

Catwalk4Power (C4P) is a project that was born from a collaboration between Positively UK and Act Up (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), in London. C4P grows ever-stronger as a creative, peer-led movement fronted by women living with HIV (this includes all women-identifying people), to empower our lives. We organise at a grass-roots level, supported by a community of women living with HIV and allies, in women-only safe spaces and with public-facing education and awareness-raising as a goal. Since C4P was first established in London, in 2017, women living with HIV have been our primary focus. The group has consistently networked, locally and internationally, to build a coalition that sees women owning their voice, producing highly creative, politicised events, and leading workshops, through artistic and thought-provoking group action. 2019 has seen us reach out to our sisters and allies in areas of the United Kingdom where HIV prevalence is high. We believe it is important to make these vital, social contacts so that we can connect all the issues we face as women living with HIV, to mobilise against HIV stigma and make our lives better.

In Brighton, over the summer, we have made special and meaningful connections with Sussex Beacon, Lunch Positive, and Peer Action. These connections carry great strength and understanding because we share common experiences of how to establish community-building programmes that reinforce solidarity, at times of great socio-economic pressure and continued, significant funding cuts to HIV services.

We urge our families, peers, communities, and the elected decision makers who represent our towns and boroughs, to support our mission to prioritise Brighton and Hove women's lives with effective HIV treatment, prevention, support, and care.

#SussexSistersOfPower #Catwalk4Power #ThePowerIsOurs #IAmHere

Public Health England

POSITIVELY UK



Catwalk4power received a warm welcome from the moment the Positively UK team contacted the services in Brighton.

It seems everyone was willing to help and support the project, and we are very grateful for all the support we have received.

Brighton Pride was a special highlight, we set up a stall in the community area and met so many merry makers who were interested in what we were doing and wanting to learn more, we ran out of surveys!

The workshops have been fun, creating and making our sashes and amazing body parts, these have helped form the #SussexSistersofPower as the group of women have named themselves. The women have travelled from all the corners of Sussex and shown a commitment and enthusiasm to join, be inspired and create the catwalk you will enjoy today.

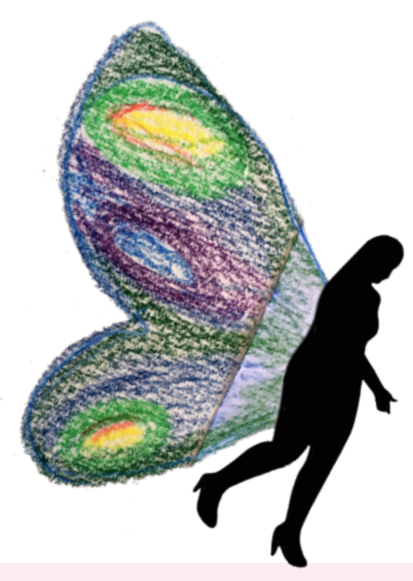
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Catwalk4Power

I love volunteering on front-of-house, where people all spend social and peer-support time together.

It's a joy to see people in conversation, making friends, supporting each other. It's a special part of my role to spend time welcoming women and families when they come along, and we've had some brilliant conversations – and much happy laughter! We're always encouraging more women to come along, and have plenty of time to spend making people feel welcome and helping them settle in – please help us reach more!

Christina
Volunteer
Lunch Positive



POSITIVELY UK IS A NATIONAL ORGANISATION WHICH WAS FOUNDED BY TWO WOMEN WITH HIV IN 1987.
ALL OUR FRONTLINE SERVICES ARE LED AND RUN BY PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV.

As a women with HIV who has lived in Brighton & Hove for nearly 10 years, from my experience, I can say that we go easily completely invisible outside of the Sussex Beacon.

However, I understand that no one will suddenly have an insight and will be able to read our minds and give us what we want or need: we have to learn to be more vocal, to own our presence and to own anything we want - we need to articulate our needs to the relevant partners, organisations or authorities - no one is going to give us what we want if we just keep quiet. This is something I learned from working together with my male gay peers: they got most of what they want because they are clear on what they want and they articulate it to whoever needs to hear it and act on it. That's why the Catwalk4Power is so-so-so important: beginning with me, I truly believe women in general and especially women living with HIV should own their space unapologetically, and walk in confidence in all areas of life. We are worth it.

Adriana
Peer Action

the sussex beacon

The Sussex Beacon in Brighton has been shining since 1992, providing outstanding services to people living with HIV and at least 200 women, and has hosted the 5 Catwalk4power workshops that have been facilitated by Positively UK.

It is one of only three facilities left in Britain that provide specialist residential care for those with the most complex conditions resulting from the virus. The Women's group started in 2008, following the closure of Open Door, and this led to the development of the Women and Families Service in 2011. They offer 1:1 support to discuss issues that may arise specifically for women including discussions about HIV within families, Life skills, fitness and physio, mindfulness, Stigma, HIV and employment and HIV and the menopause.

The Sussex Beacon would like to thank its service users, volunteers, funders and the local community and partners for their continued support, especially in bringing together an event like today in raising awareness of women living with HIV and celebrating together.





When one door shuts, others will open...

Kemptown is the centre for LGBTQI+ culture in Brighton and it was here that the Diocese of Chichester offered The Open door centre for 25 years, a place where all people living with HIV could meet without experiencing any judgement.

As Maria explained at the time, **"I can be myself without worrying about people's reactions, and it's where I get the help, love and support I need to stay alive... Just because we have drugs now, it doesn't mean we're not suffering. Sometimes I just need a hug."**

The doors closed in 2008, but this meant other services opened. Lunch Positive and Sussex Beacon family services continue today to provide that peer support, listening ear and connection that is so vital, for the well-being of women living with HIV.



Lunch POSITIVE

Provided by people with HIV for our community

Lunch Positive is a small Brighton & Hove charity that provides a range of support and services to the local HIV community. This year is our 10th anniversary, though we have developed directly from a much longer established service – Open Door. Open Door had run for 25-years until sadly closing in 2008 due to lack of funding. When Open Door closed specialist services there such as the Women and Families Service were transferred to other organisations, but the peer volunteers from Open Door went on to form Lunch Positive themselves, firstly as a community group – and then as a charity!

Lunch Positive now provides a very well attended weekly lunch club to over 50 people every week, a monthly 50+ supper group, outreach in other areas, and a host of other activities. All delivered by over 30 volunteers!

www.lunchpositive.org

