

“Understanding the experiences and needs of men who have sex with men who have been diagnosed with mpox”

Findings from: [Understanding the experiences and needs of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men \(GBMSM\) diagnosed with mpox](#)

What was the study about?

There are higher rates of mpox amongst men who have sex with men. We want to understand their experiences and needs when diagnosed, including around stigma.

Why is this important?

Understanding the experiences and needs of men who have sex with men who are diagnosed with mpox is important so that we can best support them, both now and for any future outbreaks. It also helps us understand how to support people experiencing other new or re-emerging infectious diseases.

What did we do?

In March/July 2023, we interviewed 22 men who have sex with men who were diagnosed with mpox in 2022 and four people from clinical/community-based organisations to ask about experiences of mpox, testing, diagnosis, contact tracing and treatment.

Key findings

- Gay and bisexual men living with HIV generally coped better with concerns about stigma relating to mpox because they drew on their experiences of HIV diagnosis as a source of resilience.
- Younger gay and bisexual men found their mpox diagnosis more traumatic and sometimes needed extra support.
- Not all healthcare professionals recognised the symptoms of mpox which could lead to delays in testing and diagnosis.
- People interviewed found that information available after recovering from mpox was not always clear. Contact tracing services often had poor clinical knowledge and could be a major source of stigma as many did not have experience or skills around supporting gay and bisexual men.
- We found that a high proportion of men who have sex with men interviewed were affected by stigma, and many who accessed general services (for example A&E) experienced discrimination.

What do these findings mean?

These findings have highlighted the need to involve affected communities in planning and delivering support when there are new outbreaks of infectious diseases. It is also vital to make sure that healthcare professionals have the skills and abilities to work with gay and bisexual men. This will help make sure that the best care is provided, and that public health messaging

is effective. This can help us to reduce feelings of stigma experienced by those with mpox and other infectious diseases and improve health and wellbeing.