

FREEDOM TO BE NEWSLETTER 2018



In August 2018, CHIVA ran our 9th Annual support camp 'Freedom To Be' (F2B).

Who attended?

102 children and young people aged 11 to 16 years old and living with HIV from across the UK and Ireland.

Camp aims

CHIVA camp aims to support children and young people living with HIV to:

- improve HIV knowledge and understanding
- facilitate peer to peer friendships to reduce isolation
- improve confidence, self esteem and hopes for the future.



The theme for camp was **'My journey and finding my way,'** which was reflected in the workshops and activities run throughout camp.

The workshops were run by experienced facilitators all of whom live with HIV. The workshops were interactive and included creative activities aimed at improving understanding of HIV, sharing important new information such as U=U, as well as exploring how to live well, and issues such as telling other people.

One workshop included parents talking about their own HIV and being a parent to a child with HIV.

'I have learnt to love myself as I am.'
young person commenting on camp



'I learnt about HIV from a parents perspective' young person commenting on camp

A Q&A with the young people was facilitated, where they had the opportunity to ask the parents in the workshops questions which they might have wanted to ask their own parents/carers but have found this difficult. This was a really important new addition to our camp programme and the young people responded really positively to the involvement of parents.

Sexual health information sessions were run in small same-gender groups where young people were able to ask anonymous questions in a safe space, relating to HIV and puberty, relationships, safer sex and having children.

'F2B - It's like one big family'
young person commenting on camp



'I learnt that you have to take care of yourself in order for you to take care of the people you care about'

young person commenting on camp

Two young adults living with HIV, gave short TED-style talks about their own journeys, Mercy, our former Youth Committee Chair, talked about her journey from finding out about her HIV, the support of her doctor and family, and going on to become a campaigner and public speaker, raising awareness about HIV.



E spoke about his experiences living with HIV, and working towards his dream of being a successful music producer and performer. It had always been his dream to play his music on TV and he achieved this by starring in a TV music talent show this year and reaching the semi-finals.

Outside of workshops young people took part in different activities such as drama, art, music and performance poetry which continued to explore HIV along the theme of *journeys*. As well as football sessions, a camp bake-off and outward bounds activities provided by the centre.

One of the most special things about camp is the young people getting to know each other and building relationships. We make sure there is time at camp for the them to have informal conversations about living with HIV, this might be talking about taking medicines, telling friends or school, and generally sharing thoughts and feelings. In the evenings there were different activities young people could choose to do such as a pampering session, a camp bonfire, hanging out in the games room whilst offering lots of opportunities for these conversations.



After a party on the last night, we had a closing ceremony on Saturday morning. This is the time where the young people share what they take away from camp with them, and their journey during the week. Young people said things such as 'I feel more confident with my HIV,' 'I feel more comfortable being around people who have HIV'.

'Camp has meant being free to talk about my status without stigma'

young person commenting on camp

