Blackliners

Blackliners was an early community response to HIV in Black Caribbean, African and Asian people in the UK, based in and mainly operating in London. Founded by Arnold Gordon, a migrant from Sierra Leone (1), from his South London flat in 1989 as a helpline, it was incorporated as a charity in 1991 and formally closed in 2003 (2). Its early activities included raising awareness of HIV/AIDS through health promotion posters and leaflets, delivering African food to people in hospital and working with a housing association to create homes for people with HIV (1, 3). Arnold had been a volunteer for Terrence Higgins Trust but realised that Black people with HIV needed their own organisation, despite substantial early opposition from the Black church community in Lambeth (1) and others who felt it was stigmatising to link AIDS to the Black community. In 1999 it created the campaign “HIV Positive Attitudes” which featured Mel B of the Spice Girls, who raised over £100,000 for the organisation through parties (1,4). It expanded over time to include a range of practical direct services to Black people living with HIV and at its height it had offices in London, Manchester and Bristol (1, 5). After its demise in the early 2000s its services were folded into those of the Terrence Higgins Trust which by then had taken on a specialist support team of African origin staff (1).

(1) Love, Loss & Life: Real Stories from the AIDS Pandemic, Coleman, 2021 ISBN-10 095665617X
(2) https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/1015000/governing-document
(3) https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ktr274r3
(4) https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-hiv-awarenessmel-g3-106248784.html?imageid=1FC462D6-F6F7-4AA5-BFC3-90DDAF5B4D84&pn=1&searchId=6f09df766ba1497b4044abd7035a3d19&searchtype=0
(5) https://digitalcollections.lib.rochester.edu/islandora/object/uraids:4703