provided an excellent venue.

Sandie Hope-Forest gave an inspiring key-note presentation about identity drawn from her own life, which set the tone for the day and allowed each person to realize that the most important aspects of our identity are invisible. No one is born with their sexuality stamped on their foreheads; for some, it only becomes clear in adolescence or adulthood. Similarly, whilst some people are born with a disability, others only become disabled in later years, and not all disabilities can be seen. Sandie used her own partial deafness to illustrate this point, then went on to explain the multiplying disadvantage arising from being associated with different minority groups such as LGBT, disabled, non-white etc. Though invisible to the eye, no delegate could be left in doubt that amongst the multitude of qualities that contribute to Sandie's unique identity, are her gifts as a highly intelligent, engaging and effective communicator.

Sam Oldfield provided the second personal contribution to the conference, in a moving and informative DVD presentation. An electronic survey with an almost instant display of results, allowed individuals to record their own experiences and views; whilst, a facilitated discussion session brought lots of suggestions of how the group might progress.

The Staffordshire Buddies display attracted interest from delegates and expressions of willingness from other organisations to participate in joint working. Altogether, a very worthwhile event, which will, hopefully, be repeated.

**Maurice Greenham**

# Drayton Manor Park

On Thursday 24th June, Fiona, myself and 9 people who attend the Lichfield drop in had a day out at Drayton Manor Park and Zoo. We arrived at about 10.30 and the sun was shining. Everyone had come with tons of food for the picnic (enough to feed 5,000), which we left in the boots of our cars until lunchtime.

The morning soon passed as we (well, a few of



us brave ones, hey Dave!!) queued up to go on the rides. G Force, Apocolypse, we did them all. At lunchtime, we found a sheltered spot under some trees and spread out the picnic which we all enjoyed.

We spent the afternoon going on even more

rides, the traditional Dodgem cars were very popular but I think we all came off with a few bumps and bruises.

It was 5.30pm by the time we left the Park, it was a great day and everyone enjoyed it. We are now busy getting ideas and lots of suggestions for the next day out.

Drop in at Lichfield

takes place every other Thursday at 3pm – 7pm although we are going to alter the times for a trial period to 5pm – 9pm to enable people to come along after work.

If you would like more information about the Drop-in get in touch with Gayle or Fiona on 01543 418770



**Gayle Bird**

HS Services Caseworker

## Positive Feedback for the Hanley Extended Drop-In

(alternate Thursdays from 2pm – 7pm)

The story so far:-

Since we decided to give this a go over a trial period of six months, we never envisioned how this would take off, would it be a success as far as improving uptake? We have had 3 extended drop-ins so far which have all had an increased up take in service user attendance. It is so nice to see different people dropping in at a later time, whereas before they have never had that opportunity to do so because of work commitments etc. We have the monthly themed drop-ins which are always well received and something to look forward too. On our first extended night we had the artistic talents of one of our service users who brought along painting equipment to the group and offered to teach clients the basics of painting on canvass. This went down a storm, with everyone thoroughly enjoying themselves and throughout this session each service user became more confident.

We also invited Jenny Read from the Piccadilly

Centre to come and do a workshop on Assertiveness Awareness. This workshop had service users thinking a little more of how they can self-improve their confidence.

Running the extended drop-in has benefited our service users in many different ways, therefore I have captured their thoughts and comments.

I would like to add that none of this would have been achieved without the dedication and hard work of the Volunteers.

Client comments ...

***"The extended drop-in is a great idea and I have no problem with it."***

***"I love the extended drop-in because it gives me more time to relax and it helps to relieve my stress levels."***

***"I can discuss matters that are concerning me and I can get help."***

***"Great idea, I love it"***

***"We have so much fun and I love the workshops."***

**Jane Mayer –**

Drop in Facilitator

# Introducing the Chlamydia Screening Project team ... a

**Shaun Smith**, one of last year's **Britain's Got Talent** finalist, popped in to Staffordshire Buddies Health Promotion Team's Lichfield office to give his support (and a urine sample) for screening to the new Chlamydia Screening Outreach Project funded by South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust.

Shaun said he thought it was a great idea taking testing out to pubs, clubs and places where young people go, it will give young people aged between 16 and up to 25 the opportunity to get tested.

Scott Ormerod from Staffordshire Buddies Health Promotion Team said that preventing ill health among young people is a priority. Providing young people with clear factual health promotion and prevention messages is key to improving their health and wellbeing, testing will help Chlamydia to be detected earlier so that treatment can be given and further transmission can be prevented.

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial, sexually transmitted, infection found in young people. It affects both men and women and is easily treated with antibiotics. Around 1 in 10 young people who are sexually active test positive for Chlamydia, although most people have no symptoms and have no idea they have it.

If you are aged between 16 and up to 25, it's free, confidential and as easy as simply giving a small urine



Hi all,  
My name is Marc Harvey and I have recently begun working fulltime at Staffordshire Buddies on the Chlamydia Screening Project. I am based in Lichfield and work on various days throughout the week but mainly work evenings and weekends in order to get the highest number of screenings complete. For the last 3

years I have worked for Staffordshire Youth Service as a detached worker, this involved me working out on the streets with young people and tackling anti-social behaviour in hotspot areas. I still do a few hours of youth work every week at my local youth centres in Lichfield and Burntwood. During these sessions I teach young people between 13-19 how to DJ which in time earns them various awards which are equivalent to GCSEs. I have been a DJ now for almost 10 years and spend a lot of my free time practicing in order to keep improving. I also spend a lot of time playing football, I am captain of my team, Lichfield Social FC. In the next few years I plan to do lots of charity fund raising and am planning on going to Ethiopia next year to help work in a school which we raised money to build last year. I am 22 and still live at home with my parents as I like having my washing and ironing done on a weekly basis!

If you would like to get in touch with me call me on 01543 411413 or 07791 547804



Hi,  
I'm Marissa Fifer, the new full time female worker on the health promotion team based at the Staffordshire Buddies Lichfield office. Most of our work is outreach based and carried out during evenings and weekends. Last year I graduated from Leeds Metropolitan University with a Law degree and since then I

have been working part time as a youth support worker in Tamworth.

My work with the Youth Service is predominantly detached meaning that we work on the streets in young peoples' own environment. This has so far been a rewarding role and I have learnt a lot. I also run a small dance tutoring business teaching street dance and many other styles of dance to children and young people. I work alongside my best friend and teach in a community setting which gives more disadvantaged young people easy access to dance lessons and encourages healthy lifestyles. The best thing about it is that the lessons are funded so they're free for those who join in! My background also includes volunteering with the youth service and more recently for a Citizen's Advice Bureau as a part of my degree. Personally, I am 22, enjoy keeping fit and dancing (a lot!). As an outreach worker my hours vary from week to week but if you would like to contact me please do so on 07791547635.

# and a star guest!

sample. You can get your results by text message, mobile phone or e-mail.

Look out for us in our hoodies or bright yellow t-shirts at a venue or event near you; or contact us to find out where and when we are going to be bringing testing to your area; or just visit [www.staffordshirebuddies.co.uk](http://www.staffordshirebuddies.co.uk) and click on the health promotion web pages to see our Google calendar. It couldn't be easier!

You can contact us on 01543 411413 or send an e-mail to: [sexwise@staffordshirebuddies.co.uk](mailto:sexwise@staffordshirebuddies.co.uk)

You can find other venues that provide this service and for further information visit:

[www.chlamydia-screening.nhs.uk](http://www.chlamydia-screening.nhs.uk)



Hi,  
I'm Andy Cole.  
I have recently started working for Staffordshire Buddies as a Health Promotion Sessional outreach worker, part of the Chlamydia Screening Project and I am loving it. My previous work background has been in a multitude of jobs ranging from hairdressing, retail assistant to office work.

I have also volunteered for Staffordshire Buddies for three and a half years in many roles and activities, including outreach and detached work, health promotion work in schools and colleges, and office volunteering. My favourite role being a SPACE LGBT Youth group volunteer.

My personal life includes my fiancé Matt, who I have now been in a relationship with for 2 and a half years and who is currently studying in Salford, Greater Manchester towards a Music Degree. I have also now introduced my family to Staffordshire Buddies, so I am sure you will be seeing them around.

I also enjoy spending much of my free time with friends, socialising in a multitude of ways including shopping and nights out.

If you would like to get in touch with me, you can email me at [andy.cole@staffordshirebuddies.co.uk](mailto:andy.cole@staffordshirebuddies.co.uk) or alternatively, you can leave a message with the Lichfield Office on 01543 411413 and I'll contact you.



Hello,  
My name is Kat Roberts and I am one of the new sessional workers for the team based at the Lichfield office. For the past year I have been working for Staffordshire Young Peoples Service, in which I am a youth worker. I work with local young people in a Girls Group as well as a Friday night session working to tackle

antisocial behaviour. I started out in the Youth Service as a young person. I was involved in a trip to Ethiopia during which myself and a group of other young people wrote and delivered packages around sexual health, HIV and disability in both the UK and Ethiopia. One of the main achievements of the trip was the new build classroom developed in one of the rural areas, which now supports several young people with disabilities.

Since coming back from Ethiopia a new voluntary group has evolved, Life Ethiopia, of which I am chair. We raise funds for the classroom and building educational packages for young people in the UK to help raise awareness and educate about global and local issues. Staffordshire Buddies played a fundamental role in the development of the Ethiopia project, providing us all with resources and education. I'm 18, just completing my A-levels and I can't wait to take on the next part of my journey.

Hope to meet you all soon.

# Ageing with HIV Conference 28th April 2010

## Staffordshire University – Beaconside Campus

An impressive line-up of speakers was selected for this groundbreaking conference organised by Staffordshire University. These included Dr Stephen Karpiak, Director of Research and Dr Mark Brennan, Senior Research Scientist from the ACRIA Centre on HIV and Ageing in the United States of America. Their statistics based research provided a fascinating overview of the emerging population of older adults with HIV from an American and global perspective.

Unfortunately, ill health prevented Dr Mike Youle Director of Research at London Royal Free Hospital from attending, but Lisa Power, head of policy at the Terrence Higgins Trust, admirably plugged the gap by extending her captivating talk about the needs of people over 50 living with HIV in the United Kingdom. Dr David Asboe from the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, presented an interesting comparison and contrast in HIV care for the mature and the less mature.

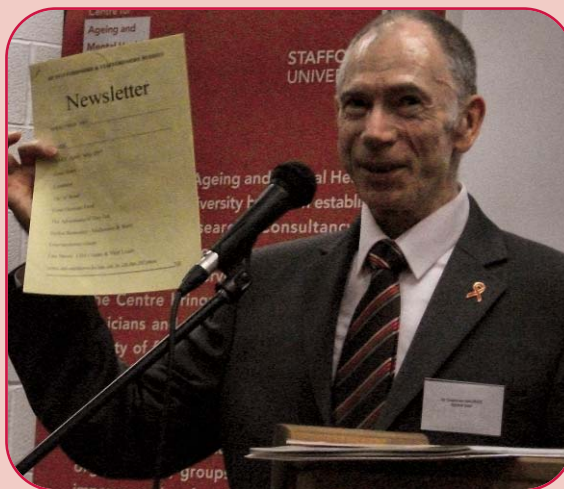
Whilst some delegates had travelled great distances, there was also strong local support. In particular, the presence of familiar faces of

volunteers and staff from Staffordshire Buddies was a great source of comfort for Maurice Greenham who was there to give a personal account of living and ageing with HIV; hopefully, offering living proof that an individual can age with HIV and still lead a full and productive life. In contrast to other speakers, instead of PowerPoint, he illustrated his talk with props and slides of photos taken over the past 25 years.

One delegate noted that what she liked most about the conference was that it was possible to understand everything that was being said. So often HIV conferences are incomprehensible to all but scientists and clinicians because of the barrage of technical jargon frequently employed by speakers.

The Ruxton Technology Centre offers a well-equipped lecture theatre set in idyllic rural

Staffordshire, which, with a touch of sunshine, added an extra pleasurable dimension to networking in the breaks. Congratulations to Caroline Rowe and Elaine Stanway for such a well organised and smoothly run event.



## National Long Term Survivors Group

My name is Anthony and I live in Norfolk. For several years friends of mine who are HIV Positive were telling me about a rural retreat near Stone in Staffordshire offering a weekend respite for those in our 'situation'. What they failed to tell me was that I had to be diagnosed for at least 5 years before I could attend, and seeing as I was only diagnosed in March 2004, I had a few years to wait until I was able to experience the place for myself. But back then I thought I would never see 5 months as my health was so precarious and close to death.

There are 4 weekend retreats scheduled per year. I have been fortunate to go twice now; my first opportunity, last summer (YAY! made it to 5 years!!!), was sponsored by the Elton John AIDS Foundation and this year's recent trip was paid for by my local PCT (Norfolk currently has funding available for those wishing to attend) and on both occasions I have had a thoroughly wonderful time!

The weekend is well attended by a great cross-section of the HIV community from around the country. The accommodation and facilities are clean and comfortable. All the trustees, facilitators and staff are very friendly and approachable. There are formal and informal discussion groups where one can get absolutely ANYTHING off ones

chest. There are lovely enclosed gardens for relaxation. The therapies available are second-to-none and offer a wide range of much needed relief from chronic aches and pains. I highly recommend a Shiatsu or Hot Stones – returning home with a new back and bounce in my step is one of the main reasons for my stay! - not to mention the sheer mental release it provides. The cosy downstairs 'crypt-style' bar provides an excellent atmosphere to make new acquaintances. And to top all that off, the superb 3 course meals are prepared fresh 3 times a day with sandwiches in the late evening to aid the ale. Entertainment is provided by those that have a knack for entertaining.

Sometimes we need a real break and a shoulder to lift ourselves out of the lonely mire we often find ourselves wading into; sometimes we need a relaxing or even a fun-packed weekend to remind ourselves we still have a life that needs living... I have balled my eyes out until they were blood red here; I have laughed so hard that I've fallen over in stomach cramps here; I have disappeared in my thoughts to re-emerge with fresh ones. But by far the most important aspect to my time here is that I have made some great friends along the way and cannot begin to express how much they mean to me. The National Long Term Survivors Group at Shallowford House will offer as much or as little as you need to recharge the batteries and keep you going!

## Thank you Staffordshire Buddies!

I am writing this article mainly as a thank you to Staffordshire Buddies for all their help since returning to the UK two years ago.

I had been living in privately rented property and was under constant threat of the landlady deciding to ask me to leave, so as you can imagine I had been extremely stressed all the time, which had a drastic effect on my health. I began drinking quite heavily to block out the fear that I may become homeless at any time, and I got to the stage of not wanting to go out of the house to visit friends or family, so was becoming isolated. I knew something had to give, so I contacted Staffordshire Buddies to see if they could help me to obtain a property through the local Housing Association, Trent and Dove in Staffordshire.

Jenny Crowther was great, she sent a letter to Trent and Dove to check where I was on the waiting list, as I had been on it for over a year. Six weeks later I was offered a one bedroom property which was fantastic, but at that time my health was not too good and as I had family staying with me to support and help me with things that I would normally do myself, I needed more space. I approached Jenny again and she contacted Trent

and Dove on my behalf asking if I could possibly have a two bedroom property, one week later I got the offer of a two bedroom property! There was plenty of work to be done, so armed with my grant and B&Q discount card off I went and after a week of hard labour and lots of sweat and tears I managed to get the place ready for moving day. Since the move, my health has improved immensely. I have quit the drinking as I am much more relaxed in myself and the worry that the landlady may come round at any time and ask me to leave, or just to be nosy or have a moan has now gone thanks to Staffordshire Buddies.

I would also like to give Staffordshire Buddies a big thank you as in the early days they were always there for me, and have helped me so much over the last 6 years with Drop in and Out Reach, they offer an invaluable service. I know I am here today happy and healthy and not on any meds because of the added support and help of Staffordshire Buddies. Your guidance is great..

Thanks to you all at Staffordshire Buddies,

**Davey**  
Service User

## New Older LGBT People's Group

Started in December 2009 as the intended outcome of a highly successful conference, the Older LGBT People's Group hold regular monthly meetings at the Polari Lounge in Hanley (The recently acquired home for the LGBT Network N Staffs). Members socialize and make suggestions for a programme of activities for the group, whose principal objective is to offer mutual support, by respectfully sharing interests and personal experiences in a safe location. In this way it also offers an opportunity for individuals to escape the feelings of isolation often felt by older LGBT people, particularly those living on their own, whether in quiet rural countryside or busy urban townships.

The first meeting at the Leopard in Burslem saw a handful of people gather together on a cold and snowy winter's day, each month has seen a steady increase in numbers. In addition to people from the local community in Stoke-on-Trent, individuals travel from as far afield as

the Staffordshire Moorlands, Cheshire and the Welsh Borders. Members of the group have welcomed the chance to meet new friends and exchange stories in a warm, supportive and friendly environment, as well as planning optional social and cultural activities for the month ahead. These have ranged from visiting places of interest, such as art galleries and old buildings, to music concerts, theatre performances and even trips to Manchester to spend time with some of the fabulous members of Out in the City.

Some of those travelling the greatest distances have commented that it was well worth the effort to be able to talk to other people like themselves and not feel as if they were the 'only gay in the village'. We extend a warm welcome to older lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

The group usually meets at 2:00pm on the last Sunday of the month. For further details, please get in touch by calling 01782 266998 or email [info@gaystoke.com](mailto:info@gaystoke.com)

Did I miss going to New Zealand this year? In a word, yes! The furthest I have travelled up until now, was Southport, where I enjoyed the engaging and stimulating company of my old friends from Derby at the start of January. Another very pleasant occasion was my first outing with the Gay Birders' Club in Delamere Forest, where, despite inclement weather, we had a great time, seeing lots of species including rarely spotted crossbills at the top of a high conifer.

### LGBT Network

Cycling rides organised by the LGBT Network also offered an opportunity to discover amazingly beautiful scenery close by. The first event took a circular route from Hanley Central Forest Park going as far as Westport Lake where we stopped for a midpoint break. Torrential downpours did nothing to dampen the spirits of a friendly intergenerational group that included a couple of members of the older LGBT group. In contrast, our second outing, starting and finishing at the Britannia Stadium, was blessed with glorious sunshine. The passage through woodlands at Hem Heath was magical with a vast carpet of bluebells illuminated with bright shafts of sunlight. This contrasted with the dramatic white cascading hawthorn blossom we found reflected in the peaceful stretch of canal towards Barlaston where we stopped for a welcome break at the canal-side pub watched over by a mother duck and her six cute little ducklings.

### Older LGBT Group

From a handful, our numbers are gradually increasing. The first meeting was at the Leopard Inn in Burslem on a bitterly cold winter's day. Since then we have gathered at the Observatory in Hanley, but from June we will be able to use the meeting room at the Polari Lounge in Piccadilly. The amount of interest that the group has attracted from statutory and voluntary organisations has surprised me. However, it is the members of the group themselves who decide on a monthly programme of activities. So far these have included concerts, plays, visits to art galleries and historic buildings, the most distant being a trip to meet up with members of a similar group in Manchester called 'Out in the City'. Above all, the principal object of the group is to provide an opportunity for older LGBT to meet and offer each other peer support...and in so doing, helping to counteract the feelings of isolation often experienced by people often living on their own, whether in a rural or urban location.

### Volunteering

Apart from the aforementioned group, I have been busy attending meetings, forums, and conferences relating to issues around ageing, physical and mental well-being and, of course, HIV. I felt honoured to be invited to speak at the 'Ageing with HIV Conference' at Staffordshire University. In the event I enjoyed the opportunity and was only disappointed that I wasn't able to get through all three sections I had prepared. Still, as the song by Meat Loaf goes: 'two out of three ain't bad'!

### Health

Switching to once a day Truvada with Nivirapine has brought a sense of greater freedom...I just have to take my HIV medication after breakfast each day and that's it. However, the downside is that I have experienced increased sleep disturbances. (one of the many listed common side effects). Having mentioned this to a friend who has made a similar change, I discovered that I was not alone, and he reported another person with identical sleep problems since taking Truvada. My solution has been to spend more time in bed...that way I can ensure that despite insomnia, I get the amount of sleep I need.

### Open University

Increased demands on my time from voluntary organisations, has reduced the amount of hours available to do course work. Whilst I am just about able to keep up with understanding the explosion of new words and grammar points in French, using the language is something else entirely. To help, I have joined a friendly enthusiastic group of people who wish to improve their linguistic skills in a weekly 'French for Fun' class. I am hoping that this will boost my confidence for the next online tutorial and for the summer school in July.

### Music

In the week before the French summer school in Caen, I have my grade 7 organ exam. Thanks to the kindness of Fr Terry and the PCC I will be sitting the exam at St Mark's Church Basford on Thursday 8th July. Straight afterwards, I head off for the National Long Term Survivors 'Living-Proof' summer weekend. I just hope that I have all the papers ready for the AGM, which takes place on the following day.

Keep well,

Maurice

