

Staffordshire Buddies

Press Release



Monday 25 November 2019

2019 marks the 31st anniversary of World AIDS Day, and it will be marked in Staffordshire with a vigil, open to all on 1 December.

World AIDS Day is a time for us all to remember the lives lost to HIV/AIDS, but Staffordshire Buddies also wants to look towards a brighter future by showing local residents how together they can work towards raising awareness, challenging stigma, ending loneliness and isolation, and providing peer support to anyone who needs it.

Today, medical advances have excelled and ending HIV transmission in the UK is finally within sight. With the right treatment and care, most people living with HIV in the UK will have a more or less normal lifespan. Very few people in the UK fall ill or die as a direct result of HIV anymore.

The annual vigil in Hanley is organised by volunteers, staff and service users from Staffordshire Buddies and has been held for a number of years. It gives family and friends the opportunity to celebrate the lives of loved ones lost to HIV/AIDS. The event aims to reaffirm a message of hope, compassion, solidarity and understanding about HIV/AIDS.

37.9 million people globally are living with HIV of which 100,000 are from the UK. Last year 4,453 people in the UK were diagnosed with HIV.

Gill Butler, Chief Officer of Staffordshire Buddies said *"On 1st December, people all over the world will wear a red ribbon in remembrance to those who lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, but it is also a time to look to the future. Communities Make the Difference is the theme this year. Together we really can make a difference for people living with and affected by AIDS/HIV."*

"We're encouraging people to come along to our event and wear their red ribbons with pride and remember those loved ones lost to AIDS/HIV."

Staffordshire Buddies plays a big part in offering the support needed to those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Many people who are HIV positive rely on the services they give. Here is a selection of the positive experiences faced by those who have used the service.

- Michael at Staffordshire Buddies sat with me during my darkest days, when my world fell apart upon diagnosis in 1997, my diagnosis was never an issue even in those days and the support continues to this day... Thank you can never be enough, I am grateful for everything they (Staffordshire Buddies Team) do for us.
- Staffordshire Buddies is everything you want it to be from practical support to a safe place just to be you and most of what they do is free... Big Love!!!
- Peer support given through Staffordshire Buddies has given me my confidence back and a chance to let go of all the fear!

The event takes place on Sunday 1 December. Everyone is welcome to attend the event. People are invited to meet at the Staffordshire Buddies Head Quarters in Birch Terrace, Hanley from 3:30pm where hot chocolate and mince pies will be served. At 5:15, the group will begin the walk to Fountain Square, Hanley for the 5:30pm vigil.