

ACTION PLAN

Update 6: 'Hepatitis C'



Fold 3

Key facts on Hepatitis C

- Hep-C is a **virus passed on through blood contact**. The most common way to catch it is through **sharing injecting equipment**.
- Most people with Hep-C don't know they have it so get a test done!
- It can lead to **liver damage**.
- **IT CAN BE CURED** Treatments are improving all the time. New drugs are taken as pills, have less side effects and a better results.

practical advice around the issue. The guidance and quotes are based on what our Peer Advocates see first hand when working with homeless people to improve health.



Groundswell advocates supporting Hep-C treatment



Fold 1

Hep C- Groundswell's Experience

Groundswell works with the Hep-C Trust and the NHS to support people who are homeless to deal with Hep-C. Groundswell peer advocates supported people to attend appointments for treatment. Some of our advocates have Hep-C too, have been through the treatment successfully and recoveries.

"I support people going to Hep C appointments and help them understand what it's all about. The last guy I worked with, who completed his treatment, has improved his lifestyle. He's happier and feeling healthy."

"Speak to you test. Then always follow up appointments you're entitled to."

"I think it's one amazing treatment I worked with. I think their lives are around."

Groundswell

Groundswell exists to enable homeless and vulnerable people to have control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and in our community.

Homeless Health Peer Advocacy

Groundswell works to improve the health of homeless people who have been homeless themselves, can go with you to health appointments to help you to get the best service from the NHS. We can offer you:

- Help to make health appointments
- Go with you to your health appointments
- Pay for your travel fares if needed.

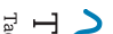
Find out more at: www.groundswell.org.uk

Call our office on: 03000 039 600.

Email us at: info@groundswell.org.uk



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of people don't know that they've got it. But the treatments are getting better all the time so if you think you might be at risk get yourself tested.

What is Hepatitis-C?

- Often called **Hep-C** for short, it's a virus which can damage your liver.

How do you catch or pass on Hep-C?

- It's caught through **blood to blood contact**.
- The most common way to catch Hep-C do it by sharing injecting equipment, it could be any part of the works not just the needle. **About half of the people who have ever injected drugs have Hep-C** but most don't know that they have it. **Safer injecting practices are key to avoiding Hep-C.**
- Other common ways of catching it include sharing razors, crack pipes, notes used to snort drugs **or anything else that might have got blood on it, even if it's a tiny amount that you can't see.**

What does Hep-C do to you?

- **Lots of people don't realise they have Hep-C because there often aren't a lot of symptoms early on.** Some people feel like a bit like they've got flu soon after catching the virus, others don't notice anything for years.
- **A common Hep-C sign is a tired "foggy brain" feeling.**
- As Hep C develops **you may get liver damage called cirrhosis** but this often happens many years after you first catch it. Your liver swells, scars over and eventually starts to fail. If this is happening you might notice losing or gaining weight, bruising easily, itchy skin and light or dark stools. **As it gets worse you may notice that your skin and eyes go yellow,** a swollen and painful abdomen and vomiting blood.
- **Alcohol also damages your liver so it can make the effects of Hep-C much worse.**

What should you do if you think you might have Hep-C or be at risk?

- If you think you might be at risk of Hep-C **get a test ASAP.** It's better to know and seek treatment earlier. GPs, sexual health clinics, drug support projects and some pharmacies offer tests.
- If you know you have Hep-C it is important that you get a scan of your liver to see if there are any signs of liver damage.

What's the treatment for Hep-C?

- **Hep-C can be cured!!!!** There are lots of different treatments and they are improving very fast. Older treatments involve injecting yourself and can have some difficult side effects. **Newer treatments are taken as pills. They are much more effective and have less side effects.**

with the new treatment, if you are eligible for it, you will have no real issues with side effects."

"I was diagnosed in 1988. I was living a really chaotic lifestyle. I attempted the interferon treatment around 2000. That still had the main side effects. Recently I was put on the new "wonder drug". One month in it was "no virus detected", and now 8 months later its still "no virus detected". So my big thing is to advocate and help people to get in now. If you're Hep-C positive and your eligible for treatment with the new drugs get in now. Get the treatment done and dusted because the earlier you get the treatment the better the outcome. If you had seen me two years ago you'd see a very different person."