

Breaking Stigma: Delivering a Lived Experience Hepatitis C Peer Programme in Women's Prisons

Speakers/Facilitators:

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In 2017, an estimated 215,000 people in the UK were living with hepatitis C (HCV), around half undiagnosed. Injecting drug use was the main risk factor, responsible for over 90% of new infections.

On entering prison, 58% of women reported using Class A drugs before custody compared with 43% of men, and hepatitis C prevalence in Northern prisons was 25% among women versus 14% among men, highlighting a significant issue in women's prisons. Stigma often prevents open discussion and reduces willingness to seek testing or support.

In response, the Hepatitis C Trust launched a women's prison peer programme in 2018, recruiting two female staff with lived experience of HCV, drug use, and imprisonment. Employing women was important to support trauma-informed approaches and better engage women with complex histories. Women in prison were consulted through surveys to shape how support and information were delivered, and many became involved in programme activities.

The programme uses lived experience to reduce stigma, encourage testing and treatment, and support women during custody and back into the community. To date 16,372 women have been engaged, 2,123 supported through HCV treatment and 632 have been supported through the gate back into the community.

This workshop will explore the journey of the women's peer programme. We will share eight years of outcomes, successes, and challenges, including prison access for lived-experience staff, peer development, literature redesign, partnerships with services, through-the-gate support, and bespoke programmes.

The workshop will use an opening presentation to set the scene and share programme outcomes, alongside a lived experience story to illustrate the work in practice. Interactive elements will include group discussion, participant engagement activities, and Q&A session to encourage shared learning and explore transferring this model to different countries.

Nurse, Practitioners, custodial staff, researchers, people with lived experience
60-100 delegates

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

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¹ The Hepatitis C Trust

² The Hepatitis C Trust, World Hepatitis Alliance (Past President), GVAC