

## Transcript

### Time to look again at HIV and relationships

#### Voiceover by Dr Tom Witney:

Did you know there have been effective treatments for HIV for over 25 years? - Keeping the virus under control, so people can live long, healthy lives.

These treatments reduce the virus to such low levels that it cannot be passed on through sex, even without condoms. When the virus is undetectable, it is untransmittable. But what does it mean for people living with HIV and their partners?

We spoke to 30 gay and bisexual men in the UK, in couples where one partner was living with HIV. They told us that day-to-day, it was almost like the virus didn't exist. The only sign was the positive partner's daily medication.

Some had stopped using condoms altogether. For them, it was an important expression of closeness or a way to show that HIV wasn't a worry. But despite this, the stigma around the virus still had an effect.

Some HIV positive partners felt they were lucky to be in a relationship at all, or felt duty bound to keep their partner negative.

People's attitudes towards HIV were very important to the participants. HIV stigma made them careful who they talked about their relationships to.

Some HIV negative participants worried they'd have to tell someone about their partner's HIV status. For instance, if they were in an accident.

A recent survey found hardly anyone knew that effective treatment stops the virus being passed on and more than half didn't believe it was true.

Our participants felt it was important that more people became aware. They wanted the public to feel as they – and lots of other couples – do: that HIV just isn't such a big deal anymore.