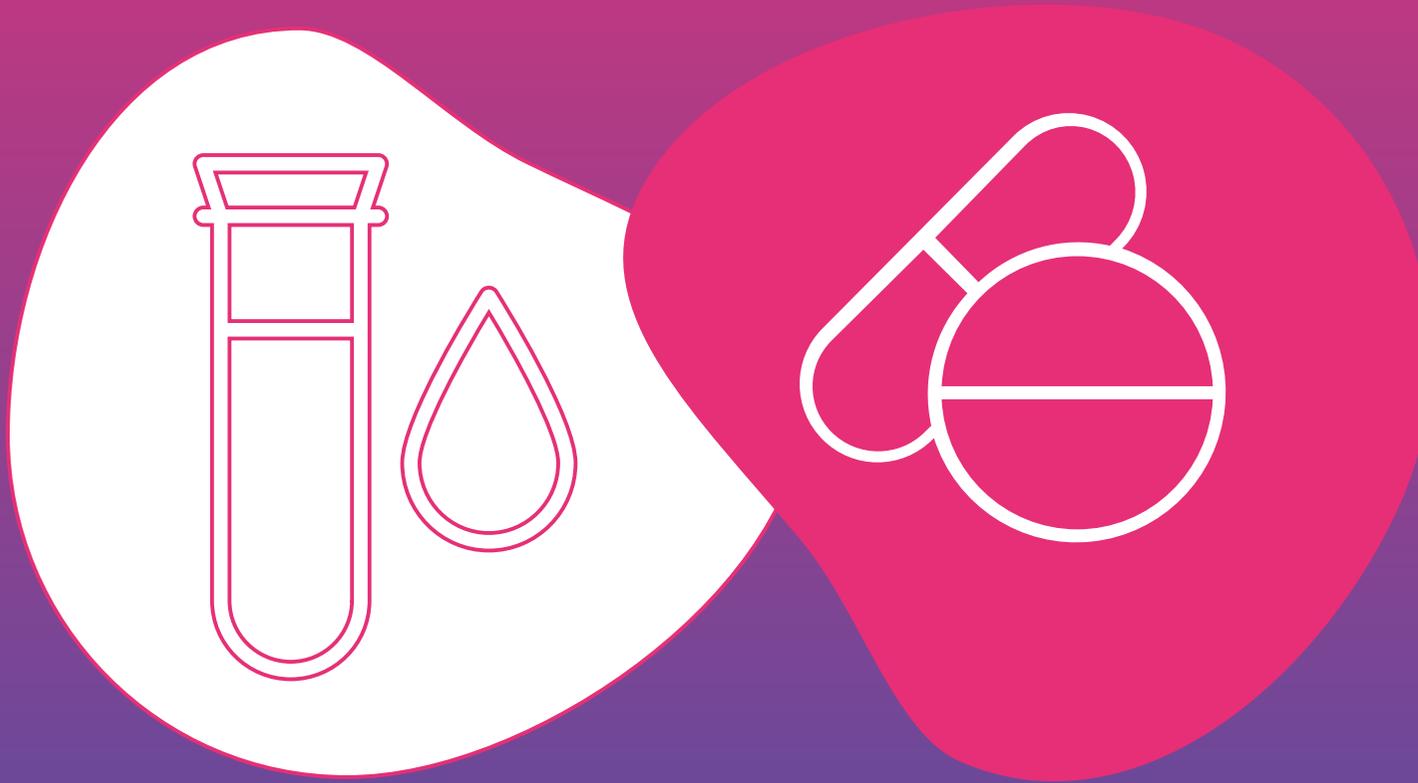


HEP C
U Later



Reaching and maintaining hepatitis C micro-elimination at the Hillingdon drug & alcohol service

(Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, CNWL)

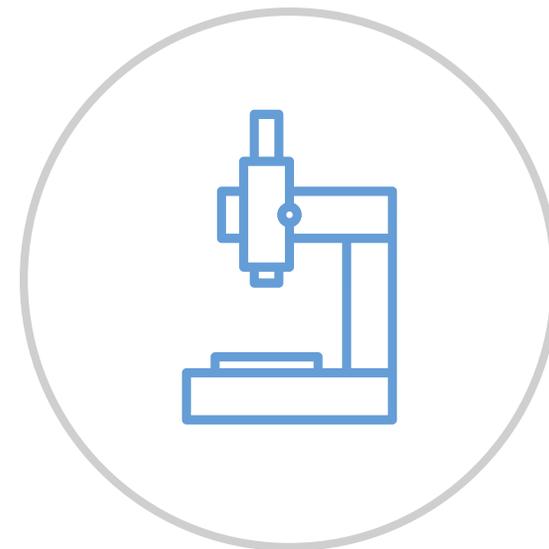
We spoke to Beth Crossland, Clinical Nurse Specialist, who supported the Hillingdon CNWL service to achieve hepatitis C micro-elimination in September 2023.

Working towards hepatitis C micro-elimination required lots of communication with other members of the team, education and promoting the importance of reducing the risk of hepatitis C for people accessing drug services.

“I think it was great because it meant that we got to work so much closer with Hep C U Later, the Hepatitis C Trust and the local hepatology team. It was essential that we did work so closely with them, and it means now we’ve developed a better relationship than we had before, which makes it easier going forwards.”

Many different approaches were used to reach every person who needed a test or treatment such as written reminders with prescriptions, incentives, testing events, ensuring discussions were taking place in team meetings, monthly meetings with the Operational Delivery Network, and inviting the Hepatitis C Trust into the service so people could approach them with questions.

Beth spoke of how the physical health clinic was re-established post-Covid ensuring holistic care alongside hepatitis C testing was provided.



Want to explore more resources that could help your service reach hep C Micro-Elimination?

Visit [our resources](#) where we have plenty of free resources designed to help you.

Beth spoke to us about how reaching hepatitis C micro-elimination was challenging and was the result of a considerable team effort, recognising that one person cannot achieve it alone. Reaching this milestone was a big achievement for the service and solidified their team efforts.

“It was like all the hard work was worth it... We were really proud about what we were able to achieve within our service and how we had worked together to get there...everyone understood what it meant.”

Additionally it was recognised that working in drug services can be challenging at times and reaching micro-elimination brought the team together to celebrate a real achievement. Beth spoke of the positive conversations had with people accessing drug services about what they were trying to achieve and the impact it had on them.

“When I was having those conversations with people they were very grateful, like, ‘oh, that’s great, let’s do this’. A large amount of people recognised we’d seen that there was a risk or we wanted to make sure they were OK.”

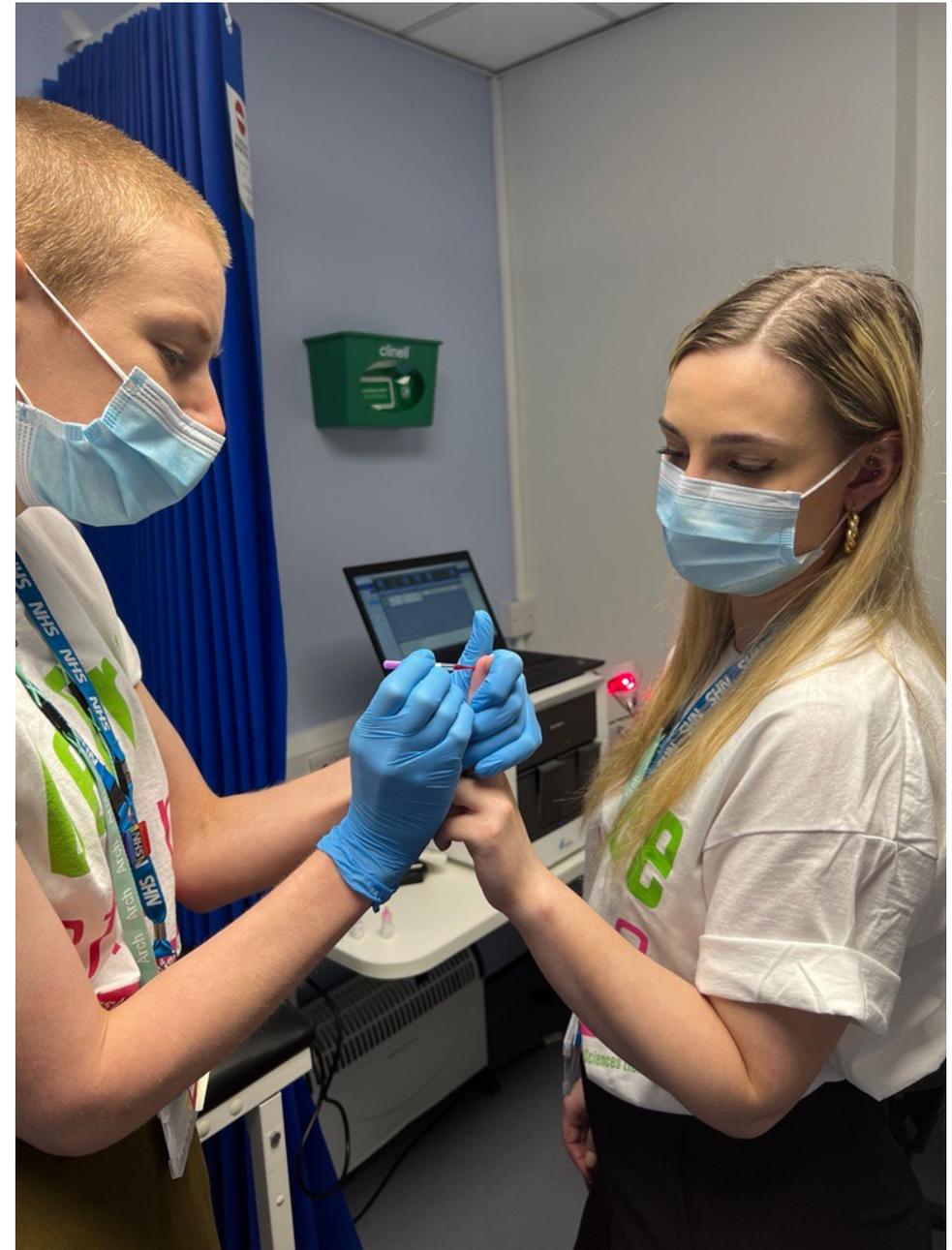


The service identified people who had a hepatitis C infection but were previously unaware of it, and may not have been tested otherwise.

“It’s one of my favourite parts of my job to be able to see someone through that...and then see them a few months down the line to do their SVR and tell them they’re free of Hep C now.”

The service also noticed positive changes as a result of people receiving treatment for hepatitis C.

“It’s like a snowball effect, there are people who have got back into employment, their substance use is dropping off, they’re reducing their methadone, they have this energy that they didn’t have before and they didn’t quite know why. It’s been really good for people.”



When discussing the challenges in reaching hepatitis C micro-elimination Beth reported two specific areas which they had to find solutions to.

The first challenge was where people declined testing or treatment. Beth understood very well the reasons for people not wanting to proceed with testing and treatment and treated these decisions respectfully, whilst ensuring regular opportunities for revisiting the offer.

The other significant challenge was ensuring the data was reflecting the hard work the teams were doing within the service.

“It was our amazing admin team, my manager Katie Ord and the fantastic Hep C U Later team who worked on the data. The data seemed to really be the last frontier, the last challenge to get over to make it all line up with each other.”

We asked Beth what she believed the highlights to be when completing this challenging work.

“I think it’s always when people come back and they’re beaming, smiling, so happy they don’t have hepatitis C. That is the best. It’s just wonderful to see the positivity in them. It’s such a forward movement, getting hep C cleared.”

Maintaining Hepatitis C Micro-Elimination:

Beth spoke of the mechanisms in place at Hillingdon ensuring they maintain their micro-elimination status such as regular review meetings with Hep C U Later, altering how they record to make things clearer for data entry, and ensuring everyone accessing the service attends a health clinic where hepatitis C screening is offered. Additionally it is believed that risks relating to injecting is now more widely understood, and the hepatitis C screening processes have become embedded.

“There are going to be challenges, but perseverance is key. Keeping on top of the data is vital and working with your data team and the Hep C U Later data team. Remember why you’re doing it - so that you can say confidently that nobody in your service has hep C and doesn’t know about it. We can get to a point where it’s very unlikely that someone has hep C in a service and doesn’t know, and that’s how it should be.”

Beth also recognised that working towards hepatitis C micro-elimination in drug services has helped the service to highlight how well placed drug services are to reach and engage people into other healthcare needs which may not be being accessed through primary care.

“We’ve got this opportunity to deliver physical health interventions, even if it’s just health promotion, preventative work, lifestyle advice. We’re so well placed to reach people. We’ve got this opportunity and we’ve definitely been trying to really build on that.”

Following on from hepatitis C micro-elimination Beth and the team plan to continue to grow their holistic health and wellbeing clinics for people accessing the service. At present the clinics include advice on smoking cessation, oral health, and sexual health as well as tailored harm reduction advice. For Beth this level of good quality care in the Hillingdon service sends many additional messages.

“Number one, your health matters. Number two, this is how your substance use is likely to impact your health. It’s about empowering people.”



In 2023 Beth Crossland and Eugenia Moyo from CNWL won the British Journal of Nursing Infection Prevention and Control Nurse of the Year award for their work towards micro-elimination