



**Consensus Statement on improving the screening, testing and delivery of treatment for Viral Hepatitis and Blood-Borne Viruses (BBVs) in people who inject psychoactive and non-psychoactive drugs between Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (GMHSC), Change, Grow, Live (CGL), Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMH), Addiction Dependency Solutions (ADS), Turning Point, Addaction, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, and the Greater Manchester and East Cheshire Operational Delivery Network (ODN).**

**This consensus statement describes our intent to work towards a consistent delivery model for Viral Hepatitis and Blood-Borne Viruses in all Greater Manchester Community Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services and Needle and Syringe Programmes. Ensuring that people over the age of 18 years who are at risk of contracting blood borne viruses get the personalised, integrated care and support they require to live healthy and fulfilling lives within alcohol and drug services.**

### **Headline consensus statement**

We will work together to use our collective capabilities and resources more effectively to enhance the lives of the people we work by the use of a consistent delivery model for preventing and diagnosing BBVs and we will support and encourage our local services and networks to do the same in their communities.

### **Introduction**

People who have or are currently injecting drugs are a group at particular risk of acquiring viral hepatitis and injecting drugs is the most common risk factor in the UK for HCV infection. The 2015 Shooting Up report outlines that the types of psychoactive drugs being injected in the UK are changing. Heroin remains the most commonly injected psychoactive drug; however the injection of other psychoactive drugs, particularly stimulants such as amphetamines and amphetamine-type drugs (e.g. mephedrone), has become more common in recent years. The use of stimulants has been associated with higher levels of risk behaviours and lower levels of intervention uptake. Overall, the level of needle and syringe sharing among those currently injecting psychoactive drugs has fallen across the UK. The sharing of filters and mixing containers, and cleaning and reusing injecting equipment is more common among those injecting mephedrone than other drugs. UK-wide data (see GMVHS 2016-2019) indicate that around half of those who inject psychoactive drugs have been infected with hepatitis C.

Traditionally people who have or are currently injecting drugs are treated in structured drug treatment programmes and these programmes are expected to offer:

- preventative services such as contact tracing, infection control advice and needle exchange;
- diagnostic services, offering testing for blood-borne viruses including HBV and HCV;
- referral to treatment, where appropriate

To improve delivery; representatives from Public Health England (PHE), Change Grow Live (CGL), Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust (GMMH), Pennine Care Foundation Trust, Addiction Dependency Solutions (ADS), Turning Point, Greater Manchester and East Cheshire Operational Delivery Network (ODN), and Addaction, met on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2018 to agree to develop this consensus statement and minimum standards. There is a new working relationship with the shared aim of identifying and improving the quality of viral hepatitis and other blood borne viruses screening, detection, and treatment for people who inject drugs. Indeed, those who could benefit from early engagement with local services will be identified and this consensus statement represents a joined-up multi-agency approach to put into practice the Greater Manchester commitment to eliminate Hepatitis C. Its emphasis is on agreed minimum delivery requirements to improve practice, increase the numbers of clients diagnosed, and ultimately work towards increasing the number of clients accessing and completing Hepatitis C treatment in all community and acute settings.

### **Shared purpose**

Viral hepatitis is one of the leading causes of death globally, accounting for 1.34 million deaths per year – similar to tuberculosis and higher than for malaria and HIV. At the 69th World Health Assembly in Geneva, 194 governments adopted [WHO's Global Strategy on Viral Hepatitis](#), which includes a goal of eliminating hepatitis B and C in the next 13 years. In the UK the majority of transmission of Hepatitis C is through the sharing of injecting equipment and this is a substantial risk factor for Hepatitis B transmission as well. PHE North West have been supporting work under the Greater Manchester Viral Hepatitis Strategy including a specific strand related to injecting drug use. There are estimated to be around 14,000 people who currently or have injected drugs in the past who are infected with Hepatitis C in Greater Manchester.

### **Greater Manchester Viral Hepatitis Strategy (GMVHS) 2016- 2019**

The aim of the GMVHS is to provide strategic oversight to promote the prevention, diagnosis and effective management of viral hepatitis (in particular hepatitis B and C) across Greater Manchester, by:

- preventing infections
- diagnosing the undiagnosed
- engaging the unengaged, and
- treating the untreated

The strategy focuses on four priority population groups at increased risk of infection, these are:

- injecting drug users;
- migrants and ethnic groups at higher risk of infection;
- children at higher risk of infection; and
- prisoners

The strategy also promotes appropriate opportunistic testing for the general population and effective clinical care for those who are diagnosed.

Taking these considerations into account the strategy has identified the following objectives for people who inject drugs within the strategy:

***People who have or are currently injecting drugs***

1. Increase completion of HBV vaccination schedule among people who have or are currently injecting drugs
2. Increase testing and access to treatment for HBV and HCV among people who have or are currently injecting drugs
3. Improve understanding of issues surrounding HBV and HCV in people who use image and performance enhancing drugs across GM

This consensus statement is first and foremost concerned with objectives 1 and 2 above.

*(Please note that the aspiration to achieve 100% screens and vaccination for all clients accessing alcohol and drug treatment services is dependent on the future investment in the Greater Manchester Hepatitis C Elimination Strategy.)*

