

HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

January 2023

HCV Action publishes good practice case study on ED testing

HCV Action: Sharing good practice hub
Case study: Bristol ED testing

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Targeted HCV testing in Bristol Emergency Department

An example of peer-led engagement of clients with complex needs

[HCV Action](#) has published a new [good practice case study](#) on peer-led targeted testing for hepatitis C in emergency departments (EDs). The case study takes an in-depth look at the work of [The Hepatitis C Trust](#)'s Alex Caulder, who works in the emergency department of [Bristol Royal Infirmary](#) to engage patients at high risk for hepatitis C infection, deliver testing and support people through treatment. It is the only peer-led service based in a hospital.

Alex's role is embedded tightly with the rest of the ED support teams, effectively working in collaboration with the Homeless Support, High Impact Users and Drug and Alcohol teams to identify and engage high-risk patients. Target groups for screening are people who currently or have formerly injected drugs, those experiencing homelessness, ED High Impact Users and those already known to be hepatitis C positive. Many of these communities present with multiple needs and experience significant health inequalities.

The patients often stay in the ED for a short period of time and are not otherwise engaging with health and social care services, offering a unique and short window of opportunity to provide an intervention around hepatitis C and signpost and refer on to other health and social care services. Since February 2022, Alex has engaged with 132 people and tested 110, 29 of whom were HCV positive, with 23 having started on treatment.

Read the full good practice case study [here](#).

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Eliminating hepatitis (B and C) as a public health threat: actions for 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024 (WHC/2023/001)

Letter to health boards on the actions they need to take to make progress on hepatitis B and C elimination.

Part of: [Health circulars and NHS management](#)

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The Welsh Government has published a new [health circular](#) by Chief Medical Officer for Wales Sir Frank Atherton setting out steps to be taken to get Wales back on track for hepatitis C elimination. The circular primarily addresses senior figures in health boards and [Public Health Wales](#), and sets out the measures needed to accelerate elimination progress ahead of Wales' 2030 elimination target.

In order to galvanise the new push towards elimination, the Welsh Government has established a Hepatitis B and C Elimination Programme Oversight Group. The group reports to the Chief Medical Officer and the Minister for Health and Social Services, while its membership includes representatives from the Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, clinical services in NHS Wales, and the third sector.

The circular outlines 13 actions for progressing the elimination agenda. The first and primary action is the mandated development of Joint Recovery Plans by health boards before 31st March 2023, in conjunction with the Area Planning Boards and Public Health Wales, that outline how the board will get back on track towards elimination. Other actions include: preventing infection through increased needle and syringe programmes; increasing case finding through better outreach with defined demographics; expanding the settings where BBV testing is available; and providing funding for meeting the elimination targets.

The health circular can be read in full [here](#), and a summary by [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) is available [here](#).

Infected blood scandal described as 'preventable catastrophe' at inquiry

'Governments have over the years delayed, denied and have degraded those who are infected and affected by how they have subsequently been treated.'

Lucas Cumiskey • 6 days ago



The most recent round of hearings as part of the [Infected Blood Inquiry](#) has led to media attention from the Independent and other outlets, particularly due to comments made by Steven Snowden KC. Snowden [described the scandal](#) as a “preventable catastrophe” and highlighted the “failure on the part of the government and clinicians to recognise the long-standing danger of Non-A, Non-B Hepatitis, Hepatitis C as it came to be known, and their failure to respond appropriately”.

This month, the Inquiry heard the closing submissions from the barristers representing victims and their families, as well as the [Department of Health and Social Care](#). The Evening Standard has [reported](#) that Eleanor Grey KC, the solicitor representing the [Department of Health and Social Care](#), said that the interim compensation payments amounting to £400m show that the Government accepts its ‘moral responsibility’ to help the victims of the infected blood scandal.

Some of those affected by the scandal have called for the consideration of prosecutions of those responsible, as [reported](#) in The Guardian.

News and reports

* HCV Action has joined LinkedIn! Follow our [new LinkedIn page](#) for the latest information about our work and to connect with other members of the hepatitis C professional community.

* HCV Action has [published a summary report](#) of December's webinar which provided an overview of the [NHS England](#) hepatitis C 'elimination deal' and the activity that has taken place as part of it. The summary report provides an overview of the key points from each of the webinar speakers. A full recording of the webinar is also available [here](#).

* A new paper in [BMC Public Health](#) examining micro-elimination of hepatitis C in the Tayside region of Scotland concluded that decentralised care pathways, particularly in harm reduction and drug service settings, were key to achieving elimination in the area, but that primary and secondary care also remain central to elimination efforts. Read the paper [here](#).

* Wales has announced plans to become the first UK nation to introduce mandatory licensing for tattoo artists, body piercers and cosmetic clinics, with the aim of reducing infections such as hepatitis C. The Welsh Government has launched a 12-week consultation on the plans. Read more [here](#).

* A systematic review of research studies published in [The Lancet Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#) concluded that, compared with laboratory-based testing, the use of point-of-care RNA viral load testing is associated with reduced time from antibody test to treatment initiation and increased treatment uptake. The effect of POC viral load testing is greatest when positioned within a simplified care model in which testing and treatment are provided at the same site, and, where possible, on the same day. Read the paper [here](#).

* [Swansea University](#) has announced plans to introduce a new HCV screening initiative in the local homeless population of the city. A team from the Welsh homelessness charity [Wallich](#) and [Swansea Bay University Health Board](#) staff will carry out routine antibody screening amongst the homeless and precariously housed people they work with. They will also use the programme to collect data on incidence levels in the area.

* A team from the [University of Amsterdam](#) has [developed a high-resolution map](#) of the critical proteins that stud the surface of the hepatitis C virus and enable it to enter host cells. The mapping details key sites of vulnerability on the virus. The researchers have been able to generate a structural map with new clarity, which could be instrumental in paving the way for a vaccine design.

* The [Hep Mag](#) has [published analysis](#) by the [Polaris Observatory](#) on global elimination progress by nations, and has found that only 11 countries are on track to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030. The UK is one of the eleven who are on track, the others are: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, the country of Georgia, Japan, Norway and Spain. The nations that are not on track are mostly concentrated in South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South East Asia.

* The [Pharmaceutical Journal](#) has [reported](#) findings that only 21 community pharmacies have provided hepatitis C testing since September 2020, despite 650 pharmacies registering to deliver the service. The Journal found that the participating community pharmacies had carried out a total of 565 hepatitis C antibody tests by September 2022.

* Research published in [The Lancet eClinicalMedicine](#) suggests broad direct-acting antiviral access may reduce hepatitis C incidence among people living with HIV through a “treatment as prevention” effect. The full paper can be accessed [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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