

## Mark Woolliscroft

[00:00:00]

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, my name's Mark, I'm 54 years old. I live in Abbey Hey in Gorton, Manchester. I live on my own even though I've got a partner, Kevin, which I've been with for 16 years. I work for an organisation called One Manchester which was originally a company called Eastlands Homes, which originally then was from Manchester City Council housing, but it split up in to different sections. So I was originally a mechanic for the council, I had a slight accident, because of that I was redeployed into working for various departments within Manchester City Council. I work within the investment team of One Manchester which is really good because you get to meet different people, go out to see different tenants, and also find out what their needs are within their housing needs.

I used to be interested in cars because I was a mechanic but now I tend to do more things from home. I've got my little dog, a French bulldog called Louis. He's my baby, my fur baby as they call them. I've also got two cats as well, which is interesting because watching them, the way they all interact with each other, it's quite interesting. Because one of them's a Bengal cat as well and she tends to like Louis more, although Luis seems to think that it's his little girlfriend and have to be very careful with them. But at least Louis gets me out as well which is good because of my mobility. I struggle a little bit really, walk with the aid of a stick so at least I can take Louis out.

But I've just recently bought a torch that goes on your head because obviously when you go out it's dark, so I look like a Dalek now when I'm walking up the path with Louis. I must look a right sight because obviously I've got one leg longer than the other so I hop as well, so the light must be going backwards and forwards as I walk up the path. But last week I bumped in to a friend of mine and Louis took a fancy to his dog so it must have been quite strange that, the things that we shouted to him like 'Louis get off her' and... it's, this guy's saying 'you're blinding me with your light' because my light was shining in his face, and... but yeah, he's a character, Louis, and he's spoilt rotten so...

But yeah, I live in Gorton, I've got my partner Kevin, which I met through... I was a volunteer for the Lesbian and Gay Foundation and Kevin was a volunteer for, I think it was the Gay Switchboard at first. And then he came over as a volunteer for LGF as well and we had a date in, I think it was the New Union. And we've seen each other ever since which is 16 years now. Which I think, they've been very happy years although Kevin would probably disagree with me.

[Laughter]

But I think that I was the best thing that ever happen to him but I'm bound to say that. But he lives in Liverpool. He doesn't do as much volunteering now because he helps out with his mother, because his father passed away a few years ago. After being diagnosed with Parkinson's, he decline quite rapidly so Kevin obviously now looks after his mother quite a lot so he spends some time in Manchester with me and then goes back to Liverpool to be with his mother.

[Break from 00:03:52 to 00:04:28]

[00:04:30]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** I was just going to say, going back to your volunteering, what was your initial involvement? What made you want to start doing that?

**PARTICIPANT:** When I first came out as a gay man, I was 33 years old so I was a bit of a late comer-outer as such. I'd been engaged to a lady for five years but then we split up and I knew something was wrong then, so... not wrong, but that I wasn't being myself, and I didn't know many gay people. When I came out I worked for a company called British Aerospace and there was a guy called Graham who worked there who was one of the union representatives. When I came out as being gay they had a bit of a meeting because obviously the foreman had to discuss it with all the people I worked with so that there was going to be no discrimination against me. But Graham pulled me to one side and spoke to me and said to me that he was involved with an organisation called Healthy Gay Manchester. I think they used to meet on a Thursday at a building over near the train station. He said they used to meet there on a Thursday and put condoms in to packs and then in to boxes. He said they just sit informally around the table chatting, even at the time we used to get pizzas brought in and things so he actually said to me 'why don't you come along and meet some people?' Because I didn't have a lot of gay friends, so I went along to meet everybody and it was brilliant. I think for me it was such a life changing thing because I really did think that I was the gay Manchester person, that there was only me about. When I walked in there was all these different peoples from all different backgrounds, you know, and probably different stages of their lives as well. Some were still secretive about the way their sexuality... some were very open about it and it was a bit of an eye-opener for me because like I say I didn't speak to anybody else about it at the time, so we used to sit there on a Thursday packing condoms. And we used to go out in to the Gay Village afterwards for a drink, and Healthy Gay Manchester used to buy us all a drink. Again, that was a bit of a new step for me because I'd never been out, even in to any of the pubs. I used to sit outside in my car, but I was so nervous about actually going out and meeting other gay men as such really.

So besides the fact that we were doing something good for the community, it actually did a lot for me as well in the fact that it introduced me to other gay men as well, which I hadn't been involved with before.

[00:07:30]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** So also thinking then about the AIDS crisis and stuff, what were your initial reactions? Maybe going back to when it came out as that it was a crisis.

**PARTICIPANT:** I think... I always think back to, it was an advertisement on television where there was some coffins that were popping up and it was saying about how it was spreading, and it was like 'is this what's going to happen to me as well?' I never forget the first time that, when I told my parents that I was gay, my mother actually burst in to tears and said 'is this... are you going to get HIV and die?' Because that's

what was being broadcast to everybody. And I also thought that myself, you know, because I didn't know about safe sex, what to do. Could I contract HIV by sitting on a toilet seat and things? Because I was so wrapped up in my own little world at the time that that's what I thought would happen. And it was only when I joined HGM and it was talking about safe sex, the condom packs, you know, what you should do if you think that you've contracted, and even the fact that if you did contract it you weren't going to die necessarily, that it was, things out there and groups for you. I mean I didn't know if there was actually gay centres that you could go to for a medical to be examined and things, which was good. The fact that all these things were there for people to use and that, even if you did contract HIV it wasn't the end of the world really, that was perceived on television really.

[00:09:22]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** So yeah, so it was for you as well, it was like learning about all this and also getting that community?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah.

[00:09:30]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** Do you think that could also seem as, for the whole activism of it all, was that also relevant as well? Because I think a lot of people think that it brought a lot out for the gay community in that people didn't have to hold back any more.

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, it's... I think people, if they've got HIV, the fact that it wasn't the end of the world, the fact that they could carry on, the fact that people wouldn't ignore them and not speak to them. I found out years later that a friend of mine, a very close friend, had HIV. And you know, the fact that you can interact, you can still kiss that person, you can still cuddle [?] that person, you can still have sex with a person that's got HIV because it's not the fact that, if you've got HIV, it's the end of the world. Because some people... well even I, before I got involved with Healthy Gay Manchester, that's what I actually thought. That if, I could contract HIV and that I would die. But that's not the case.

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**INTERVIEWER 1:** So do you think, thinking about back then, what are your thoughts with the whole... because I guess maybe you were thinking similar in that you would think straightway that it was this awful thing, but what do you think about the way people felt towards it? So you talk about the advert, so what do you think that made people think about it?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, I think it's not just gay people as well, the way they reacted to HIV, I think it's educating people, straight people, the fact that it's not only gay people that contract HIV. You know, the thing is, it was always seen as gay men that would contract HIV and that they were filthy, basically, because they were having unprotected sex within each other and it was all their fault really. Whereas when you go back further and further where it actually came from and the fact that it's educating even people like my parents who are elderly now, you tell them,

somebody gets HIV, it could be from blood transfusions, it could be anything. And if they got it, it's not the end of the world, it's not their fault. It's a terrible disease but it's not the end of the world, and just by touching someone's hand or holding them, that you wouldn't catch HIV. Because it's, I think people, like I said my mother, she instantly thought, because that was what was portrayed to her through the press and through things like even Freddie Mercury, it was things like that, and Kenny Everett. You know, like they've got HIV, they've died. My mum was saying 'oh, they must have slept around' and everything but it was teaching her and other people like my parents that that's not the case really.

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**INTERVIEWER 1:** So do you think, obviously it's progressed and everything's a lot more positive now. What ways do you think that that's happened?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the fact that it's been publicised more. I think the more the fact that it's on television, the more people that have got HIV that are still living a healthy life. Even this friend of mine that had got HIV, I told my mother about him. She's seen him, he's still alive now. And I think it's the fact that if you think there's something wrong, the fact that you can go to a health centre and it's not the end of the world. If you have got it you can actually live with it and carry on living for a long time.

[00:13:19]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** Before you said you got involved with when you did Pride, do you want to talk a bit about that?

**PARTICIPANT:** Like I said before, I always thought I was the only gay in Manchester, to be honest with you. And I never remember the first time I was involved with Healthy Gay Manchester, walking in Manchester Pride, and first of all I was a bit subdued. Walking because I didn't want everybody to look at me. But when we came out and went in the parade, we started off and we saw these people on the streets cheering us and clapping us and I was part of that organisation promoting Healthy Gay Manchester. It was unbelievable. And one of the other things I saw were the parents of gay people that were on a float as well and I even said to my mother 'why don't you come along and try and get involved?' and I actually brought my mum and my auntie to one of the weekends and they were amazed because they actually thought there was only a few people and when they actually saw so many people, that it wasn't just me, that looked amazed and I think it was an eye-opener for them as well as myself. Obviously they went in, I think they went in the Rembrandt. And they went in the toilets, and she came out to me and she said 'there's men actually using the ladies' toilets' and I said 'that's the way it is down here, we're all equal'. And she was amazed, it really did change her view, that I wasn't the only one too.

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**INTERVIEWER 1:** So thinking about also maybe the people that you were involved with in the condom packing, were they all gay or was it just like... was it a community in itself?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, there was all different, there were bisexual men. I say that, I don't think there were any straight people involved with it at the time but there were all different sorts of people, so like there were some people that hadn't come out, some people that wanted to come out. And it was also getting involved with the group that led to other things, so back then there was other groups being formed where there was over-40s, there was a bisexual group, there were different groups being formed within the organisation. And it was good to see all those being developed as well, because I think what happened then was the group of people that were involved with the condom packing also got involved with the other groups as well. Like the married men's group and things like this. And again, that was unbelievable, seeing that develop in to this organisation, that it wasn't just the condom packing, it was everything else being branched out from it really.

Because some of the people I met there, I'm still very good friends with them. We formed very good friends and it was seeing them develop as well as myself and some of the things we were involved with, it was unbelievable to be part of that really.

[00:16:41]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** So I was just wondering, at a personal level how you became... so going back again, you were becoming more aware of HIV or as it was often just called AIDS back then. And how that impacted you personally in terms of you coming out, in terms of what the relationships you can have and the kinds of sex you can have. Did it make you think twice, or did it impact you in your sense of your own self? How did that play out in terms of your relationship?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think years ago, before I came out, I was frightened. Obviously you heard about HIV or AIDS. And I would never have wanted to have sex with anybody else, that they'd contracted the disease. But I think being involved with HGM and LGF probably changed my mind so much because I did meet people, people were very open about the fact that, 'before we have sex I've got to tell you I'm HIV positive' and I said 'okay, that's fine, I appreciate the fact that you've told me because now we can have safe sex'. I think it also would have had safe sex anyway because of the fact that I'd been involved with HGM and LGF anyway, but it wasn't a case of... years ago I would never have even kissed somebody that had HIV but I think being educated within the organisation that there was ways to have safe sex, kissing and cuddling I wouldn't contract the disease. There would be people had very good... I met people that, in relationships where one was HIV positive and one wasn't, the way they were together, the fact that they had a very healthy sex life and life together, I think taught me that even if I did meet somebody that was HIV positive I wasn't going to ignore them or treat them differently. Because I think I would have done years ago before I'd got involved with the organisation because I was

frightened, because I didn't know how it was going to be contracted, what you could do if you did get it.

But I am very open about the fact that I have had sex with men that are HIV positive and because of the organisation we've had safe sex, I've had relationships with them, and I'm not ashamed of it and I'm not ashamed of them. We're very good friends, still, with some of them. The relationship I've got now with Kevin, you know, he actually said to me that he was frightened because he thought he had HIV years ago, but it turned out he hasn't but it didn't make any difference to us because I loved him, I loved him as a person so it didn't make any difference whether he was HIV or HIV negative. I loved him as a person.

And I think that's what's, even now, people walk about it. And you know, people joke about it, but the thing is I'm very quick to say to them, 'do you know all the facts about it? Do you know how it's contracted? Do you know that people are living with it?' And I said to him 'you might be stood next to somebody who has HIV, would that make you feel any different to them? Would you love anybody less?' if you love somebody, I actually feel proud of the fact that I've taught people not to be negative and to be discriminating against people that have got them. Because at the end of the day that person is still a loving, caring person, no matter what.

I'm proud of the fact that now I can help educate people, I suppose really, about it really.

[00:20:51]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** When you were doing the condom packing and putting the packs out, where were you going to put them out? And what was the response and what kinds of attitudes were there in the Village and wider communities?

**PARTICIPANT:** I think when we used to first pack them we used to put them in to boxes and they were in the corner and taken out by different people, outreach workers and things. But I think there was a lady called Emma who was involved with HGM and it was the lead up to one Pride and she asked me if I would go out and deliver the boxes and I was absolutely gobsmacked how many boxes were put out and how even during Pride we had to restock the bars to put these out. I felt proud then, about packing these condoms, because you thought that you were just doing a box that was going to stay there for six months or something but it wasn't, it was used up, and you actually spoke to people and said 'you know what? These are such a lifesaver, these condom packs'. And it was going out to all the different bars within Manchester and the fact that we had to replenish them halfway through Pride because they were running out. And we actually thought we'd packed thousands and thousands of boxes, but they were used up. And it was just a sense of pride that we were doing that, that Manchester was providing this thing to people where they could just... if you've not got enough condoms and you meet somebody, and you're going back for sex, that you can just grab one and they can take it with them. It was a sense of pride really, being involved with all that.

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**INTERVIEWER 1:** Could you say a little bit more about what HGM was and where it came from as far as you're aware? Just for someone who's never heard of it before who might be watching this.

**PARTICIPANT:** I think HGM was, when I first started it seemed to be a smaller organisation where it was obviously Healthy Gay Manchester, where they was promoting safe sex, the condom packs. But as I got more and more involved with it we moved premises and it grew because Healthy Gay Manchester then joined forces with the Gay Switchboard to become LGF at the time. And you can see the difference, when it grew how it expanded and all the services. Because I think that it was Healthy Gay Manchester, I don't think they had things at the time like the Married Men's Group and all these other groups, and as I was involved with the condom packing, I saw these groups evolve and it was a group for everybody and it was good to know the service we were providing. Because I even did training to go on the switchboard as well and that was amazing, to receive calls off people that were in a situation that I was in years previous to that where I was frightened, you know, 'I don't know who to talk to, I don't know what to do'. And it was great to say to them 'well look, hey, we're here, there'll be someone to talk to, don't feel like you're alone. If you want to come along and meet people...' and it was great to be part of the group expanding. It was like a chrysalis, with the butterfly, it was opening up to provide all these services to people. It wasn't just gay men, it was bisexual men, women, transgender.

I remember once meeting a trans person, it was a man that transition in to a lady. And speaking to him, well, there were kind of in-between being trans... and he was like, the way he was being treated by his parents and I was like, the sort of like disgust... but the fact that he could come to LGF and to be with his family, and he progressed and he transitioned in to a beautiful lady, and it was great to see that and be part of that as well and the fact that he had so many friends and he gained a relationship through it was well, it was unbelievable. It was great to be part of it really.

[00:25:27]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** You said earlier when we were having our chat, you talked about your partner and in the way you met your partner through your work. And you mentioned meeting other people as well, around that you kind of remember working with. Could you say a little bit more about that?

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, I met Kevin, I think it was when the LGF was near the old BBC social building. And I had gone in to do some condom packing on a Thursday and Kevin had come out, he was a councillor and he took my breath there when I first saw him because he's six foot four and I thought 'wow' and I always used to make a point of, when he was on on a Thursday, that I would hang around the foyer just to say hello to him. And like I said we used to go out after condom packing in to the Gay Village, and we got talking and 16 years later we're together still. I've still got a lot of friends within the organisation. I met Paul, Paul Martin, who's the chief exec. Became friends with Paul as well. Involved with other activities with LGF.

And even a few months ago I went to a funeral and there was a guy called Steven that we're very good friends with, and I always used to think of Steven with a smile because I gave him a lift home one day and when we were driving down the road he always used to say 'forward', forward through the traffic lights, forward round the roundabouts. And I said to him 'why do you always 'forward'?' and he said 'I never use the word 'straight' darling, I never use the word 'straight''. And a few months ago I was at a funeral and I heard this voice, and I thought 'I recognise that voice' and it was Steven. And we were very good friends, we used to go clubbing together and we lost contact, and we spoke about the happy times. Because as I came out and we shook hands with him, we went to one side and we spoke about the happy times at Healthy Gay Manchester and LGF, and the friendships that we got together. And there's still people that used to work for the organisation, there's the guy called Christian that I'm still very good friends with and it's... all them friends then I've got close to my heart, we've met through LGF and it's, I've got so much to be thankful for to the organisation, for educating me, for giving me a life and also friends and a partner.

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**INTERVIEWER 2:** That's good going.

**PARTICIPANT:** Yeah, it's a lot. A lot I've got out of it.

[00:28:16]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** I was going to ask, going back again, you mentioned figures like Kenny Everett and Freddie Mercury. What was the impact when you first, for example, I remember when it was announced that Freddie Mercury had passed away. Do you remember that time and what the atmosphere was like then? When these things were announced.

**PARTICIPANT:** I think it was the fact that it was dirty, the way that it was perceived was that if you got HIV and you died of it, it was because you were dirty. I think the people that I worked with and associated with at the time and was friends with, that's the way they perceived it. And I think it was lack of education really. A thing that frightened me really because that's all I had the dealings was, was the TV ad and the fact that Freddie Mercury had been sleeping around and that's the way he got it. That he was dirty and everything. It was only through joining HGM that actually it educated me in to thinking completely different about it.

I mean, even my mother, even now to the day she talks about one of her old heartthrobs, was it Gregory Peck? One of them. Rock Hudson, sorry. Who came out as gay. And she still to the day turns round and says to me 'what a waste' and I say to her 'why do you say that?' 'Because he could have had any woman that he wanted.' And I say 'but he could have had any man he wanted too. If he was happy, why can't you be happy because he was happy?' And even still I have to stop her because she still says that even now, 'what a waste'. And it isn't a waste. It's teaching people that it isn't a waste.



[00:30:13]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** You mentioned that you used to go clubbing. I was wondering if you could say a little bit more about what life was like for you, maybe once you were coming out and going out and stuff.

**PARTICIPANT:** I think the first time I went in to a gay club it was actually with the organisation, I think we had a Christmas Party and we went out... I met a very good friend of mine, John Paul, and we went to I think it was Cruz 101 and we were all stood around huddled in a group and then we spread out a little bit and had a little bit of a dance but it was great being part of that because before that the only time I'd ever been to a club was with a girl. To be able to go in to a club and actually be myself was unbelievable. And having a dance and dancing how I wanted to dance, and not be afraid of who was watching me. And I actually met a guy called Paul, both me and John Paul took a liking to this guy Paul walking past, and I got talking to him and we had a bit of a fling together, but it was the fact that you could dance together, you could put your arms around another man and hold him tight and dance, and not be afraid of showing your feelings. Because, I would never years before that have dreamt that I would be able to go in to a club or bar or anything in Manchester or anywhere and be that open with another man. It was great and I think that developed in to going to other clubs like Essential and things like that, and it's great seeing the way people could dance with each other. Because you'd always been to a family party and seen a man and a woman dancing together and thinking 'I wish I could dance with a man like that'. And it was actually great being able to do that.

[00:32:14]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** You've mentioned quite a few clubs in the Village and I was just wondering, you mentioned that you grew up in Gorton. I was just wondering if there were any spaces outside of the Village that you go to that you do feel are... whether it's your local, whether at the time it was very much focused in the Village or whether there were other spaces around and about where you felt comfortable?

**PARTICIPANT:** I don't think I felt comfortable where I lived at the time even discussing my sexuality. I think I did feel more comfortable in Manchester, and it wasn't because I was ashamed, I think it was the way that it was perceived around. Because it was... even my work was very male-domination kind of thing, and it was the fact that the local pubs was all gangs of lads together going around and the fact that I couldn't go there and be myself. The only time I could be myself was in Manchester. Even myself and Kevin, we had a holiday once in Mexico, in Cancun, and we were dancing on the dance floor and obviously the drinks were flowing a little bit, and we got a little bit smooching, we were dancing together and holding each other, and because of that somebody didn't like it, they took a dislike to it and started fighting with myself and Kevin. We'd made some friends with people, they stuck up for us. We left, me and Kevin, went back to our room because we felt ashamed because that's the way people perceived it: look at them two 'faggots', was the words that was used against us. So even now, the only time we would go on holiday is actually to a gay resort because we feel comfortable in a surrounding that we can actually be ourselves, hold hands walking around. Because of what happened in

Mexico really, that it did put a bit of a frightener on us really. The way people shouted to us, really.

[00:34:30]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** And you mentioned work, I was wondering in your current job, how do you feel about these kinds of issues?

**PARTICIPANT:** When I first came out, I came out when I worked at British Aerospace. Even though my friends accepted it, I think it wasn't discussed very much. It's only when I went working for Manchester City Council that I got a different reaction. Within Manchester City Council they had a gay group for people that worked for them, and that was amazing really because even though I was accepted I still got quite a lot of grief off other mechanics because I came out to them as a gay man, but it was only when I went to some of these meetings and told them that 'this is what I'm being treated like' they said 'well you shouldn't be treated like that'. And I used to be ashamed really and kept it quiet, but it was only through working for Manchester City Council that they said 'look, you shouldn't have to put up with that, with homophobic remarks, it's not acceptable.' But as I change jobs and got redeployed within offices, because I was working with a lot more women as well it became more acceptable, the fact that 'we don't care, we've got gay friends, you can be who you want.' And it was great because within Manchester City Council and office work I could actually be me. And actually, I know it sounds daft but camp it up. And actually I loved it. The fact that I used to go [?] 'love, dear, sweetie' and things like this, and have a laugh. Whereas before I would never have done that, it was only through working at Manchester City Council and not rubbing it in people's noses but not being ashamed of it.

Even now I walk in to the office and joke with people and have a laugh with them and they're great. People accept me. But at the end of the day, why shouldn't they? I'm Mark, you know. I'm not 'Mark, a gay'. I mean, I am gay, but I'm Mark.

[00:36:50]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Over the past few years there've been quite a few changes in terms of different technologies like testing for HIV's improved quite a lot and we've got PEP and now we've just got PrEP coming in as well. I was just wondering on your thoughts about how things have changed over the years in terms of the toolkit in terms of safer sex and where you see it going in the future.

**PARTICIPANT:** When I first joined HGM you could go to the GUM clinics, I think they used to be called at the time, and probably because I was a kid in a sweet shop and I was a bit promiscuous at some points, I went to these clinics and I was frightened probably, and you had tests but you had to wait quite a few weeks to get the results back. And I think in them few weeks it was like you were swallowing glass every day waiting for the results to come back. And I think just recently I heard you can actually have these tests and more or less be told straight away is unbelievable, because for somebody who is worried, to not have to wait two or three weeks to get the results back it unbelievable. It's come so far in a few years. For somebody who thinks they may have contracted it. But also it's not just the fact that you can get

tested, it's actually the fact that the treatment available is publicised more, the fact that 'hey, if you have got it, it's not the end of the world'. You can have counselling, it helps you to look after yourself better, and I think that has been portrayed so well, the fact that it has changed so much, the fact that you can get tested on the same day.

Because I'm not being funny, I think if a woman went out and had unprotected sex they could take the morning after pill, and I think for somebody that's gay, that thinks they may have contracted something by having unprotected sex, then they could go out and have this test is unbelievable.

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**INTERVIEWER 2:** Is it something you'd ever consider, using PrEP for example as a way of preventing HIV transmission?

**PARTICIPANT:** I've not really heard much about the PrEP.

[00:39:21]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** It's the new thing that's coming in, there's a trial at the minute. It's a pill you take, it actually lowers the risk of you catching HIV. People think it's going to change quite a few things.

**PARTICIPANT:** It's like the morning after pill really, isn't it? In a way, because it you can take that after it does.

[00:39:50]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah, that's a bit like PEP, where if you think you've been exposed to some risks then you can take PEP. PrEP is something you might take every day for the rest of your life, or something you might take if you're going to Berlin for the weekend.

**PARTICIPANT:** So you can take it constantly?

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**INTERVIEWER 2:** Yeah, you can do. At the minute they're just putting it on a trial. You can't get it through the NHS at the minute but fingers crossed.

**PARTICIPANT:** That's amazing.

[00:40:20]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Did you have any other questions?

[00:40:25]

**INTERVIEWER 1:** No, I think that was all. I was just going to say I thought it was really nice, when you got involved in all this stuff it was like a turning point for you and the rest of your life, it's had such a positive impact and that all stemmed from making this sexual health awareness.

**PARTICIPANT:** I've got a lot to thank HGM, LGF and LGBT Foundation for, to be honest with you. Because it's changed my life in so many ways, not only other people's but it's changed my life. It's given me a life because I was scared, I was frightened, I didn't know what to do. Through that I met a lot of friends, I met my partner, I'm not ashamed of who I am. I'm not ashamed to go out and show people. And if people ever come up to me... I think somebody the other day was saying to me that a friend of theirs was a lesbian but she was frightened because she didn't know what to do about meeting people. And I say, it's not a case of... there's so many different things that people could do now, where you can go to people, there are groups that go walking, that go to the pictures and things. I said 'you want to get in touch with the LGBT Foundation and find out what things she can get involved in'. She said 'oh, I didn't know all that'. I said 'yeah, it's not just there to promote safe sex, it's also there for people, to help them.' And I think that's amazing. I've got a lot to thank them for.

[00:41:59]

**INTERVIEWER 2:** Great. Before we finish, is there anything else that you'd like to add that maybe we haven't covered, anything that you think-?

**PARTICIPANT:** I just think that telling anybody that's out there, that's watching this video, that's maybe not come or they're frightened, that I've been there, done it, go the t-shirt and even the HGM t-shirts I've kept because it's a good reminder. But you're not alone and there are people there for you to talk to, whether it's meeting people, whether you're concerned about your health, there's somebody there on the phone to talk to. So get in contact with them.

**[00:42:46] End of transcript.**