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# HCVAction

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Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

August 2021

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**Scottish Government publishes recovery plan for sexual health and blood-borne virus services**

## **Reset and Rebuild: A Recovery Plan for Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Services**

August 2021



A [report](#) published this month by the Scottish Government explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses (SHBBV) services, and plans for recovering ground lost during the pandemic. Over the last decade, SHBBV services have been improving significantly, driven by clinicians, third sectors providers, academics, and service users themselves. The pandemic has presented critical challenges to these services, and this report explores the measures that will be needed to regain the progress made by SHBBV services in Scotland.

The report finds that even at the height of the pandemic many efforts were made to address and overcome challenges to services through solutions such as digital care. However, there were still significant reductions in services, including testing and prevention interventions. The impact was felt most strongly by those already at risk, people already facing additional barriers to

accessing services, young people, and people experiencing homelessness or who have other complex needs.

The Recovery Plan, coproduced with the [NHS](#) and third sector partners, builds off the recently published [EPIToPE study findings](#) and attempts to take stock of the impacts of the pandemic on SHBBV services and the people that use them. While the plan does not set out a detailed roadmap of actions needed to return to full service, it includes various commitments by the Scottish Government such as: additional funding to support recovery actions, particularly those focussed on testing, HIV and hepatitis C elimination; re-establishing hepatitis C treatment, including adapting outreach and treatment methods; and the development of practical proposals for a national approach in how PWID are found, treated and diagnosed for hepatitis C.

The Recovery Plan for Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus Services was published under the [resource library](#) of the HCV Action website, and can be found [here](#). A short summary of findings has been published on The Hepatitis C website [here](#).

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## Changes to the Infected Blood Payment Scheme in Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland Health Minister Robin Swann has [announced](#) new payments to beneficiaries of the Northern Ireland Infected Blood Payment Scheme.

Previously, people impacted by infected blood in Northern Ireland received considerably less financial support than those in other nations of the UK. But, in this most recent announcement, the minister confirmed that all eligible beneficiaries on the Northern Ireland Scheme have now received backdated arrears. In addition, bereaved beneficiaries who were themselves infected will receive annual payments for being both infected and bereaved.

[This article](#), published on [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) website, gives a comprehensive overview of the new payment scheme and its details.

*If you are affected by contaminated blood or require further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to call [The Hepatitis C Trust's](#) confidential helpline on 020 7089 6221 or by e-mail. Everyone on the helpline has had hepatitis C themselves and can provide a wide range of information on all aspects of living with or being affected by hepatitis C. The helpline can also provide guidance on making claims to the various infected blood support schemes people are eligible for.*

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## Lifesaving hepatitis C treatment for children on the NHS



Children in England are set to be the first in the world to be offered direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment for hepatitis C, as part of NHS plans to eradicate the disease entirely. More than 100 children have already been identified and offered a course of five antiviral tablets and two follow-up blood tests.

This step is the latest action in the NHS England elimination agenda, which seeks to eliminate hepatitis C some years ahead of the [World Health Organization](#) 2030 target.

The new service allows children and young people living anywhere in England to have virtual access to care by a team of world-leading clinicians, led by Prof. Deirdre Kelly at Birmingham Children's Hospital, while receiving treatment at their local centre close to their homes.

Rachel Halford, chief executive of [The Hepatitis C Trust](#), said:

“Children and young people now have access to Direct-Acting Antiviral

treatments for hepatitis C. These treatments are effective, with few side-effects, and are taken as pills.

“This is a massive improvement on old treatments which had major side-effects and could often fail to clear the virus. It is fantastic that this network will mean children can access these treatments easily, close to their home, with their care discussed and overseen by the leading experts in the country.”

Read more on this on the [NHS England](#) website [here](#).

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## News and reports

\* A team of experts, led by [Glasgow Caledonian University](#) (GCU) and the [University of Bristol](#), in collaboration with [NHS Tayside](#) and the [Scottish Drugs Forum](#) (SDF), have just published a ‘game-changing’ blueprint on how best to get hepatitis C treatment to those who need it most after a successful three-year trial in NHS Tayside. Key recommendations include nurse-led community services for testing/treatment, recruiting peer workers, and creating close ties between existing community services for PWID. Read a full breakdown of the blueprint and recommendations [here](#).

\* [HCV Action](#) published the full [findings](#) of its survey to professionals working in hepatitis C care, including perspectives on the opportunities and obstacles services face in the coming months. The survey indicates a mixed picture of how testing, treatment and other care for people with hepatitis C has changed through the pandemic. Read it [here](#).

\* Last week on World Hepatitis Day, Practice Plus Group offered every prisoner in HMP Wormwood Scrubs testing for hepatitis C (HCV). 87.3% of the prison population were tested as part of the three-day High Intensity Test and Treat (HITT) intervention. The combined efforts from [Practice Plus Group](#), [The Hepatitis C Trust](#) and [Gilead Sciences](#) will offer ongoing support and treatment to help cure the virus and prevent future transmission. Read more on Practice Plus Group's website [here](#).

\* The [Health Information and Quality Authority](#) (Hiqa) has recommended that people born between 1965 and 1985 in Ireland should be offered once-off testing for the Hepatitis C virus. It is recommended that testing this group could be cost-effective in the long run, and help Ireland achieve its goal to eliminate HCV. More information on this recommendation and its details can be found [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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