

9<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### **Birmingham HIV Sector secures Heritage Lottery Fund grant for 'Living Archive'**

*The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a grant to create a 'Living Archive' of people in Birmingham with, and affected by, HIV it was announced today. The grant will go to a partnership made up of all of the local groups who work with people with HIV.*

The award of £48,000 is being used to create a 'Living Archive' of memories and experiences of HIV in Birmingham since the beginning of the epidemic in the 1980s. The Archive will gather oral histories from a cross section of the community including medical staff, support workers and voluntary groups as well as those living with, or personally affected by, the virus. It is hoped that the Archive will serve both as a lasting memorial to those who have died of HIV and AIDS in Birmingham and, as a celebration and testament to those still living with the virus. Through the project the testimonies of people affected by HIV will be stored for future generations to understand the impact of HIV and how communities responded to the virus in brave and poignant ways.

2008 figures from the Health Protection Agency show that since the early 1980s nearly 5,000 have been diagnosed with HIV in the West Midlands; 167 of these were in the first half of 2008 alone. Advancements in HIV medication mean, once diagnosed, people are living longer lives with better prognosis. However a lack of education and a basic understanding of the virus mean that many people still face stigma, discrimination and prejudice. For this reason an essential part of this project will be an educational exhibition which will tour local schools, universities and community groups to challenge perceptions and provide an insight into the reality of living with HIV. In addition an interactive website will also be launched in time for the 2010 Sexual Health Week. This website will provide electronic access to interviews as well as background information and links to other organisations for those who wish to find out more or gain support.

Mohammed Al-Rahim, Founder, President and CEO of local charity Freshwinds said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled this work to take place. HIV has had a profound impact on the lives of many people in Birmingham, and thanks to this grant we have the opportunity to create a lasting record of the Birmingham HIV epidemic and, through education, to challenge the stigma attached to it."

Anne Jenkins, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund in the West Midlands, said "We are pleased to have been able to support this important project which will record the experiences of a range of people affected by HIV in Birmingham over the years and enable those experiences to be shared with, and explained to, the wider community".

The project, which begins this week, will recruit twenty volunteers from within the local community and train them in a variety of skills including archiving, research and oral history.

If your life has been affected by HIV and you would like to volunteer or share your story with the 'Living Archive' please call in confidence on 0121 4156670 or email [livingarchive@freshwinds.org.uk](mailto:livingarchive@freshwinds.org.uk).

– ENDS –

***For further information, please contact***

Please contact Catherine O'Byrne, Living Archive Project Co-ordinator at [catherine.obyrne@freshwinds.org.uk](mailto:catherine.obyrne@freshwinds.org.uk) or on 0121 415 6681.

***Notes to Editors***

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since 1994 it has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4 billion across the UK. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

In the England and Wales there are an estimated 76,000 people living with HIV of whom approximately a 3<sup>rd</sup> do not know they are infected.

Despite advancements in treatments, HIV is still a life long condition for which there is no cure. Stigma and discrimination that surround HIV and AIDS still prevent many people from living full lives.

Freshwinds is a registered charity and company working across Birmingham to support those with life limiting and life threatening illness and those who are socially excluded. We have over 3700 service users across our 6 main areas of work including the support of people living with HIV to live independent lives. [www.freshwinds.org.uk](http://www.freshwinds.org.uk)

Freshwinds is the lead partner on this multi-agency project consisting of ABplus, The Terrance Higgins Trust Birmingham, Healthy Gay Life, Birmingham City Council HIV Team, The Pan Birmingham Sexual Health Directorate, Connecting Histories, Adullam Homes, Birmingham City Council PSHE Service and Birmingham World AIDS Day Steering Group.