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HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

July 2019



HCV Action hosts National ODN Stakeholder Event following elimination deal

[HCV Action](#) and the [British Viral Hepatitis Group](#) held a National Hepatitis C ODN Stakeholder Event on Thursday 4th July. With over 110 attendees, the event brought together ODN representatives from across the country and featured presentations on a range of topics of relevance to ODNs, focusing particularly on the opportunities and challenges associated with the recently-announced [NHS England](#) hepatitis C elimination deal.

As well as presentations on the elimination deal from Prof Graham Foster, National Clinical Lead for ODNs at [NHS England](#), Dr Douglas Macdonald, ODN Clinical Lead for North Central London, and the three pharmaceutical companies involved in the deal, the event featured talks on the patient perspective, the peer support model, and tackling hepatitis C in drug services, prisons and community pharmacies.

Breakout sessions gave attendees the chance to identify challenges and

develop solutions across four topic areas: community outreach; reaching ethnic minority groups; treating in prisons; and engaging with local commissioners and other partners.

You can read the summary report of the event [here](#). You can access the presentations of speakers [here](#).



Mayor of London visits hepatitis C testing van for World Hepatitis Day

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan visited [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) and [King's College Hospital's](#) hepatitis C testing van ahead of World Hepatitis Day, in an event organised with the [London Joint Working Group on Hepatitis C and Substance Use](#) at the [Manna Centre](#), a homeless day centre based in London Bridge.

[Public Health England](#) estimate there are 14,200 people living with hepatitis C in London and the testing van is commissioned by [King's College Hospital](#) to test and treat homeless people who often find services challenging to access.

Khan called for Londoners at risk to get tested and emphasised the importance of equal access to treatment: "I'm urging all Londoners in high-risk groups or those who might be experiencing symptoms of hepatitis C to get tested.

"Every Londoner deserves access to quality healthcare and this testing van offers a way to reach some of our most vulnerable communities. Working in partnership across the capital we want to ensure nobody is left behind and to strive together to eliminate hepatitis C in London."

Read more about the visit [here](#).



Department of Health & Social Care

Department of Health and Social Care announces funding for hepatitis C testing in pharmacies

The [Department of Health and Social Care](#) has announced it will fund the introduction of hepatitis C testing in community pharmacies with needle and syringe programmes in 2019/2020. The announcement follows encouraging results from the [London Joint Working Group on Hepatitis C and Substance Use's](#) (LJWG) pilot project offering saliva and blood tests in community pharmacies in London.

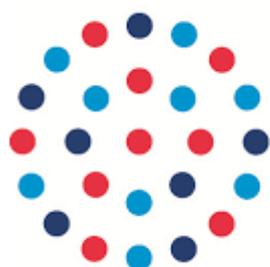
The announcement came as part of the five-year funding settlement for the sector published on 22nd July.

During the LJWG pilot's second phase involving blood testing in eight London pharmacies, a total of 184 patients were tested, with 24% returning positive tests. A similar pilot on the Isle of Wight in 22 pharmacies found that 7% of pharmacy tests led to a HCV diagnosis.

The LJWG is now calling for a law change to allow it to complete the third phase of the pilot which would trial dispensing treatment from community pharmacies.

Read the full Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework for 2019/20 to 2023/24 [here](#).

Read more about the London pilot [here](#) and the Isle of Wight pilot [here](#).



Health
Protection
Scotland

Scottish Government announces 2024 elimination target, as figures reveal fall in diagnoses

The Scottish Government has announced a new target of achieving elimination by 2024, six years earlier than the [World Health Organization](#) target of 2030.

The announcement followed a new [Health Protection Scotland](#) surveillance report on hepatitis C testing, diagnosis and treatment in Scotland, which revealed that diagnosis rates are at their lowest level since 1996, 22% down on 2015 levels. This is despite testing rates remaining broadly consistent with recent years, suggesting more needs to be done to test in alternative locations and among different members of the population.

Treatment numbers in 2018 exceeded their target by 600 although the national target will increase to 2,500 people receiving treatment in 2019/20 and to 3,000 people treated annually from 2020/21 onwards. The report says there needs to be "an increased focus on case-finding to reduce the undiagnosed population."

Read about the Scottish Government target announcement [here](#). Read more about the Health Protection Scotland report [here](#) and the full report [here](#).

News & Reports

* [HCV Action](#) will shortly be announcing full details of its next hepatitis C good practice roadshow event, taking place in late September with the West London ODN. Details of how to register for the event will be announced on the [HCV Action Twitter](#) page shortly.

* A number of political leaders provided statements of support for World Hepatitis Day, coordinated by [The Hepatitis C Trust](#). Politicians who provided statements included First Minister of Scotland Nicola Sturgeon and First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford. Read the full statements [here](#) and [The Scotsman](#)'s coverage of Nicola Sturgeon's comments [here](#).

* To mark World Hepatitis Day, Prof Graham Foster, National Lead for ODNs at [NHS England](#), and Rachel Halford, Chief Executive of [The Hepatitis C Trust](#), co-wrote a blog on the journey towards hepatitis C elimination. Read it [here](#). Rachel also had a blog published by the [Local Government Information Unit](#) on the challenge local authority funding cuts present to achieving hepatitis C elimination, which can be read [here](#). Prof Steve Ryder, Chair of the [Hepatitis C Coalition](#) and [HCV Action](#), also reflected on progress towards elimination, and the action still needed, in an article for [Hospital Times](#). Read the article [here](#).

- * [Public Health England](#) has published an evidence review of case-finding and linkage to care. The review summarises evidence for all major settings of HCV treatment and includes an economic analysis. Read the review [here](#).

- * The [EMCDDA](#) (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction) has published a report on 11 best practice case studies from across Europe for increasing testing and treatment rates within drug treatment services. Read the report [here](#).

- * Drug treatment service provider [Turning Point UK](#) launched its hepatitis C strategy in July. The strategy includes measures around prevention like providing low dead-space needles through needle exchanges and working to represent drug treatment services within ODNs. You can read the strategy [here](#).

- * The [NHS SMPA](#) (Substance Misuse Providers Alliance) has been awarded funding alongside Gilead to eliminate hepatitis C within the network by 2023. The project aims to support NHS service provider engagement with ODNs in order to treat and cure over 6,000 additional patients and create effective elimination in member services. This includes using streamlined routes into treatment alongside award-winning peer engagement projects which, in some localities, have led to the microelimination of hepatitis C in service caseloads. Read more [here](#).

- * The [Local Government Association](#) has warned of an increase in people accessing needle and syringe exchanges who are injecting image and performance enhancing drugs (IPEDs). In Wigan, it is estimated that between 40-60 per cent of needle exchange users request equipment for image and performance enhancing substances. A national survey of people who use IPEDs found that almost one in five (18 per cent) of the participants who had injected reported reusing their own injecting equipment, and about one in seven (15 per cent) had shared a multi-dose vial. Read more [here](#).

- * A new study published in the [Harm Reduction Journal](#) has found that peer-supported screening is effective in finding people in prison with hepatitis C and then linking them to treatment. The findings also support the public health focus on prisons as a key locations to increase hepatitis C diagnosis and treatment. The study was based in Mountjoy Prison in Ireland which holds over 500 male inmates. Read more [here](#).

- * Researchers in Australia have found that providing DAAs (direct-acting antivirals) in primary care settings increases treatment uptake and cure rates among people who injected drugs. The percentage of people who had achieved

SVR (sustained virological response) who were treated in primary care was significantly higher than among those treated in hospitals (49% vs. 30% respectively). Read more [here](#).

* A study published in the [Harm Reduction Journal](#) has found that a project in Holland has been successful in better linking people who inject drugs with hepatitis C care by introducing local HCV healthcare screening and treatment pathways in addiction care units. These positive results were despite most of the study taking place before DAAs were introduced. Nearly 40% of those who were referred started treatment. Read more [here](#).

* An article in [Infectious Disease Advisor](#) has argued that developing a HCV vaccine is "essential" in order to reduce the number of new hepatitis C infections. The article notes that even vaccines that are only 30% effective can be very effective at reducing disease transmission. Read more [here](#).

* A new study in Scotland funded by the [National Institute for Health Research](#) will research whether treating people who inject drugs will lead to a reduction in the number with the virus and determine whether drug users should be targeted for early treatment in the community. During the study, researchers will treat up to 500 people who inject drugs in the [NHS Tayside](#) area over a period of two years. Read more [here](#).

Share your 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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