Sometimes it's a *whisper*
The three letters crawl and take up space in self-doubt, unworthiness, despair

Sometimes it's a **shout**
The three letters **bang against our curves and overshadow our voices, our desires**

Sometimes it's in childhood,
meaning life growing up is different
Sometimes it's in adulthood
life has to abruptly readjust

terror
shock
depression
difference
anger
denial – are often felt

But sometimes it's confusion: this bubble wrapped around us seems to suffocate, burst, but also give new life

The puzzle becomes clearer
breathing a new perspective, opportunities.

Sometimes it's soft, bringing new friendships.
Hope
Sometimes it's clarity: hidden questions finally providing relieving answers
Sometimes it's powerful: the thing that opens up doors to speak up
(in our home, to ourselves beyond)

Understanding our rights, in a way we didn't before
Realising our worth, when we previously didn't dare

Comfort grows, sexy begins to show its face, we realise who we are
It may take time
to stop fearing love between our legs
Grow through discomfort
Knowing that our curves deserve to be caressed

We are deserving
We are here
We are enough

We are taking up space
We are whole
We are sharing space
We are stronger together
We are realising our journeys are different
that each difference is noteworthy, deserving a place

There is enough power to share power, share information
of unknown lessons from new perspectives
unlocking each other's potential
messages from different tongues
speaking kinder to ourselves
share that our treatment should empower us
forgiving ourselves
amplify the voices of our sisters
knowing we don't need to be forgiven – **this is not a moral issue**
sharing the knowledge to keep going, live boldly

Daring to live comfortably in desire

Some days it'll be a whisper, our voices will get kinder
Some days it'll be a shout, we will stand firm in our positive truth
through sisterhood we will become bolder, live in full colour
in complete spirit

the truth is
we are powerful

Beyond and before HIV
we are here
Developing within ourselves and through others
Not sometimes, always
we are enough
we are

The 'I Am Here, We Are Here' festival took place over 8 and 9 March, 2019. Organised by Positively UK and hosted at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, the conference celebrated the power and solidarity of women living with HIV, while focussing on wellbeing, visibility, and the establishment of a collective manifesto. Guest speakers presented and workshops were held throughout International Women's Day, itself, and a Catwalk event packed with performances took place the following day. The poem 'We Are' brings together the collective words, ideas, and visions of all of the women who participated at this festival. Coordinated by spoken word artist, Baktia KK, this is our report of that special time.