

UPSKILLING A PEER WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TO AN OUT OF HOURS ENGAGEMENT WORKER FOR STREET HOMELESS POPULATIONS IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND

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Background:

Areas of North West England have a higher proportion of street homeless compared to national averages, with Blackpool having over double the homeless referrals compared to the rest of the country and 3 times the national average of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) detection. Additionally, it is common for people to not access housing support or treatment services leading to a lack of access to HCV testing.

Similar needs were identified in Preston and East Lancashire as well as additional tools for successful engagement. Anecdotally, the rates in which people disengaged from HCV treatment appeared higher in those that were homeless.

Description of model of care/intervention/program:

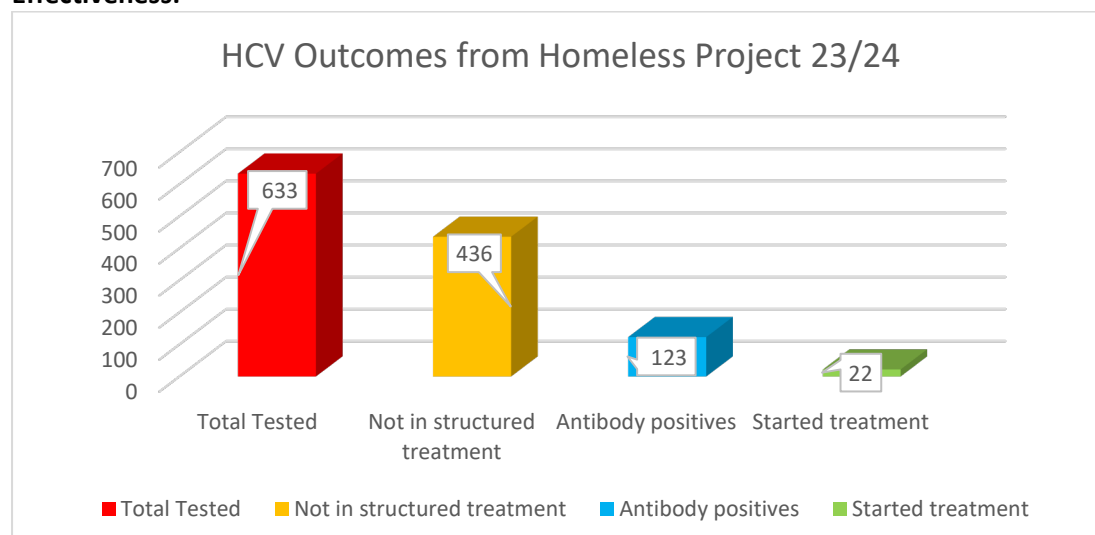
A volunteer with lived experience of HCV and homelessness was provided with the skills and support to work with homeless communities in a paid role. Patients were also provided with phones, vouchers and comfort packs. Crucially, the programme provided support and testing on weekends and evenings.

During the 4 month pilot 400 HCV tests were completed. Initially the focus was testing people currently street homeless within the focus areas, followed by a concentrated effort to support those that required treatment.

Tests were conducted in services and areas that had not previously been targeted.

Regular multiagency meetings were held to coordinate and continuously review pathways, target lists and data collection.

Effectiveness:



There are a number of patients who need treatment and are being offered ongoing support.

¹ East Lancashire Hospitals Trust

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Conclusion and next steps:

The peer worker enabled effective engagement for populations outside of traditional testing locations. With that experience patients feel more willing to engage and be treated³.

Due to this success the project has been expanded and extended. It is hoped that the programme is promoted and replicated.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The Hepatitis C Trust has received funding via NHS England to fund the homeless project. Funding for the management of that project and HCV support in Lancashire and South Cumbria has come via MSD.
