

Hepatitis C Trust prisoners facilitating reception BBV screening

Background: BBV opt out policy was introduced back in 2014, the aim to increase testing uptake in the prison estate. Over the years we have seen some increase, but we still see some prisons below the target rate of 75% uptake rate. Several prisons experienced very low uptake in reception BBV screening resulting from staff shortages, lack of training, competing priorities and lack of motivation. The Hepatitis C Trust (HCT) trained

volunteer prisoners to screen men for BBV's at prison reception. They use DBST testing method and have their own code, so we can run reports on the number of test the prisoners have completed per month.

Effectiveness: In October 2023, HMP Stoke Heath testing uptake increased from 5% to More than 90% by 2025 of new arrivals being tested with the introduction of a prisoner peer led testing program, effectively prisoners testing prisoners through dried blood spot testing (DBST).

Qualitative data collected through surveys of residents tested by prison peers shows prison residents trust new peer-led screening and respond positively to fellow prison residents taking responsibility for BBV safety in prison.

Conclusion and next steps: Pressure on healthcare teams has been reduced, particularly considering staff shortages. HMP Stoke Heath reached micro-elimination during 2025. HCT continues to support the resident peers via supervision and continued training of new peers. Next steps have been the continued success of prisoner peer led testing programs at HMP Birmingham, HMP Bristol as well as consideration being given to number of prisons across the United Kingdom. Scotland will be introducing a peer led testing model to prisons in 2026.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

We received funding from NHSE, Gilead, AbbVie, MSD