

Ubuntu-Hunhu in Hertfordshire

A Summary



With an increase in the number of black Africans settling in Hertfordshire and other parts of the United Kingdom, there is an increasing trend of new HIV diagnosis amongst this community. Previously in the UK, HIV transmission was believed to be a health problem for the gay community. Clearly this is no longer true.

In order to find out the needs of this population, an action research that combined giving people information about local services and sexual health was carried out in the county by Ubuntu-Hunhu, the London Metropolitan University and the Crescent Support Group. This work was based on Ubuntu-Hunhu values. These values include respect, dignity and treating other people humanely. These values, it is argued, underpin African communal life.

This revealed very important information on the lives of black Africans living with the virus, the black African Community and the sexual health of the black African in Hertfordshire. The study focused on the lives of people living with HIV and those affected by HIV. The main findings of the report are shown in the following sections.



1. Black Africans Living with HIV in Hertfordshire

The 15 adults accessing services at the Crescent and living with HIV were interviewed by their peers. These 15 belonged to a range of African communities. Some were from Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. Most mentioned that apart from their HIV positive status, other social issues pertaining to poverty, mental health, adherence to anti-retroviral drugs, stigma of living with the virus, immigration rules and getting support from others were their major concerns.

2. Black Africans Living in Hertfordshire

The research team wanted to understand what life was like in general for black Africans living within the Hertfordshire population. The total number of black Africans that were interviewed was 320 (53% = females, 47% = males) and were recruited from a wide range of community settings across Hertfordshire such as supermarkets, the university, workplaces, jobcentres, leisure centres, hair salons, pubs, clubs and business centres. The majority of ages ranged from 16 – 34 years. Most (77%) of them were single, with the majority percentage from South and East Africa and the minority percentage from other countries in Africa.

Although most perceived their health favourably, working long hours, studying, stress, lack of social life, discrimination, illnesses, food problems and the weather were threatening their health.

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3. Sexual Health of Black Africans Living in Hertfordshire

The respondents were asked about their sexual partnerships and sexual health matters.

Some respondents had more than one partner. This was especially true of males, of which 51% reported they had sex without a condom, with varying reasons given for not using a condom, particularly trust of their partner.

Reflecting on their sexual health, questions on whether they ever suspected they could be infected with HIV revealed that the majority did not suspect that they were infected. Nevertheless more than half of the respondents suspected that their friends were at risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. This is a very disturbing finding.

4. Conclusion

From the above findings it shows that black Africans are migrating to Hertfordshire and there is a need for them to begin to make informed decisions about preventing sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

This is due to the fact that black African communities are increasingly recognised as a group affected by HIV and AIDS.

The report clearly shows that the majority of the African population do not know their HIV status, which is a major concern, especially with reports of high-risk behaviours. Especially with multiple partnerships and non-condom use for some who use face value to assess their partners, which places them at risk of passing or contracting HIV.

Lack of awareness and information, regarding access to health care and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases/HIV is evident.

This, therefore, requires more Africans with or without the virus, need to make an effort to take care of their sexual health.

This summary is taken from The Crescent Support Group
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