

## **ADDRESSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE MICRO ELIMINATION OF HEPATITIS C IN ENGLAND.**

### **Authors:**

Kemp T<sup>1</sup> and Furlong P<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Change Grow Live, UK

### **Background:**

Needle and Syringe Programmes (NSPs) are crucial in minimizing hepatitis C, HIV, bacterial infections and other harms among people who inject drugs (PWID). UK NSP coverage is estimated at 30-35%. Barriers to more effective coverage include the loss of discrete, anonymous NSP arising from integrated recovery services. Consequently, the number of people sharing and re-using injecting equipment remains high, with a third of PWID sharing and reporting they don't have sufficient access to NSP.

### **Programme of work:**

Change Grow Live (CGL) is the largest provider of substance use treatment in the UK, delivering a third of all treatment across 106 services. Its programme to achieve and sustain micro-elimination of Hep C includes:

- NSP re-promotion within CGL and across the treatment sector, supporting staff's continued professional development.
- Participating in the UKHSA working group to standardize measuring of NSP coverage.
- A full harm reduction re-training program aimed at frontline workers.
- Working with the harm reduction social enterprise Exchange Supplies providing an online ordering system (NSP Direct) delivering sterile equipment to people's home address.
- A strategic refocus on NSP/ blood borne virus (BBV) interventions as standardized operating procedures, with named Harm Reduction Leads in services.
- A network of Pharmacy Liaison leads across CGL driving quality improvement.
- Contributing to the UK's NHS hepatitis C elimination strategy through the Treatment Services Hepatitis C Provider Forum.

### **Effectiveness:**

Over 35,000 people were tested for hepatitis C and other BBV in CGL services between April 2022 and March 2023 - with over 1,400 going on to access treatment. Six services and two hubs achieved hepatitis C micro-elimination.

### **Conclusion and next steps:**

A renewed focus on NSP coverage and harm reduction is required to sustain recent success in Hep elimination. To achieve this, we need sector-wide collaboration to the level achieved in the micro elimination of Hep C.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Change Grow Live have a contractual arrangement in place with Gilead Sciences as part of NHS England's Hep C elimination program. Change Grow Live also have a contract with Exchange Supplies for all postal supplies of NSP equipment.