

# Wessex Clinical Van (WCV) Case Study

**HEP C**  
U Later

The Wessex Clinical Van is an initiative from the NHS England hepatitis C elimination program. The service is provided by Inclusion, part of Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust on behalf of the Wessex Operational Delivery Network (ODN). There are around 25 key stakeholders across the region. The team have worked across Hampshire, Salisbury, Dorset and Isle of Wight since 2020 testing, treating and eliminating hepatitis C amongst people at high risk. Sean and Elaine are the core WCV team with Alan supporting the work across Hampshire as part of the Inclusion Recovery Hampshire service.

Elaine Pearce is the Wessex Clinical Van Co-ordinator for Bournemouth, Dorset and Salisbury areas. Elaine began her role in October 2022 joining Sean Caddy who had been covering the whole of the Wessex area by himself. Elaine said **“It became apparent that it would be more manageable and effective to split the Wessex area, as a result I was promoted on 1/6/23. I was allocated the Bournemouth, Dorset and Salisbury areas with Sean covering Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.”**

Elaine’s daily responsibilities involve organising hepatitis C testing appointments, driving the Clinical Van to designated locations, conducting home visits, completing blood tests with people before and after hepatitis C treatment, and referring people for treatment when needed. **“The team also plan testing days to help identify people who may be unaware they have the hepatitis C virus, or have been resistant to treatment in the past. Once identified they are encouraged and supported into treatment. My role requires me to work alongside Drug Treatment Providers such as Inclusion, Reach, We Are With You and Turning Point, as well as hepatology nurses from Bournemouth and Salisbury hospitals, GP surgeries, and charities offering peer support such as the Hepatitis C Trust.”**

Elaine finds working with the Wessex Clinical Van team rewarding as she witnesses patients seeking treatment and clearing the virus, and describes **“Seeing people’s health improve, and receiving the treatment they need, and that it allows them to move forward, and knowing I had made a difference to their lives is special.”**



Alan Howard is the Hep C Hants Peer-to-Peer Co-ordinator.

**“My role is to co-ordinate the hepatitis C, and blood-borne virus testing, treatment and support across Inclusion Recovery Hampshire services. Part of the role is recruiting peers with lived experience to tackle and reduce stigma, and to engage people that might not typically access testing. Lived experience helps break down barriers to testing.”**

Alan describes how the Wessex Clinical Van came to fruition **“I started in this role in August 2020, prior to starting there had been nurse-led Hepatology outreach clinics within the drug and alcohol services in Hampshire. Due to ongoing Covid-19 measures there was a shift to less face-to-face interactions within the drug and alcohol services. To ensure continuity of the nurse-led clinics, we repurposed the clinical van we had within Inclusion Recovery Hampshire. The data quickly evidenced the high engagement with the van-run service. During this period, NHS England sought bids for ‘Find, test and treat’ vans, and having a van already, we submitted a bid. Louise Hansford played a key role, leading to the establishment of the Wessex Clinical Van service.”**

Alan describes the highlight of his and the team’s work as **“Seeing someone that has addressed their hepatitis C and has gone onto address their overall health is very rewarding. Our service users are the highlight.”**



Alan, Elaine and Sean work closely with the Hepatitis C Trust as well as their own peers. Typically, in each area they will target pharmacies which may have high needle use, or areas where there are pharmacies with high numbers of people accessing needle and syringe programmes. A significant amount of time is spent mapping targeted areas. Alan and his team also work with a large number of partners including housing providers for people who are homeless, to understand if there's a need for additional testing in that area.



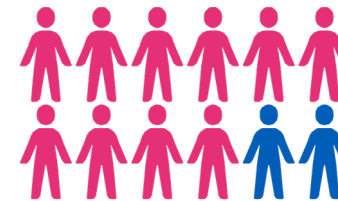
One of the key factors to their success has been developing relationships through engaging with peers which Elaine details **“We often use incentives to encourage people to have tests such as vouchers. We will meet up with the peers on our van days and ask them to bring people who may be ‘at risk’ to the van. Bringing the specialist services to people who may not ordinarily access healthcare services really makes a difference. Harm reduction advice runs through everything we do, such as needle exchange, naloxone, and when there is a nurse on the van this also includes wound care. It’s about a whole package of care.”**

The other key factor in the vans success has been the use of the Cepheid machines which enabled fast testing, Alan explains **“The introduction of Cepheid machines has made a huge difference, in terms of accuracy and timing. This removes a huge barrier. Lots of people would be put off from having a test if they have poor venous access. Cepheid machines means we can test using capillary blood rather than venous blood and this has been a huge benefit. It’s reduced the time to treatment significantly and now they can be on their treatment pathway much quicker.”**

#### Obstacles the team have overcome:

- **Covering a wide area**
- **Being in contact with community**
- **Factoring in the time it takes to test**

#### Since 2020 the team has tested over...



**4500 people**

#### And treated over...



**360 people**

**“The Wessex Clinical Van project has achieved remarkable success, not only in reaching a wide geographic area but also in offering high-quality harm reduction services, hepatitis C testing, and treatment. Additionally, they have assisted people to access and engage in drug treatment services. The team’s efforts have undoubtedly made a positive difference in the lives and well-being of many people. Operating within a complex system involving multiple stakeholders, the Wessex Clinical Van Project has demonstrated the positive impact and endless possibilities that come when resources are made available to those with a desire to make a difference. A heartfelt thank you to the Wessex Clinical Van Team and all its supporters.”**” Deanne Burch, Hep C U Later Programme Lead