

VITAL POSITIVE VOICES



Vital Positive Voices is a network of Africans in the UK living with and affected by HIV and sexual health needs that enables their experiences to be shared and their voices to be heard.

This initiative will inform and invigorate the African HIV Policy Network's (AHPN) work and its existence will serve to reinforce the value of involvement in the work of the organisation in policy, research and practice. By interacting with and learning from Africans in the UK living with and affected by HIV and sexual health conditions, AHPN gains greater understanding of the particular issues and concerns that affect them, thus enabling AHPN to represent its membership in a more informed and effective manner.

Objectives of *Vital Positive Voices*

To enable Africans in the UK living with and affected by HIV and sexual health needs to:

- Engage in influencing policy, research and practice
- Enable AHPN to learn from people's experiences
- Have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives
- Be supported so that they are not disadvantaged

Benefits of membership of the *Vital Positive Voices*

- Become an ambassador for Africans in the UK living with and affected by HIV and sexual health needs
- Contribute to national debates, thereby influencing change
- Access to some of AHPN suite of publications
- Dedicated interactive web page, on AHPN's web site, for *Vital Positive Voices* members
- Appropriate and reasonable reimbursement of expenses incurred for attending and participating in involvement sessions
- Advice, support and training [where required] to support involvement activities
- AHPN Membership is at no cost

NB: We welcome people of all ages, experiences and with diverse interest areas: Young people, women, over 50s, men, LGBT/sexual minorities, carers/partners/dependents

Joining the network

- Individuals must complete a **Joining Form**
- Applicants will be asked to consider AHPN's **Vital Positive Voices Charter** and AHPN's specification and requirement

Duration of membership of the *Vital Positive Voices*

- Membership of the *Vital Positive Voices* has no specified end date
- *Vital Positive Voices* members reserve the right to review their membership and leave when they see deem fit, by informing AHPN
- AHPN reserves the right to withdraw the membership of a member of *Vital Positive Voices*

Frequency of Involvement

- The amount of time each *Vital Positive Voices* member gives to the panel is flexible and it will be in accordance with their individual circumstances, capacity, capability, availability and personal wishes
- The involvement activities that members of the *Vital Positive Voices* engage in/with is also their choice, no member of the *Vital Positive Voices* will be forced to be involved in an involvement activity, session and/or topic that they do not want to be involved in/with
- AHPN will endeavour to provide a detailed brief to the *Vital Positive Voices* members about an involvement activity/session and what is expected of them.

Schemes

- **Leadership Programme:** to enhance leadership skills by enabling African people living with HIV to actively engage with policy, research and practice issues in order to foster community, national and global leadership
- **Media Group:** for people who are keen to keep abreast of how HIV and the sexual health of Africans is reported on in the media. Group members are also encouraged to actively seek opportunities in local and national media to change perspectives and inform the public about HIV and sexual health, tackling related stigma
- **Peer mentoring scheme:** to bring together people living with and affected by HIV and sexual health needs to allow for personal development and growth. The *mentors* are people who have long experience of the various issues that may be relevant to individuals affected by HIV and sexual health and the personal characteristics to support independence and provide encouragement
- **Consultation Forum:** for people that have good overview of current policy and practice as it relates to African communities affected by HIV and sexual health and want to actively influence and inform key decision makers who would like to hear the experiences of individuals from African communities in the UK
- **Policy & Research Group:** for individuals that are interested in the promotion of research and willing to occasionally provide the evidence base for policy influence and change
- **Workshops and seminars:** for people that want to attend and participate in a number of key areas of development and activities
- **Campaigners & Advocates:** for people that want to work with us for positive change!
- **Volunteering,** allowing members to identify opportunities to volunteer
- **Interest groups** e.g. young people, men, LGBT etc.