

HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

January 2020

Report on impact of peer support published by The Hepatitis C Trust

THE HEPATITIS  TRUST



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING PEOPLE
IN HEPATITIS C CARE AND TREATMENT
THROUGH PEER SUPPORT

[The Hepatitis C Trust](#) has published a report and video on its peer-to-peer support programme, detailing how peers help engage and support patients or those at risk of hepatitis C.

25,000 people have been reached by the Trust's peer programme since it began in 2010. Since 2017, the programme has grown considerably, particularly since NHS England's 'elimination deal' was announced in May last year. The Hepatitis C Trust now has more than 140 peers (52 paid staff and 88 volunteers) who build relationships based on shared experience with those at risk of or infected with hepatitis C.

The report is based on interviews with staff, peer volunteers and patients the Trust has supported and details the benefits of peer support in community and prison settings including: effective awareness-raising and myth-busting, increased testing uptake following awareness workshops, and supporting patients otherwise unlikely to engage to complete treatment.

Additionally, there are benefits for volunteer peers, with many seeing it as an opportunity to 'give back' and around 40% of those who volunteer as peer mentors with the Trust finding full-time paid employment within 12 months, having often had little or no previous work experience. Dr Ben Stone, Clinical Lead of the South Yorkshire ODN, writes in the foreword for the report that efforts to eliminate hepatitis C without peer support "would be futile."

You can access the full report in the [HCV Action](#) resource library [here](#) and watch a short video on the peer programme [here](#).

HCV Action prison roadshow report published



The report for [HCV Action](#)'s roadshow event focusing on testing and treatment in prisons was published at the beginning of December.

The morning of the roadshow featured presentations from a variety of experts and health professionals, from commissioners to nurses, peers to researchers, chaired by Rachel Halford, Chief Executive of [The Hepatitis C Trust](#). Speakers presented from a range of perspectives about the barriers and solutions to providing hepatitis C care in prisons, and there were a number of good practice case studies presented.

Further presentations took place after lunch, followed by a panel discussion offering attendees the opportunity to ask questions. The audience then split into two groups to attend workshops on substance misuse teams in prisons and improving linkage to care in the community

The full report is available [here](#) and slides from speakers at the event [here](#).

London Joint Working Group holds annual conference

LJWG 2020 Annual Conference

Your Role in Eliminating Hepatitis C in London

LONDON JOINT WORKING GROUP

ON SUBSTANCE USE
+ HEPATITIS C



[London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C](#) held its annual conference on 27th January. This year's conference heard from experts across London about barriers and solutions to being the first global city to microeliminate hepatitis C.

Speakers included Vicky Hobart, Head of Health at the [Greater London Authority](#), and Prof Kevin Fenton, Co-Chair of the [Fast-Track Cities](#) initiative as well as researchers and practitioners from across London with reports on efforts to eliminate hepatitis C covering areas including harm reduction and prevention, primary care and engaging homeless patients.

Live updates from the conference can be accessed via Twitter [here](#). Slides from the day's presentations will be available shortly.

New HCV Action good practice case study: How One Recovery Bucks achieved a 90% treatment completion rate



[HCV Action](#) this month published a new good practice case study, looking at how the One Recovery Bucks substance misuse service increased the proportion of service users testing positive for hepatitis C antibodies who went on to complete treatment from 18% to 90%.

Previously the service only offered antibody testing, followed by referral to a GP for a test to check whether a patient was PCR positive. However, with the support of the local NHS Trust alongside other measures to support treatment, such as text reminders for appointments and incorporating hepatitis C treatment into care plans, the service was able to implement a new pathway which reduced the number of tests patients had to complete and the number of appointments they were required to attend.

The case study can be accessed [here](#), and the BBV pathway the service uses [here](#).

HCV Action holds #HCVChat on prisons

HCVAction

Last month, [HCV Action](#) held a Twitter chat on hepatitis C in prisons under the banner of #HCVChat.

Kate Jack, Research Associate, PhD candidate and Advanced Virology Nurse Specialist, took over the [HCV Action](#) Twitter account to answer questions and lead a discussion on the issues facing staff working in hepatitis C care in prisons. One particular focus of the discussion was how to stay engaged with patients released part-way through treatment.

You can see what was said in the discussion [here](#).

News and reports

* This month, the [Gastrointestinal Nursing](#) journal published an article by [HCV Action's](#) Iona Casley on how peer support workers can help diagnose and treat hepatitis C patients who face barriers to accessing care. The article is available to subscribers [here](#).

* The UK is on course to eliminate hepatitis C before 2030, meeting the WHO target, according to slides presented by Dr Tarek Asselah at the Paris Hepatology Conference. However, the United States and many European

nations are not expected to achieve elimination until after 2050, including Belgium, Denmark, Poland and the Baltic states. See the chart [here](#).

* [Public Health England](#) last month published the latest update on infections among people who inject drugs, as part of the Shooting Up series. The report says that there is early evidence of a reduction in chronic hepatitis C prevalence among injecting drug users, but that rates of new infection are unchanged, including amongst individuals who have recently started injecting. Read the report [here](#).

* Sexually transmitted HCV rates are high among men who have sex with men regardless of HIV status according to new research published in the [Journal of Hepatology](#). The study involved HIV negative men receiving pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in Amsterdam. Primary infection occurred in eight of 333 at-risk participants and reinfection occurred in seven of 21 at-risk participants. The authors noted that the incidence of HCV infection and reinfection was comparable between MSM on PrEP who are HIV negative and those who are HIV positive. Read more [here](#).

* *Staying Alive in Scotland: Strategies to Prevent Drug Deaths* was published by the Scottish Government and [Scottish Drugs Forum](#) last month. The report notes that DAA treatments for hepatitis C provide an opportunity to prevent drug-related deaths, but that opportunities to test for hepatitis C are being missed. Read more [here](#).

* A new study in [The Lancet](#) found that screening and treating PrEP users for hepatitis C every 12 or 6 months decreases hepatitis C incidence by 67.3% or 70.2% respectively. The results are interpreted to mean that at low PrEP coverage, increased screening of all MSM is required to achieve the WHO HCV-elimination targets for MSM in the UK, whereas at higher PrEP coverage this is possible through just screening HIV-diagnosed MSM and PrEP users. Read more [here](#).

* Anar Tejani, director of one of the pharmacies involved in [London Joint Working Group](#)'s pilot of hepatitis C testing in community pharmacy, was interviewed about the pilot for a feature in [InPharmacy](#) magazine. She said this was exactly the sort of scheme pharmacies should be supporting. "The beauty of this scheme and the beauty of it being run through community pharmacies is that we have regular contact with these people when they come in for their supplies." Read more [here](#).

* [Medicine Today](#), an Australian peer-reviewed clinical practice journal, has published a toolkit for GPs on hepatitis C. Whilst not written for a UK context, the toolkit includes practical advice around testing and treatment which GPs may find useful. Read more [here](#).

* [The Huffington Post](#) reported that some people are struggling to access sexual health testing kits, which also test for hepatitis C, due to the cap on the number of tests that can be issued per day through the [Sexual Health London](#) website. The article notes that London's per head funding for public health dropped by 15% in that period, from £80.75 in 2015 to £68.61 in 2019 - the biggest regional reduction in England. Read more [here](#).

Share good practice

If you would like your service to be featured as a good practice case study on the HCV Action website, have any news to share with colleagues, or would be interested in being an [HCV Action Ambassador](#), please send an email to hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk.



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