

EMBEDDING HEPATITIS C LIVED EXPERIENCE WITHIN ENGLAND'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: LESSONS AND IMPACT OVER FIVE YEARS

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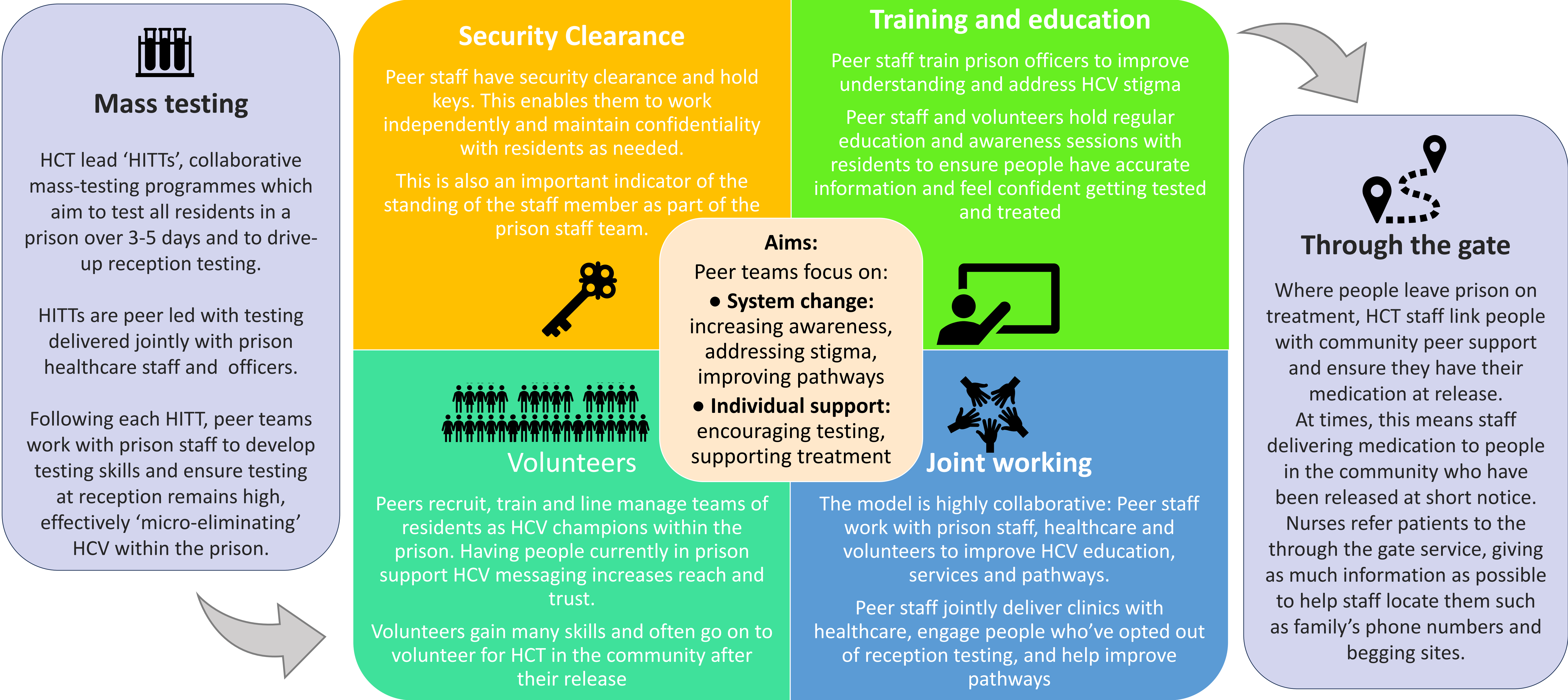
Background & Aims

People engaged with criminal justice systems often face barriers to hepatitis C (HCV) services including low awareness, stigma, poor access to health services and distrust in healthcare.

England’s prison programme seeks to overcome this by embedding staff with lived experience of the criminal justice system (peers) into prison healthcare teams. We describe preliminary findings of an evaluation of the programme since national implementation in 2019.



Model of care



Impact

In five years, almost 6,000 prison staff and 12,000 residents have attended HCV education and engagement sessions.

52,543 people have been tested through 80 HITTs with an average uptake of 87%. HITTs have identified 3,835 people (7.3%) with HCV antibodies, 49% of residents in one prison. HITTs have found 632 people with HCV RNA of whom 408 (65%) have started treatment.

National reception testing increased from 10.5% in 2016/17 to 78% in January 2024. Resident feedback highlights the value of lived experience for increasing trust, addressing stigma and raising overall awareness.

Collaboration and close working relationships with national prison and healthcare leadership has been critical to programme success.

18,000 Prison staff and residents have attended HCV peer training

52,543 People tested through HITT mass testing interventions

49% of people tested in one prison had HCV

“There is an ex-prisoner who goes into prisons with Hep C Trust, it’s really good cos she knows what she’s talking about, but also shows us that you can make something of your life after.” (female resident, EP:IC Inclusion Health Report)

Conclusions & Next steps

Peer teams can be highly effective in increasing HCV testing and treatment, and addressing stigma in prisons. This is a largely untapped and under-utilized workforce.

It’s likely the programme has impacts far beyond hepatitis C, and the model could be used with a range of health conditions common in criminal justice settings such as HIV, TB, maternal health and respiratory disease.

The programme is continuously developing. Recent work includes resident-delivered testing; integrated BBV/STI screening, and work in community criminal justice settings. We are currently seeking funding for a full evaluation.

