



# Hepatitis C elimination

Impact report 2023-2024

**withyou**

[wearewithyou.org.uk](https://wearewithyou.org.uk)

# About withyou

WithYou is a charity that offers free, confidential support and treatment to people in England and Scotland who have issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health. We provide people with support in a way that's right for them, either in person in their local service, community or online.

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Micro-elimination</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Impact in numbers</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Testing</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Treatment</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Working in partnership</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Looking forward</b>	<b>16</b>

The report was written by WithYou. You can access WithYou's webchat via [www.wearewithyou.org.uk](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk)

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This report cover the period from April 1 2023 – March 31 2024

# Introduction

This year WithYou has made huge strides towards our goal of eliminating hepatitis C in our BBV commissioned services. WithYou's national Hepatitis C Elimination Project, funded by Gilead Sciences, was set up in response to NHS England's ambition to eliminate viral hepatitis as a major threat to public health by 2025. As this impact report shows, we are pleased to be making real progress towards this goal.

Over the last 12 months, five of our services have reached the milestone of micro-eliminating hepatitis C, and many more of our services are now on track to declare soon.

Our staff have been integral to this progress, from producing bespoke resources to increase awareness of hepatitis C, to rolling out nationwide awareness campaigns. They have integrated blood borne virus (BBV) testing so it has become 'business as usual' in our services, and are doing everything they can to break down the barriers people face in service. So much of our positive momentum is down to them.

A huge part of our success is also thanks to our partnership with Gilead Sciences. Collaboration and partnership have been at the heart of our efforts, and the positive impact of this partnership can be seen throughout our organisation, and in the progress we're making towards micro-elimination.



“Wow what a year, five of our services reaching micro-elimination, micro-elimination redeclarations and many more services on track to declare. I'm so proud of what the team and our services have achieved this year and we're very much looking ahead to the important work of sustainability and beyond.”

**Emma Lamond, Director of Integrated Treatment and Project Lead**



“This latest impact report really shows the positive progress WithYou has made towards reaching hepatitis C micro-elimination. Integral to this is the incredible job our staff teams across the country have done in significantly increasing how many people we are testing.

“This is a huge undertaking and has resulted in many of our services now being able to declare and maintain hepatitis C micro-elimination. An amazing achievement and one that is really transforming people's lives.”

**Kate Blazey, Interim Executive Medical Director**

# Micro-elimination

NHS England has set a target to eliminate hepatitis C by 2025. As part of our partnership with Gilead Sciences, WithYou is committed to micro-eliminating hepatitis C in 12 of our blood-borne virus commissioned services.

The drug treatment services Hep C Provider Forum, a collaboration with Gilead Sciences, NHS England, The Hepatitis C Trust and drug and alcohol service providers, developed a set of criteria for measuring micro-elimination. In order for a service to meet the criteria, it must complete the following:

- ✓ Offer **100%** of clients in structured treatment a hepatitis C test
- ✓ Test **100%** of those with a history of injecting
- ✓ Ensure **90%** of current and previous injectors (at risk) have a hepatitis C test date within the last 12 months
- ✓ Ensure **90%** of clients who have tested positive for hepatitis have commenced or completed treatment

Over the last year, five of our services – **Darlington, Shropshire, North Lincolnshire, Boston and Liverpool** – have achieved micro-elimination.

Our services in Darlington and Scunthorpe have also revalidated their micro-elimination status after a six month review, while our services in Shropshire and Liverpool have also redeclared micro-elimination, though outside of the time period of this report. So far, we've been able to maintain micro-elimination in all services where it was declared during the six month review, an achievement we're really proud of.

- 1 Darlington
- 2 North Lincolnshire
- 3 Shropshire
- 4 Liverpool
- 5 Boston



# Impact in numbers

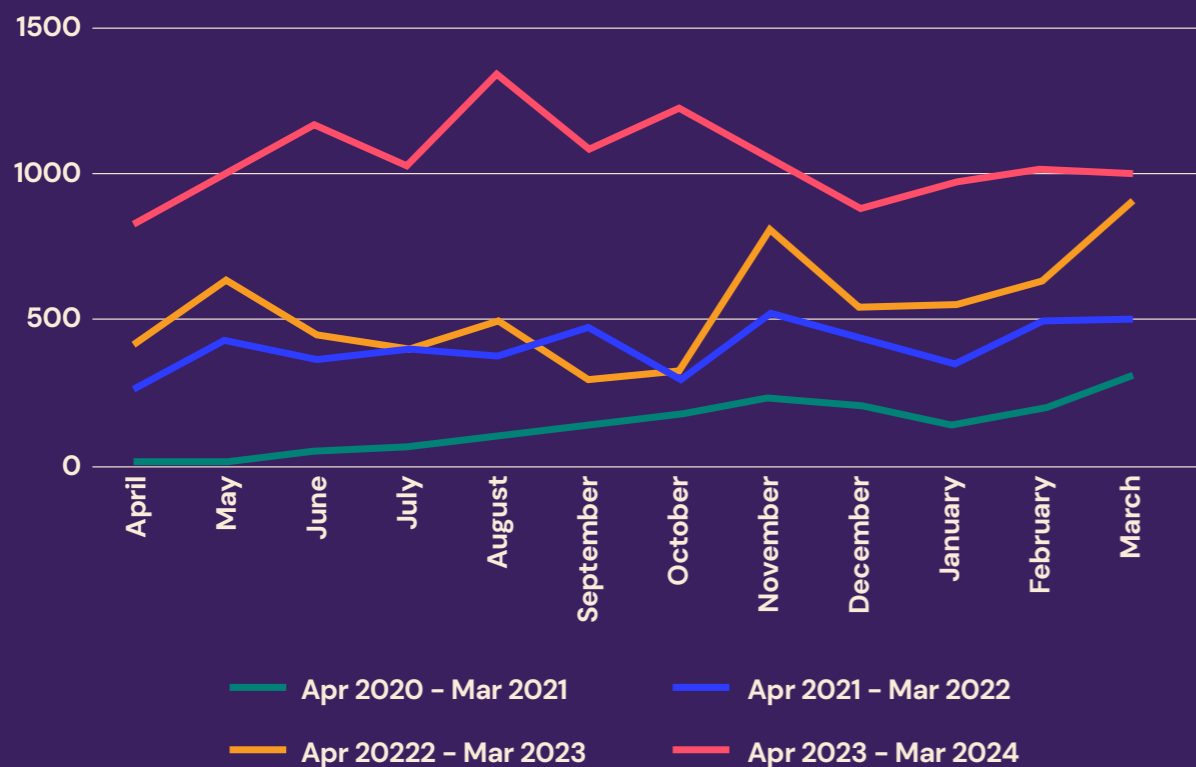
WithYou's national Hepatitis C Elimination Project has continued to go from strength to strength. More people than ever are being tested and getting the treatment they need, and though testing has significantly increased, we are finding fewer people who are positive for hepatitis C.

In 2023 – 2024,  
we completed

# 12,592

dry blood spot tests

Number of dry blood spot tests carried out by WithYou (2020 – 2024)



# 3.2%

of all tests were positive

# 1 in 31

tests came back positive, compared to 1 in 17 tests in 2022-2023



This year we increased the number of dry blood spot tests by

# 87%

# 370

people started hepatitis C treatment



# Testing

One of our priorities across WithYou's services has been to raise awareness and enhance our testing and treatment processes.

Though our micro-elimination campaign has been effective at allowing our services to focus efforts on those high-risk areas, our priority this year has been to widen and normalise our testing approach. This ensures it is fully embedded as a core part of our service delivery.

## Test. Treat. Repeat

Help reduce the impact of blood borne viruses (BBV) among our clients.



As part of this ambition, our 'Test, Treat, Repeat' campaign encourages all our services to test every client when they access a service, whether or not they have a history of injecting drugs. This is because we know that, for a number of complex reasons, not all clients will disclose their past injecting history or other risk factors. This approach is focused on not just raising awareness, but on changing the culture towards testing and treatment and challenging the stigma that surrounds hepatitis.

“As a drug and alcohol service, we come into regular contact with people who have a greater risk of hepatitis C, and so we knew that we had a really important role to play.

“But we also know that for some people, travelling to and from one of our hubs can take all day, especially if they don't have access to a car – and so we quickly realised that, like how we do with our clinical prescribing clinics, we needed to go to where people live, rather than waiting for them to come to us.

“As a result, our teams have travelled to virtually every town across Shropshire to make it as easy as possible for our clients to get tested for hepatitis C and other BBVs. This, along with running drive days and education sessions from our main hubs, has enabled us to achieve hepatitis C micro-elimination across our Shropshire service.”

**Jan Burrows, WithYou's Head of Service Delivery, Shropshire Recovery Partnership**

# Treatment

Hepatitis C can cause acute and chronic hepatitis which can range in severity – some people become mildly unwell, while others develop lifelong illnesses, including liver cirrhosis and cancer.

However hepatitis C is curable, and 97% of people who receive treatment make a full recovery and can often be treated successfully by simply taking medicines for several weeks.

Across all WithYou services, we have continued to build on our strong partnerships with local hospitals and Operational Delivery Networks, making it easier than ever for clients to access treatment.

For example, if one of our clients tests positive in Scunthorpe, we refer them straight into treatment and they are offered an appointment within days. We also work in close partnership with the Hepatitis C Trust, referring directly to the Follow Me programme to provide clients with peer support. This pathway with effective additional support is why the majority of our clients access and complete treatment effectively.

Our services have also been breaking down the barriers to treatment by hosting treatment clinics within our own buildings, as well as bringing treatment and care closer to the people that need it.

“ I was diagnosed with hepatitis C in 1992. I don't know how I got it and I had never even heard of it when I was diagnosed. The reason I got tested was because I was having bad night sweats, I was fainting and had bad dizzy spells... When I started treatment, it only took a few weeks to start working. Once I was okayed for treatment, it all happened very quick, and was very simple. There is a treatment for hepatitis C that does work and is well worth getting. ”

**Theresa, a client from WithYou in Liverpool was able to access successful treatment**

“ I got hepatitis C in the early 90s and there was no cure. I first heard there was a cure about 15 years later, but the rumour was the treatment was nasty, painful and complicated. But roll on 10 years, my WithYou recovery worker told me the new treatment was a lot better with hardly any side effects. It was one tablet a day for about three months I think so I decided to get treated and just three months later I got tested it was all clear. I had no side effects and I went around town with The Hepatitis C Trust to pass the word to other people and urged them to get treated. ”

**Jimmy, a client from WithYou in North Lincolnshire treated for hepatitis C**



# Working in partnership

Micro-elimination can only be achieved through working together and the partnership created by Gilead – bringing together drug and alcohol providers, The Hepatitis C Trust, NHS England and Gilead – has been integral to fostering an effective, collaborative approach.

We are proud to work alongside so many partners and providers, working together to make such progress in testing and treatment for hepatitis C.

## Some examples of working in partnership this year have included:

- working with the Hepatitis C Trust on piloting new peer-to-peer models in some of our services (for example in Liverpool), and ensuring clients are able to access effective additional support when accessing treatment
- representing the provider forum alongside CGL at the HCV Action roundtable on maintaining hepatitis C elimination
- working collaboratively with other third-sector providers of drug and alcohol services through the provider forum delivering webinars, and supporting specialist working groups
- presenting with the Hepatitis C Trust at the World Hepatitis Summit on streamlining community HCV prescribing for patients in Cornwall
- contributing to the development and promotion of joint social media campaigns and raising awareness and testing activities across our services for European Testing Week campaigns and World Hepatitis Day
- working with NHSE, ODN's, Treating Hospitals and Hepatitis C Trust in testing clients as part of the Needs Assessment Project and one year follow up
- HCV action – our National BBV Lead continues to be a member of the HCV Action Steering Group attending meetings to ensure the hepatitis C professional community remains informed, inspired and connected

“ Our collaboration with WithYou has been instrumental in advancing the goal of hepatitis C elimination. The dedication and hard work of the WithYou team have been the driving force behind the progress we’ve seen, particularly in reaching communities where testing is often challenging. Together, we’ve supported the launch of new initiatives and strategies, ensuring that no one is left behind and that services can reach micro-elimination. This ongoing partnership is crucial as we work side by side to achieve our shared mission of eliminating hepatitis C in England by 2025. ”

**Irfan Chhipa, Patient Access to Care, Senior Manager.  
Gilead Sciences**



# Looking forward

As we move closer to micro-elimination, we know the harder the goal will become. But most importantly, we know it is achievable.

Looking forward, we are focused on building more sustainable systems and processes ensuring we are continuing our progress towards micro-elimination, and that when the project ends, our commitment doesn't.

We also know that to sustain the positive impact we've had with testing and treatment, we must continue to strengthen and enhance our harm reduction approach to prevent new infections and reinfections. We know that through enhancing the quality of our harm reduction provisions, we're in a better position to understand and measure the elimination picture within this group of clients.

This means redoubling our efforts focusing on improving access to harm reduction services, such as through our assertive outreach models to reach people who may be street homeless, and reducing stigma and barriers to access so that we can reach more people. We'll also be focused on enhancing our needle and syringe programme services, improving access to advice, equipment and our low threshold/easy to access support services.

Looking back over the last year, this impact report shows just how much progress has been made and how much closer we are to meeting the NHS England's ambition to eliminate viral hepatitis. We are immensely proud of the impact we have had, and we want to thank all our staff, partners and clients who have made this possible.



“I'm so proud of the progress our services have made this year. I would like to thank all our staff who've worked so hard on reaching micro-elimination – the impact they've had is extraordinary. Our approach to increasing testing and making it far easier for people to access treatment has been incredibly effective, and is testament to the determination and passion of our staff and sector partners.

“However, we know there is still work to do if we are to build on the progress we have made, and I look forward to even more of our services being able to declare micro-elimination next year.”

**Simon Phillips, Chief Executive, WithYou**

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