NENC Regional HIV Summer Conference 15 July 2026

Conference Report

The NENC Regional HIV Summer Conference brought together professionals, community organisations, people living with HIV and regional partners to share learning, strengthen collaboration and support progress towards ending new HIV transmissions and reducing HIV-related stigma.

Ahead of the regional conference, a pre-event survey gathered views from professionals and stakeholders across public health, sexual health services, HIV care, drug and alcohol services, social care, commissioning, the voluntary sector and people living with HIV. The findings demonstrate strong commitment to reducing HIV transmission and tackling stigma, alongside a clear desire for greater collaboration across organisations and systems

Discussions throughout the day highlighted the importance of tackling stigma, expanding testing opportunities, reducing inequalities, strengthening partnership working, and ensuring that lived experience continues to inform regional HIV activity. Delegates also identified opportunities to improve pathways between services, enhance workforce confidence and strengthen support for populations experiencing the greatest barriers to care.

The conference concluded with a series of stigma pledges and a shared commitment to continued collaboration across the region.

1. Conference Overview

The conference provided an opportunity for participants to:

- Share learning and emerging practice.
- Explore current opportunities and challenges within HIV prevention, testing, treatment and support.
- Strengthen collaboration across sectors.
- Consider how regional partners can contribute to achieving regional HIV ambitions.

The programme included hearing from a range of professionals working within the region, lived experience contributions, a panel discussion focused on HIV and drug and alcohol services as well as an action planning session.

2. Key Messages from the Day

Lived Experience

Delegates consistently highlighted the value of lived experience in shaping services, challenging stigma and informing future regional priorities. Contributions from people living with HIV reinforced the importance of listening to community voices and ensuring experiences remain central to HIV planning and delivery.

Tackling HIV Stigma

Stigma remained one of the strongest themes emerging from conference discussions. Participants recognised the progress that has been made whilst acknowledging the need for continued education, awareness raising and organisational leadership to challenge misconceptions about HIV.

Expanding HIV Testing

Delegates highlighted the importance of increasing access to testing through both routine and community-based approaches. Earlier diagnosis was recognised as a key component of improving outcomes and reducing transmission.

Partnership Working

Participants recognised that progress would depend upon strong collaboration across health services, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and people living with HIV. Shared learning and joint working were viewed as essential for addressing complex challenges and reducing inequalities.

3. HIV and Drug & Alcohol Services - Panel Discussion

The panel discussion highlighted the challenges faced by people living with HIV who also experience substance use issues and wider vulnerabilities.

Challenges

- Stigma associated with HIV and substance use.
- Fragmented services and referral pathways.
- Supporting people with multiple and complex needs.
- Workforce confidence and capability.

Opportunities

- Stronger partnership working between services.
- Clearer referral pathways.
- Greater use of trauma-informed approaches.

The panel discussion suggested that strengthened pathways and closer integration of services would be key to delivering equitable and effective care.

4. Conference Stigma Pledges

Conference delegates were invited to make personal and organisational pledges to challenge HIV stigma within their own settings.

Pledges reflected commitments to:

- Challenge misinformation and stigma when encountered.
- Promote positive and accurate messages about HIV.
- Increase awareness amongst colleagues and communities.
- Support inclusive and non-judgemental services.
- Champion the involvement of people living with HIV.

The pledges demonstrated a strong commitment to turning learning into action and a useful resource on ***Top Tips*** was made available to delegates

5. Regional Priority Themes

Priority 1: Reducing HIV Stigma

- Strengthen HIV education and awareness.
- Support workforce training and development to enhance HIV confidence.
- Promote organisational approaches that actively challenge stigma.

Priority 2: Expanding HIV Testing

- Expanding routine and community-based testing opportunities.
- Reducing barriers that may prevent people from accessing testing and diagnosis.

Priority 3: Reaching Underserved Communities

- Ensuring HIV services remain accessible and responsive to populations facing the greatest barriers to care, including people experiencing homelessness, migrant communities, people who use drugs and other socially excluded groups.

Priority 4: Improving Integration

- Stronger partnership working across health, local authority, voluntary and community services, supported by clear referral pathways and improved communication.

Priority 5: Embedding Lived Experience

- Continuing to involve people living with HIV in shaping regional priorities, service improvement and peer support activity.

6. Next Steps

The outputs and priority actions generated through the regional HIV conference are currently being reviewed and findings will inform the drafting of a refreshed **North East HIV Action Plan,** with stakeholder consultation and final revisions scheduled during November to enable publication and implementation by early December.

Appendices

1. Conference Agenda

HIV Conference - Agenda FINAL v2.pdf

2. Stigma Resource

Addressing stigma Top Tips.pdf

Addressing stigma .pdf

3. Parking Bay - for further consideration

HIV Conf Parking Bay of issues to be consid

4. Feedback

HIV Conference Feedback_Themes ext

5. Summary of Pre Event Survey

HIV Event 15 July Pre Event Survey Results.