Dear ...................

I am writing because I am deeply concerned about the proposal by Bristol City Council to stop funding Brigstowe’s HIV Support Service. This follows just days after the announcement by Terrence Higgins Trust that they will be closing their office in Old Market due to changes in the council’s Public Health funding arrangements. This will leave little or no support for people living with HIV in Bristol at a time when the number of HIV diagnoses is rising.

I appreciate that a huge amount of savings need to be made but I cannot understand why people living with HIV are being disproportionately affected. Many people living with HIV are already dealing with stigma, poor mental health, housing issues and financial difficulties. Brigstowe is a service that these people heavily rely on.

It has been suggested that people living with HIV will be able to access generic services but this undermines the specific issues people living with HIV face. It is essential to have a specialised HIV support service meeting the specific needs of people living with HIV. Stigma and misunderstanding are sadly still rife and people living with HIV lack confidence to access other services.

Our city is now a high prevalence area for HIV. Diagnoses are going up as public attitudes are regressing. It is not the time for Bristol to turn it’s back on some of the most marginalised people in our community.

I understand that cuts are required but please ensure that people living with HIV don’t lose this service altogether. I am urging for your support to keep this much needed service going.

Yours sincerely,