



November 14th, 2016

Free HIV testing

Sexual health staff in South Tyneside and Gateshead are supporting HIV National Testing Week, which begins on Saturday, November 19th.

They will be raising awareness about HIV and promoting testing for this manageable and treatable infection. HIV testing is free and easy to access from a variety of clinical locations, including local sexual health services. There is also a free online test at <https://www.test.hiv/>

National HIV Testing Week (NHTW) promotes the testing for gay, bisexual men and black African men and women in the UK, who make up one in seven of the population.

However, NHTW also raises general awareness of the importance of people taking a test to confirm their HIV status. There are 54,000 heterosexual people living with HIV in the UK and 59% of these infections were acquired within the UK.

Dr Shaz Wahid, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's Medical Director, said: "Taking the test is a positive, healthy step as diagnosing HIV allows people to access the right care and support. The later the diagnosis, the later the access to treatment, which leads to poorer health compared to those who are diagnosed early and can then receive help to live with HIV as a long-term, manageable health condition."

National HIV Testing Week leads up to World Aids Day on December 1st, which this year will celebrate the achievement of a worldwide goal of getting 15 million people on HIV treatment.

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's sexual health teams can offer support relating to, and access to, HIV testing. For more information, for South Tyneside call 0191 2832525 and for Gateshead call 0191 2831575. For details of the other services they provide, such as contraception, go to

<http://www.stft.nhs.uk/service/sexual-health-services>
ends

Pictured above: South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust's sexual health outreach worker Dan Dobson, left, and senior sexual health adviser John Townsend with 'It Starts With Me' campaign materials aimed at highlighting that the key to winning the fight against HIV is the combination of regular testing, HIV treatment and condom use

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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