Eliminating hepatitis C virus (HCV) in England

The number of people with chronic HCV infection in England has fallen by 37% since 2015, to around 81,000 in 2020.

Of the 81,000 people living with chronic HCV in 2020, modelling suggests:

- 11% are in those with no history of injecting
- 27% of these infections are in people with current/recent drug injecting risk
- 62% are in those with a past drug injecting history but who are no longer injecting
Reducing HCV-related morbidity and mortality

Between 2015 and 2020, HCV-related mortality fell by 35%. This 35% fall has surpassed (more than 3-fold) the World Health Organization (WHO) 2020 elimination target of 10%.

By 2020, first hospitalisations for serious HCV-related liver disease were... down 17% on levels in 2015.

By 2020, registrations for a first liver transplant in patients with HCV-related disease were... down 40% on levels in 2015.

The WHO interim target to reduce HCV-related mortality to less than 2 in 100,000 people has already been hit in England (0.56 in 100,000 people in 2020).
Prevention of HCV infection

Around 2 in 3 people injecting psychoactive drugs participating in the UAM Survey during 2019 and 2020, report adequate needle and syringe provision for their needs.

Harm reduction among people who inject drugs needs to be scaled up to prevent both primary infection and reinfection following HCV treatment if elimination is to be achieved and sustained.
Awareness of HCV infection

National data and surveys suggest that more than half of people who inject drugs may be unaware of their chronic HCV infection.

More needs to be done to improve diagnosis overall, including among people with past risk factors for infection.
Increasing numbers are accessing HCV treatment, including vulnerable groups; around 58,850 treatments took place between 2015/16 and 2020/21.

Further work is required to reach the 2030 WHO target of at least 80% of people with chronic HCV diagnosed, accessing treatment (65% in 2015-2020).

Among those treated and not lost to follow-up, 95% were cured.
There is an urgent need, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, to redouble efforts to improve harm reduction, testing and access to treatment for the most vulnerable populations or inequalities will widen.