

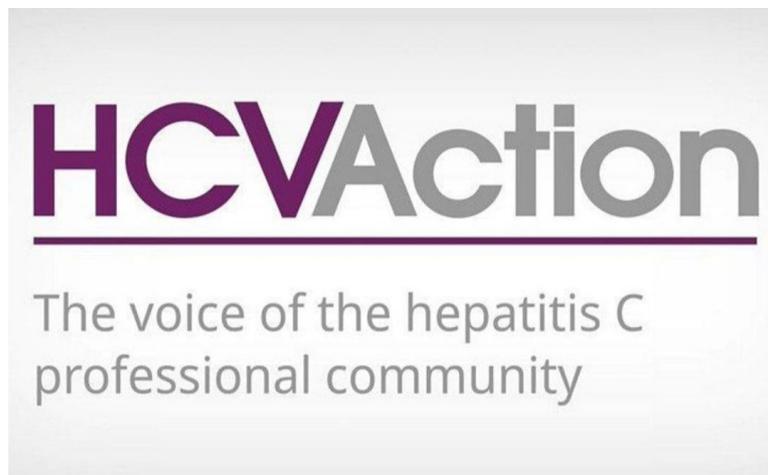
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HCVAction

Bringing you the latest hepatitis C news and events

March 2021

HCV Action holds webinar on the recovery of hepatitis C services in England



On Friday 26th March, HCV Action hosted a [webinar](#) focused on how hepatitis C services in England have been disrupted during the latest wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and their plans to expand service provision in the coming months.

Attendees heard from representatives from NHS England, Humankind and The Hepatitis C Trust before a panel discussion and audience Q&A. Speakers discussed the disruption to hepatitis C testing during the first wave of Covid-19, though pointed out that in recent months services have innovated and testing rates are much better than before. There was an acknowledgement at the national level that health workers had been put under immense pressure due to Covid-19 and should not be over-burdened by targets.

Measures to target particular groups were also discussed, including testing in emergency departments, using vans to test homeless populations and utilising the power of lived experience to increase uptake in prisons.

You can watch the whole event on [YouTube](#) and keep on the look out for our summary report of the session which will be published on [our website](#) shortly.

New Office for Health Protection announced as part of overhaul of Public Health England



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Policy paper

Transforming the public health system: reforming the public health system for the challenges of our times

Published 29 March 2021

This week the [Department of Health and Social Care](#) published its [plans](#) for reforming the public health system. This includes the creation of an Office for Health Promotion which will cover health improvement and sit alongside the previously announced UK Health Security Agency. The Office's remit will be to systematically tackle the top preventable risk factors causing death and ill health in the UK.

Public Health England previously held responsibility for surveillance and reporting of hepatitis C and will close once the new systems take shape in the latter half of 2021. While it has not yet been announced exactly where responsibility for hepatitis C will sit in the new system, the Government is [consulting](#) on their proposals and more information is expected this spring.

New study finds that homelessness and unstable housing are associated with increased risk of hepatitis C

ARTICLES | [ONLINE FIRST](#)

Homelessness, unstable housing, and risk of HIV and hepatitis C virus acquisition among people who inject drugs: a systematic review and meta-analysis

A new [study](#) published in the [Lancet Public Health](#) has concluded that there is strong evidence that homelessness and unstable housing are associated with increased risk of hepatitis C acquisition among people who inject drugs.

Following a systematic review and meta analysis, researchers identified that recent homelessness or unstable housing was associated with a 1.65 times greater risk of hepatitis C acquisition, compared with people who inject drugs who are not homeless or are stably housed. Researchers attributed this link to increased injection and high-risk sexual behaviours, which have been shown previously as being associated with homelessness and unstable housing as a result of broader health and social factors.

The study recommends prioritising access to hepatitis C treatment among homeless people who inject drugs, given the unique barriers faced by this group despite the availability of effective testing and treatment interventions.

You can read the study [here](#).

News and reports

* Paymaster General Penny Mordant made an [announcement](#) on behalf of the UK Government about support for those infected and affected by infected blood. The statement addresses parity of financial support, the commitment to considering a compensation framework, and enhancements to the psychological support for the victims of the Infected Blood tragedy. Find out more [here](#).

* The [All Party Parliamentary Group on Liver Health](#) held a meeting at the start of March. The group heard from Jeff Smith MP of the Labour Campaign on Drug Policy Reform, Crispin Blunt MP from the Conservative Drug Policy Reform Group and Graham Parsons from the Turning Point drug service for an enlightening look at drug policy, harm reduction and hepatitis C. The minutes from the meeting are available [here](#).

- * [Public Health England](#) have collected together existing resources on drug-related harms into [one place](#). The resources cover a range of issues including blood-borne infections, wound care and soft tissue infections. It is available [here](#).
- * The [Lancet Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#) published an [article](#) looking at work towards a hepatitis C vaccine, which noted that, "the chronic nature of HCV, often in marginalised communities, and in combination with the stigma associated with the disease, has left it neglected." You can read it in full [here](#).
- * The [London Joint Working Group on Substance Use and Hepatitis C](#) held two online events at the start of this month, featuring talks from all London Hepatitis C ODN Clinical Leads, Public Health England, NHS England and The Hepatitis C Trust, among others, as well as a message of support from Mayor of London Sadiq Khan. Recordings of the presentations are available [here](#) and slides can be found [here](#).
- * [We Are With You](#) has written a [blog](#) on how drug service commissioning processes can be improved, arguing that place-based strategy and collaboration is crucial. This sentiment is mirrored by another [blog](#) written for [Local Government First](#) by CEO of the [Forward Trust](#) Mike Trace.
- * Hepatitis C elimination is possible among men who have sex with men in the UK, according to a recent [study](#). Its authors recommend targeting HIV-diagnosed men who have sex with men and those who use pre-exposure prophylaxis. More [here](#).
- * A [study](#) published in [Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology](#) has found that sexual transmission of hepatitis C is uncommon in HIV-negative men who have sex with men receiving pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). You can read more [here](#).
- * An [article](#) in [Nurse Researcher](#) looks at how research methods can be used to understand more about the uptake of hepatitis C tests in prisons. You can read it [here](#).
- * A [study](#) from Canada has compared rates of treatment uptake and sustained virological response between patients with and without alcohol use. The researchers conclude that outcomes for both are unaffected by alcohol use. You can access the study [here](#).
- * An [article](#) published in the [Journal of Hepatology](#) argued that hepatitis C

detection initiatives should be combined with Covid-19 vaccination efforts. Its authors cite a pilot in Northern Italy which screened over 2,500 subjects for hepatitis C alongside mass Covid-19 testing, with a prevalence rate of 3%. Read the article [here](#).

* A [study](#) based in Scotland found that scale-up of direct-acting antiviral (DAA) treatment among people who inject drugs within community drug services led to a substantial reduction in chronic hepatitis C in the population. In particular, the paper compares the Tayside region, which successfully micro-eliminated hepatitis C recently, with the rest of Scotland. Read it [here](#).

* Tayside's journey towards elimination is explored in this [study](#), published in the [Journal of Viral Hepatitis](#). The focus is on Tayside's novel way of displaying cascades of care data, demonstrating snapshots and cumulative progression over time towards elimination targets. Read more [here](#).

* In a [study](#) published in the [Journal of Hepatology](#), researchers explored the reasons why DAA treatments sometimes failed and how other therapies could be used. More [here](#).

* Non-alcoholic liver disease is emerging as an important risk factor for hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) among people with a sustained viral response following DAA treatment for hepatitis C, according to a [study](#) published in [Metabolism Open](#). Read more [here](#).

* Over a quarter of people in a [study](#) from Australia looking at self-reporting did not accurately report their hepatitis C status, leading to calls for improved health literacy on hepatitis C antibody and RNA test results. More [here](#).

* A [study](#) from Switzerland found that people hospitalised due to mental health problems often have risk factors for acquiring hepatitis C, and therefore screening this group for hepatitis C is cost effective. More [here](#).

* A [study](#) from Taiwan argued that older people (the study's median age was 73 years) could undergo DAA treatment with excellent treatment outcomes, unlike was the case with interferon. More [here](#).

* A [review](#) of good practice for hepatitis C care has been published in [Clinics and Research in Hepatology and Gastroenterology](#). The paper identifies 13 models of good practice and can be read [here](#).

* A [study](#) from Barcelona published in the Journal of Hepatology has found that further research is needed on the potential impact of DAAs on patients with

HCC. This could shed light on the possible benefits of DAA treatments on HCC, as well as how the presence of HCC could impact on the efficacy of DAAs.

Read more [here](#).

* The latest [report](#) of the [Lancet Commission on Liver Health](#) was published this month. This advocates for a 'hub and spoke' model for delivering integrated clinical services for liver disease, similar to the Operational Delivery Network system already established for hepatitis C care. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

* The [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) has issued a [warning](#) that cuts to drug and alcohol services mean young people in need of support are missing out on specialist help, following analysis which shows £26m (37%) in real terms has been cut from youth addiction services in England between 2013/14 and 2019/20. Read more [here](#).

* The Government's [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#) (JCVI) this month [announced](#) it was placing all homeless people and people sleeping rough into priority group 6 for the Covid-19 vaccination, regardless of being registered with a GP or having an NHS number.

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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