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# HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

September 2019

## HCV Action hosts West London hepatitis C good practice roadshow



[HCV Action](#) held the latest in its long-running series of hepatitis C good practice roadshows on Friday 27th September. The event, held in partnership with [Public Health England](#) (PHE), focused on the West London ODN, and was attended by around 60 hepatitis C professionals.

Presentations at the event included two from PHE, with Emma Burke providing an overview of progress in tackling hepatitis C in the UK and Hikaru Bolt covering the epidemiology of hepatitis C in London. Dr Christopher Tibbs outlined [NHS England](#)'s plans for the next three years to progress towards hepatitis C elimination and Professor Ashley Brown, West London ODN Clinical

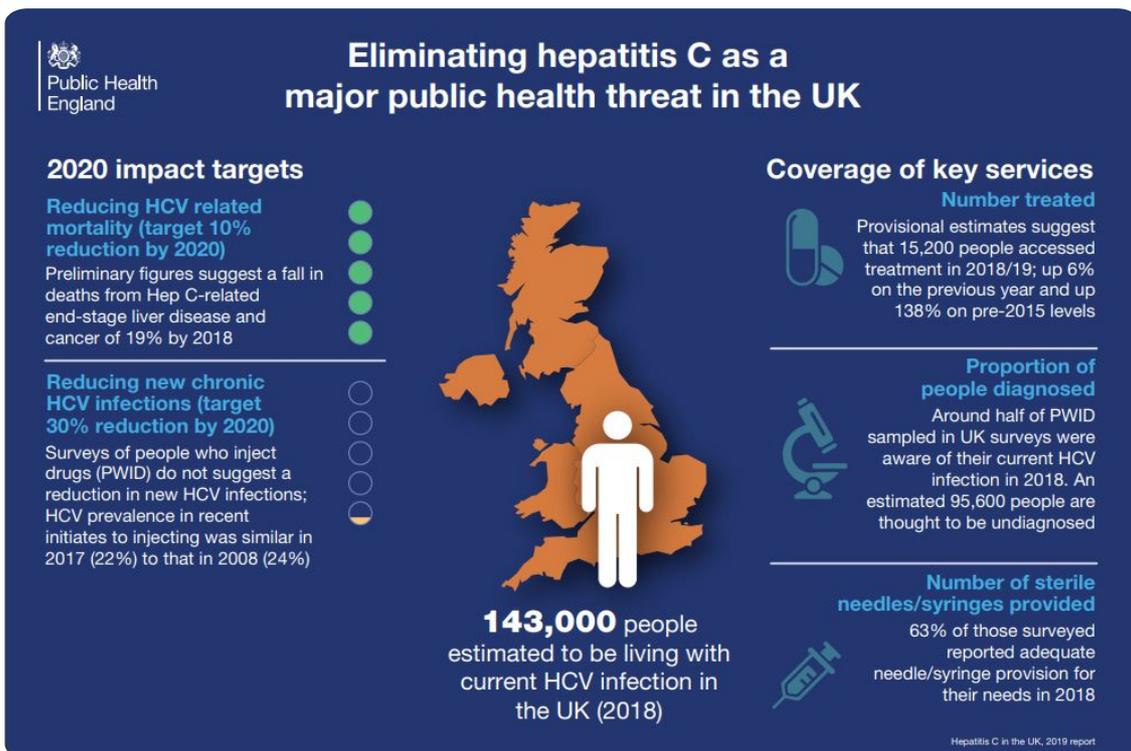
Lead, spoke about the West London ODN's achievements to date, and plans to achieve elimination.

The event also featured good practice case studies on community outreach work from Clinical Nurse Specialist Lorna Harrison and the value of peer support from [The Hepatitis C Trust](#)'s Stuart Smith, and a 'patient perspective' talk from Billie Hands. Afternoon workshops were held on identifying solutions to challenges faced by the ODN, awareness & testing in drug services and hepatitis C in prisons.

A summary report and presentation slides from the event will be available on the [HCV Action](#) website shortly. Photographs and updates from the event can also be found on the [HCV Action Twitter page](#) and via the hashtag [#hepCwestlondon](#).

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## Up to 95,600 people in the UK living with undiagnosed hepatitis C infection, according to new PHE estimates



[Public Health England](#) published this year's Hepatitis C in the UK report in September. The report contains a new, lower estimate for the number of people living with hepatitis C in the UK, but finds that the proportion of those living with an undiagnosed infection is now higher, with around 70% of people with hepatitis C undiagnosed.

Key statistics from the report include:

- 143,000 people are estimated to be living with hepatitis C in the UK, down 20% on 2015.
- 95,600 people with hepatitis C remain undiagnosed.
- There has been a 19% fall in deaths from hepatitis C-related end-stage liver disease and cancer between 2015 and 2019.
- 15,200 people accessed treatment in 2018/19; up 6% on the previous year and 138% on pre-2015 levels
- However, there has been no progress in reducing new infections, with figures suggesting higher incidence of infection in 2018 than in 2011.

The report concludes that "much good work has been done, but there remains lots to do if we are to eliminate hepatitis C as a major public health threat by 2030".

The full report can be accessed in the [HCV Action](#) resource library [here](#).

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## NHS England ends ban on hepatitis C re-treatment



# England

[NHS England](#) this month announced an end to the ban on re-treating people who have already been treated for hepatitis C if they go on to get reinfected.

Under the new change, people who are reinfected with hepatitis C will be entitled to the same drugs and standard of treatment as people presenting for the first time. Those needing medication for reinfection will be offered additional advice and guidance regarding high-risk activities and harm-reduction strategies, such as going to a needle and syringe exchange service offered at many drug services and community pharmacies, in order to stay hepatitis C-free.

The current reinfection rate for hepatitis C is around 3%, but until now [NHS England](#) had prevented re-treatment on cost grounds. The move has been welcomed by [The Hepatitis C Trust](#)'s Chief Executive Rachel Halford, who said: "NHS England's decision to end the re-treatment ban is crucial to achieving elimination by 2030; unless we can help people who are most likely to pass on the virus, we cannot expect to reach this target. This must also be coupled with an emphasis on harm reduction, such as needle exchange services, to prevent transmissions in the first place."

A news story can be accessed on [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) website [here](#).

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## LJWG publishes report on phase 2 of pharmacy testing project



### HCV testing in NSP (Needle and Syringe Provision) Community Pharmacies Pilot (Phase 2)

#### Report and Findings

September 2019

#### Authors

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This project was funded by MSD and Cephied in the UK under a Joint Working Agreement with the London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C.

The [London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C](#) this month published a report on phase 2 of the group's hepatitis C pharmacy testing project. The pilot found that 38% of needle and syringe programme clients

tested at participating pharmacies had chronic hepatitis C infection, of whom 21% went on to complete treatment. A total of 78% of those tested expressed a preference for receiving treatment through the pharmacy if such an option were possible. Legal barriers currently prevent the delivery of treatment for hepatitis C in community pharmacies in England.

Dr Suman Verma, Consultant Hepatologist at [Chelsea and Westminster Hospital](#) and Co-Chair of the LJWG, said: "This pilot clearly demonstrates that offering hepatitis C testing in community pharmacies can reach a vulnerable group of people who are at high-risk of infection. With 38% testing positive for hepatitis C chronic infection, the need for testing and treatment in this population is clear."

A news story on the project's findings can be accessed [here](#), and the full report [here](#).

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## News and reports

\* [HCV Action](#) this month published a new good practice case study on treatment support for people experiencing homelessness with hepatitis C. The case study looks at a collaborative project between [Harbour Housing](#), a Cornwall-based charity, the drug service [Addaction](#) and [NHS England](#). The project introduced a dedicated bed and support for homeless individuals with hepatitis C, and has supported seven individuals who would otherwise have been unlikely to access treatment to achieve cure. The case study can be read [here](#). The study has also been covered by [Cornwall Live](#), featuring video interviews with Helen Hampton, Clinical Lead Nurse at [Addaction](#) (and [HCV Action](#) Steering Group member) and Mary McKenna, Hepatology Nurse Specialist at [Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust](#). You can view this [here](#). If you would like your service to be featured as a good practice case study please send an email to [hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk](mailto:hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk).

\* [Public Health England](#) and [RCGP](#) launched an updated version of the free Hepatitis C: Enhancing Prevention, Testing and Care course in September. The course aims to support the learning needs of non-medical and non-clinical workers in drug and alcohol services to better understand the issues around hepatitis C for injecting drug users. The course takes around two hours to complete and participants can print a certificate at the end of the course to contribute to their portfolios. The course can be accessed [here](#).

\* A new study led by the [NIHR Health Protection Research Unit \(HPRU\) in Evaluation of Interventions](#), at the [University of Bristol](#), the [NIHR HPRU in](#)

[Blood Borne and Sexually Transmitted Infections](#) at [University College London](#), and the [London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine](#) has found that screening for hepatitis C as part of the NHS adult Health Check Programme could be cost effective, with screening most likely to be cost-effective for people born in the 1970s. Professor [Peter Vickerman](#), from the [NIHR Health Protection Research Unit in Evaluation of Interventions at the University of Bristol](#), who supervised the study, said: "The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) highlighted the possibility of adding hepatitis C screening to an existing health service in their hepatitis B and C testing guidelines but stopped short of making a recommendation due to lack of information on cost-effectiveness. Our study goes some way towards filling that information gap." Read more about the study [here](#).

\* A study based in the Isle of Wight has found that testing individuals with any risk factor for hepatitis C is more cost effective than restricting screening to people with a history of injecting drugs, with the cost of targeted testing for hepatitis C in community pharmacies found to fall below "willingness to pay" thresholds used by the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence](#) (NICE). The full study can be accessed [here](#), with a summary [here](#).

\* [HMP Swansea](#) this month announced that it has become the first remand prison in the UK to microeliminate hepatitis C. A rapid testing and treatment system has enabled men in the prison to successfully start treatment for their hepatitis C infection within a day or so of entering the prison system. More detail about the project can be found in a news story from [Public Health Wales](#) [here](#).

\* At the beginning of September, surgeons at [University Hospital of Wales](#) in Cardiff announced they had successfully transplanted kidneys from donors infected with hepatitis C, with the recipient then enrolled into treatment for hepatitis C. The procedure is thought to be a UK first and doctors say the success of the scheme means many more organs will soon be available for those on waiting lists. Lorraine Carpenter, one of the two recipients said: "Since the operation, my treatment to cure my hepatitis C has been good and I expect to be totally cleared of it really soon. Today, I'm feeling tremendous and very humbled to be the one of the first recipients of this type of kidney and am constantly in awe of how many more lives can be saved." Read more about the story [here](#).

\* [Public Health England](#)'s newly-published Infectious Diseases Strategy 2020-25 identifies one of its 10 key priorities as eliminating hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis and HIV, and halting the rise in sexually transmitted infections. PHE states that it will support this goal by working on the detection,

surveillance and control of HIV, hepatitis B and C, and TB and will focus on actions that reverse the trend in transmission of STIs and eradicate HIV transmission. The strategy can be accessed in the [HCV Action](#) resource library [here](#).

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## 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](mailto:hcvaction@hepctrust.org.uk).

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*HCV Action is co-funded by AbbVie, Gilead, and MSD.  
The Hepatitis C Trust provides secretariat support to HCV Action.*

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