



**Change  
Grow  
Live**

# Hepatitis C - Impact report

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Year ending 2021

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Written by **Tracey Kemp**  
National Hepatitis C Strategy Lead  
July 2021

## Our mission and vision


Our mission is to help people change the direction of their lives, grow as individuals, and live life to its full potential.

The vision we're working towards is to develop, deliver and share a whole person approach that changes society.

## Values

Our values work together, as principles that guide the way we act and the choices we make.

**Be open,  
be compassionate,  
be bold.**



This annual report, published in extraordinary times, demonstrates yet again our unwavering commitment to deploying effective, evidence-based strategies that recognise the complex contexts and experiences of those at risk of, or living with, Hepatitis C.

**Dr Prun Bijral**  
Change Grow Live Medical Director



# Introduction

**In March 2020, life as we once knew it changed overnight.**

**Our Hepatitis C testing and treatment pathways were momentarily paused as our NHS partners were redeployed to support the pandemic response, and drug treatment services focused on implementing critical function plans.**

As we navigated the chaos and confusion of those early lockdown days, Change Grow Live focused on developing new strategies to keep people safe and engaged as we continued our fight to eliminate the Hepatitis C virus.

Working closely with our partners and key stakeholders, new ways of working were rapidly developed to improve outcomes for high-risk groups, and whilst Coronavirus has clearly impacted the wider Hepatitis C strategy, we have continued to make progress against our stated goal: the elimination of Hepatitis C virus as a major threat to public health.



# Hepatitis C

## Testing and treatment during a global pandemic

In the months preceding March 2020, testing for Hepatitis C had seen great progress. In January 2020, we tested over 2,400 people, more people in a single month than ever before. In some parts of the country, including Richmond and Halton, we called micro elimination, something we believe was achieved as a result of our use of hyper-local data and an approach that puts the person at the centre of decision making and policy guidelines.

This excellent work stopped abruptly when the country went into lockdown, physical distancing came into effect and the focus shifted to the continued and uninterrupted delivery of other life-saving interventions.

Working alongside the NHS and operational delivery networks (ODNs), new treatment pathways were established to make sure that people still had opportunities to access treatment if they needed it. To support this, we developed a blood borne virus (BBV) toolkit that included advice on onsite opportunistic testing and self-testing – options designed to keep testing for BBVs firmly on the agenda.

The Blood Borne Virus Toolkit was launched across CGL services in August 2020 and shared externally across the UK in late September 2020.

In spite of numerous lockdowns and some severe restrictions throughout 2020/2021, the dedicated Hepatitis C team have worked tirelessly to keep the conversation active both inside and outside Change Grow Live.

And as we look to build on the successes of the past year, we will use our experiences and learning from the pandemic to help shape how we move forward in the fight to eliminate Hepatitis C.



Staff in Northampton going above and beyond the call of duty



# Impact

## Hepatitis C testing – Overall

**March 2020:** Testing and treatment pathways for Hepatitis C paused to support Covid 19 response.

### 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2021:

Testing paused or restricted. Despite only being able to test for 7 months out of a 12-month period, a total number of **10,613** people were tested for Hepatitis C.

**52%** of people tested were previous or current injectors – a priority group.

## Face to face testing in services

Of the **10,613** tests completed, **9,037** of these were carried out in our services, at a time when footfall was dramatically reduced and very few people were seen face to face.

## Self-testing (postal option)

**1576** of tests were completed using a self-test at home. Of those, **52%** of the tests were from previous or current injectors.

(Self-testing data runs from August 2020 – March 2021, the self-test option was launched as part of the BBV toolkit in August 2020)

## Hepatitis C testing

Self-tests – **1 in 9** self-tests completed detected a positive result. **87%** of the positive results were people who were previous or current injectors, demonstrating the accuracy of our targeting.

Onsite – face to face testing – **1 in 8** tests completed detected a positive result. **86%** of the positive results were people who were previous or current injectors, again showing the effectiveness of our approach to testing in the of risk-taking behaviours.

## Hepatitis C treatment

**1,258** people were supported into treatment during a global pandemic.

## Hepatitis C training & awareness sessions

**103** individual training and awareness sessions were delivered to over **1000** staff across the organisation during the past 12 months by regional Hepatitis C coordinators.

# Our Partners

Change Grow Live is the leading drug and alcohol provider for Hepatitis C testing nationally, with 48,000 tests completed between April 2018-July 2021. And whilst testing is carried out by our staff, we work closely with organisations including Gilead Sciences and NHS England, both nationally and within local NHS trusts.

We also have Hepatitis C peers and coordinators from the Hepatitis C Trust working from our services, and engage with partners from across operational delivery networks (ODNs) to roll out our innovative and pioneering approaches to testing and treatment pathways.

Other providers from the National Hepatitis C Provider forum also help shape how we work together to support more people from being cured from Hepatitis C.

We couldn't do what we do alone – from us all at Change Grow Live,  
**Thank You!**



# Innovation/Highlights

## Launch of the BBV toolkit

In August 2020 Change Grow Live launched a blood borne virus (BBV) toolkit to help improve testing outcomes across our services.

From launch of the BBV tool kit in August 2020, which included the option for people to complete a self-test at home, **1576 people** had completed a BBV test at home by year end (March 2021). This number far exceeded our expectations, and we are now sharing the approach with multiple partners across the sector.

## West Kent services

Change Grow Live's West Kent service and Kings College Hospital worked together alongside the operational delivery network (ODN) to redesign a testing and treatment pathway to enable more people to effectively engage in treatment for Hepatitis C.

Our data, and anecdotal evidence from services, suggested that previous pathways were not working effectively and were preventing the people who use our services from engaging in treatment for Hepatitis C.

Based on a detailed review of current practice, it was agreed that Kings College Hospital would employ a full-time clinical nurse specialist to deliver onsite Hepatitis C treatment clinics, and engage with hard-to-reach groups across our West Kent services, opening up opportunities to engage people into structured treatment for substance use support.

Since this role was introduced in January 2021 through to March 21, we effectively engaged and started **16 people** into treatment for Hepatitis C. This was in comparison to only 5 people starting treatment in the previous quarter before this role was in place.





## North West clinical van – Hepatitis C outreach clinics

Recognising the need to address limited access to outreach clinics in our services, due to lockdown and social distancing measures, Lancashire & South Cumbria (L&SC) ODN, in partnership with Change Grow Live and the Hepatitis C Trust, developed a project to provide a one-stop HCV (Hepatitis C virus) pathway for people living in the Lancashire and South Cumbria region.

This removed the need for people to attend face to face appointments within services and offered access to care for difficult to engage clients within an area significantly impacted by sustained lockdown restrictions.

Staff from Change Grow Live, the local Hospital Trust and the Hepatitis C Trust worked tirelessly to make the outreach approach work. With use of the Change Grow Live clinical van, the team set about engaging some of the most hard-to-reach people into treatment for Hepatitis C by taking treatment to their doors (in some cases literally!).

From September 2020 to March 21, **40 separate outreach clinics** were coordinated and of those, **200 appointments** were made with people who needed to access treatment for Hepatitis C.

Of the 200 appointments, **170 people** attended the clinical van with **125 people** starting treatment for Hepatitis C.

Whilst not all of the 125 people were engaged with Change Grow Live services, this activity created valuable opportunities for staff to engage with people who could benefit from information, advice or treatment for substance support.

The success of our collaboration, and the partnership approach taken with Lancashire & South Cumbria has been recognised by a nomination for a Health Service Journal (HSJ) Award.

## Hepatitis C specialist workers

In the past 12 months we have secured additional funding from our partners at Gilead to employ two Hepatitis C specialist workers; one who works across our Birmingham services and another who supports Change Grow Live Services in the Eastern region.

We also worked with Lancashire and South Cumbria to employ a clinical van driver to support outreach clinics for Hepatitis C testing and treatment events.

## Micro-elimination

St Helen's in the North West of England announced micro-elimination in October 2020 – an amazing achievement during a global pandemic.



# The partner agency view



“Hepatitis C affects many clients regardless of the service that they may access to address any substance misuse concerns.

The Hepatitis C Trust is delighted to see the historical collaboration amongst all service providers to address a common threat to the health of those that we provide care for.

Together we are much stronger as we journey toward the elimination of Hepatitis C as a public health concern.”

**Stuart Smith**

Director of community services - The Hepatitis C Trust

# What people who use our services say

Simon\* attended Change Grow Live Birmingham for support with his substance use and it was through engaging with his recovery worker that Simon made some life changing decisions. Here's what Simon had to say about his experience.

## “The Hep C team at CGL saved my life...

This might sound dramatic, but I feel it's true. I contracted Hep C in my mid to late twenties – I'm not sure when exactly – during the darkest period of my addiction.

Much, much drug taking later, I landed at the feet of CGL. My recovery worker told me in no uncertain terms that I needed to sort my Hep C status and I could see she meant business. Thankfully, for once, I listened.

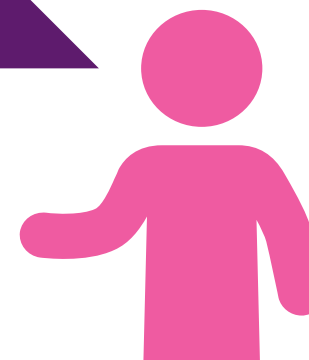
I didn't feel any side effects from the [Hep C] drugs, and as the days went by, the anxiety I had felt, began to dissipate and I felt a sense of hope.

Looking back, I can see that all the time and energy I'd used burying this problem in my mind was such a waste. I had my follow up and was overwhelmed with joy and sweet relief that with the help of the [Hep C] medication, my body and system had cleared this dark force – it was done, I was finally free from a stupid youthful mistake.

If you're reading this and find yourself in the same bind, do yourself a kindness and trust in the process. Change Grow Live have a great team and I don't have the words to express my gratitude.

**Believe that you are worth it, have faith and engage. Good luck.”**

Simon — Birmingham Services



\*The name Simon has been used to protect the identify of this person.



## About Change Grow Live

We help people to change the direction of their lives, grow as individuals, and live life to its full potential.

The people who use our services have been affected by a range of social issues and challenges. These include substance misuse and addiction, homelessness, poverty, unemployment, domestic abuse, and mental health issues.

## Find out more

[www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

E: [queries@cgl.org.uk](mailto:queries@cgl.org.uk)

 [@changegrowlive](https://www.facebook.com/changegrowlive)

 [@changegrowlive](https://www.twitter.com/changegrowlive)



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