

Duncan Cresswell and the Sussex ODN Case Study

About Duncan:

Before joining the NHS, Duncan worked within the water industry, after 5 years within Project Management and systems management roles, Duncan chose to move into a role which would allow progression and the chance to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in society.

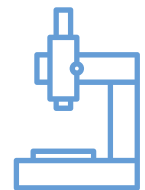
Duncan took on the role of Project Manager within the Sussex Hepatitis C Operational Delivery Network. **“The chance to be involved with such an important piece of work, with a disease that predominantly affects people already experiencing health inequalities, was so appealing and the more I learnt about the elimination program the more I wanted to be involved. Members of my family went through the old Interferon treatment and I know how difficult that was, so hearing about the new drug treatments was an exciting prospect and definitely something I wanted to be a part of.”** After two years within this role, Duncan took on a promotion as Network Manager.

As Network Manager, Duncan works for the Sussex Hepatitis ODN, overseeing the delivery of Hepatitis C treatment across the region. The role involves managing the strategy of the Network in line with the requirements set out by NHSE and to ensure they are delivering against our Commissioning for Quality and Innovation (CQUIN) targets and specific elimination initiatives.

“I sit within the Strategy and Planning team as part of University Hospitals Sussex but oversee the ODN across the whole of Sussex. We deliver treatment services at 2 NHS Trusts and 6 hospital sites (see below) as well as across 3 Drug Treatment Service (DTS) hubs managed by CGL (Brighton & Hove, East Sussex DARS, West Sussex Adult - excluding Crawley). We also deliver services within homelessness organisations, prison population (HMP Lewes), recovery projects and GPs.”



Duncan explains the key challenges for his team across the ODN - “accessing clients not currently linked to Drug Treatment Services (DTS) or prison can be very challenging. We have attempted to develop needle and syringe programme work but this has proven very difficult. We are also hoping to have a vehicle to run mobile clinics this year as our previous vehicle was unsuccessful.”



The Emergency Department Opt Out testing scheme:

The team have now rolled out the Emergency Department (ED) Opt Out testing scheme across the ODN. This is part of an NHS pilot of 30 sites where hepatitis C (HCV) is included in all blood testing unless a person objects to testing. The pilot started in Brighton in March 2023 and has already achieved good outcomes.

“Our Opt Out testing programme has just started but has already shown some positive early results, with 1 unknown person being linked to care. This is still early stages but everyone receiving a blood test through ED should now be tested for HCV antibodies.”

Duncan describes how the team utilise The Hepatitis C Trust Peer Support Network, which he describes as ‘fantastic at capturing and supporting clients into treatment’. Additionally, the team utilise contingency management vouchers (£30 for completing treatment to SVR in 3 £10 instalments).

The team are able to see the impact of people being treated which is a hugely rewarding part of their role **“The impact on people can be monumental as many see a huge improvement in their mental health after completing treatment. The nurses and Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust peers report back a real sense of achievement within the group of individuals who complete treatment, which can sometimes be a real turning point in their lives.”**

Duncan’s key advice for other ODNs heading towards micro-elimination is **“Don’t give up! We’ve found people can take a long time to be ready for treatment. Only through regular engagement and support from peers, nurses, and other key workers do some of the people eventually end up completing treatment. Although the treatments are relatively easy now it can still be a daunting prospect for the people. Perseverance is key!”**

The key groups Duncan and his team are targeting are Drug Treatment Services (DTS), Prisons, Homeless services (e.g. Hostels), recovery projects as well as people tested through Emergency Department Opt Out testing.

“Testing is offered at DTS and in prisons as part of their standard commissioned activity (e.g. reception testing). We deliver testing at hostels during HITTs (High Intensity Test and Treat Events) and also through elimination initiative funding and training, and our nurses/peers deliver testing in high risk groups such as street homeless and recovery projects at ad hoc events. Any people with a positive result will be linked to treatment at one of our community locations (day centres etc.) and can also have access to storage lockers in specific locations.”

Duncan’s top tips:

- Working in collaboration with other services is also vitally important to engage people who may have complex needs.
- Reducing stigma is really important. Any messaging you can get out to local services around the easy treatment and cure is really important.
- Making the services as accessible as possible (taking it to the people) is also really important.