

Background/purpose

In the UK, young women living with HIV can fall into a gap between provision for adolescents living with HIV and services for those ageing with HIV. Consequently, they can become isolated and excluded from sources of knowledge and empowerment, with negative consequences for health and wellbeing. We aimed to create a new space for young women living with HIV to connect and develop the skills to advocate for better HIV care for themselves and others.

Approach

We developed Young Women Rising, an innovative weekend workshop targeted at UK women aged 18-27, held in January 2020. The workshop was designed and led by a young woman living with HIV and closely tailored to young women's needs. Topics covered included identity, advocacy, and sexual health. The workshop took a participatory approach, focussing on creative activities to explore challenging areas. It was designed to be inclusive and accessible to participants with different needs and abilities.

Outcomes/Impact

Over 70% of workshop participants said they had not attended similar events before. Participants built new connections over the weekend, describing it as a place "to bond and talk freely", that they "left with new friends". Moreover, 86% of participants reported feeling more empowered, with 57% recording improved self-confidence. After the workshop, many participants have stayed in-touch and expressed interest in leading sessions at future face-to-face events, when possible.

Innovation/Significance

In the effective treatment era, achieving good quality-of-life among people living with HIV in the UK is a policy priority. The unique, tailored programme of Young Women Rising allowed young women living with HIV to build support networks, learn new health information and develop vital skills, all of which can reinforce wellbeing. As a result, Young Women Rising is an important template for engagement with young women living with HIV focusing on support and empowerment.