

# Success of peer mentoring in supporting patients to improve virological control: a collaborative project supported by the Fast Track Cities (FTC) initiative



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**AIM**  
60% of those engaging with the FTC's Peer Mentor will have achieved an undetectable viral load, within 12 months after referral to the peer mentoring programme.

**BACKGROUND**  
Incomplete adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and difficulty engaging in care is a common cause of HIV related mortality and morbidity.

We designed and implemented a dedicated peer mentor scheme, providing individualised support for people living with HIV (PLWHIV) with a viral load (VL) of >200 copies/ml and frequent non-attendance.

The project was funded by the FTC initiative in partnership with two large HIV centres and a third sector charity.

## DRIVER DIAGRAM

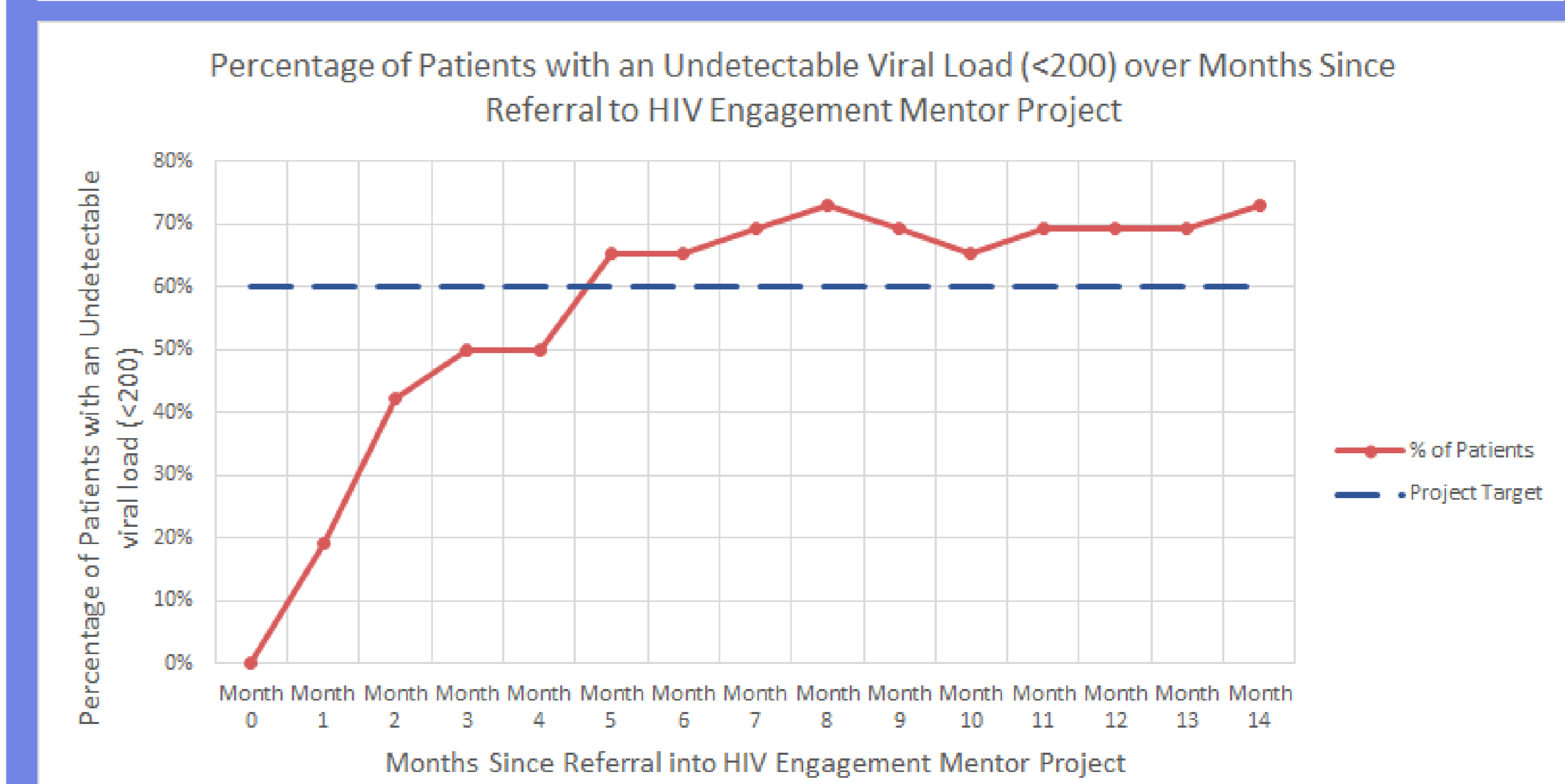
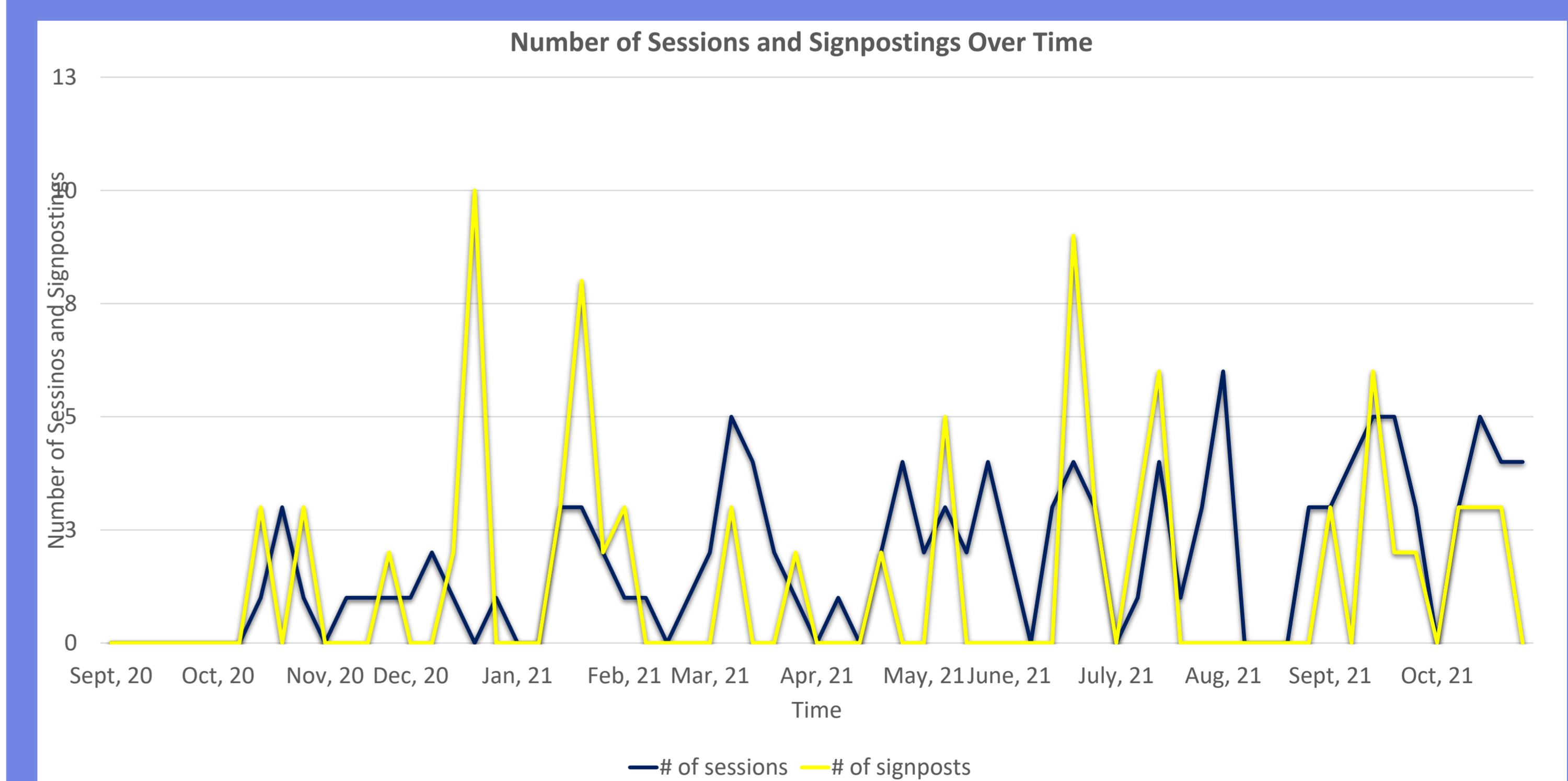
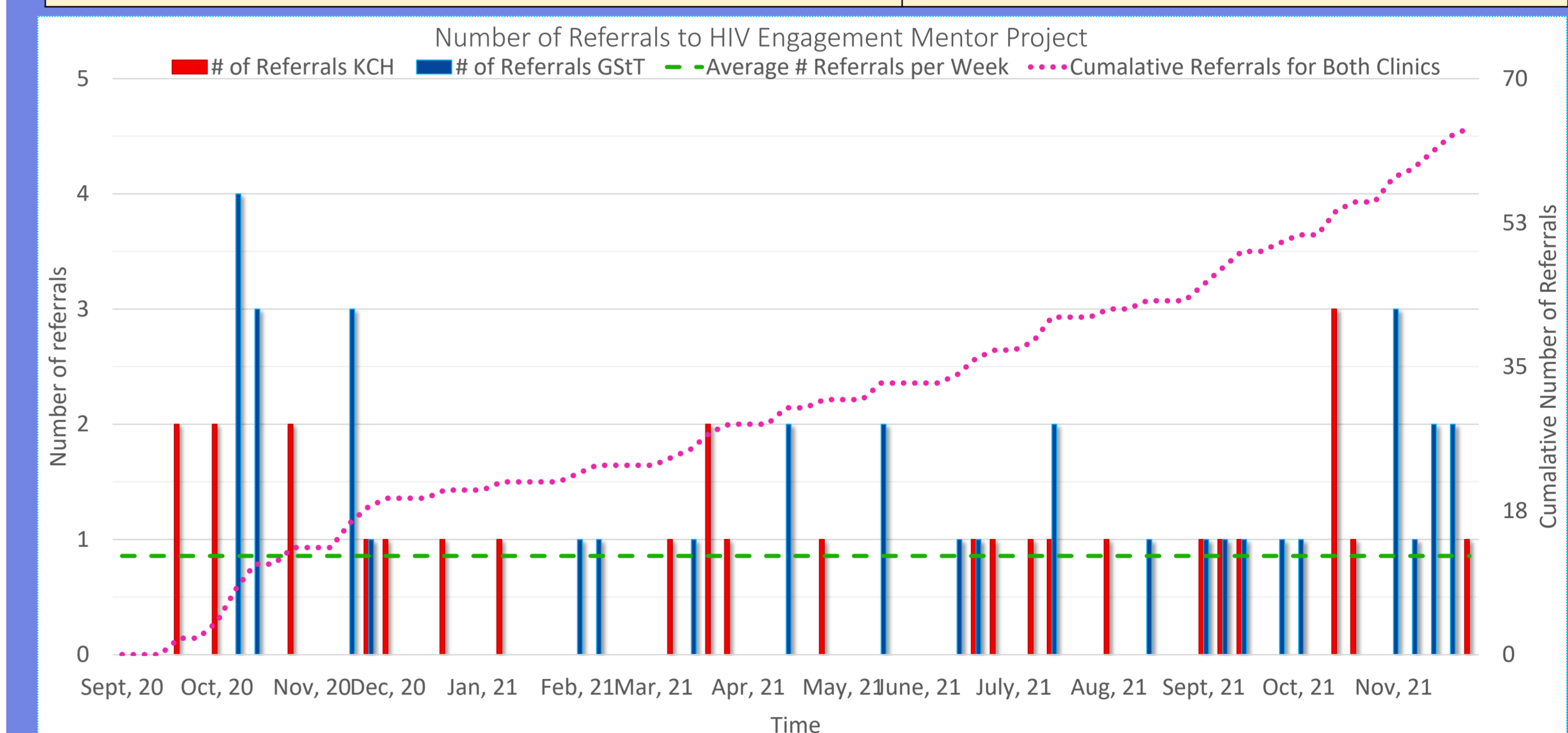


## RESULTS

- By month 14 a total of 50 patients were referred, 26/50 (52%) patients engaged with mentoring. Characteristics in table 1. The cohort had high rates of drug and alcohol dependence.
- 73% (19/26) achieved an undetectable VL. 60% had achieved virological suppression within 5 months of referral.

Table 1 Patients engaging with mentoring. N=26

|                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Median age                     | 42                 |
| Male                           | 14 (54%)           |
| Black ethnicity                | 15 (58%)           |
| CD4 count at referral cells/ml | 161 (range 15-706) |



## FEEDBACK

"[the mentor] was introduced to me when I was feeling really low and I dismissed his help thinking that I wasn't worth the bother. The fact that he saw beyond and persisted calling to see how I was doing was a breakthrough for me and I took on his mentorship gladly",

"I feel a 100% confident about staying undetectable. It's taken me years to get to this status after nearly 20 years since the diagnoses"

"I would absolutely recommend mentoring to others. I wish I had known about it long time ago as I battled mental health on my own for years. Many don't know how to ask for help, so to have someone who 'comes without asking' just to say that help is ta hand is quite valuable".

## CONCLUSION

- Collaboration between the third sector and the NHS improved patient outcomes.
- Embedding the peer mentor within the clinical team is a key element, allowing close working and communication.
- This approach has resulted in high rates of viral suppression in patients who struggle with engagement and adherence and so far has exceeded project targets.