**Tackling health inequalities with people who have experience of rough sleeping**

**in the SW during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Hepatitis C Outreach Programme in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole**

Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) started a Hepatitis C Testing and treatment project in June 2020.  Previously ad hoc testing services / clinics had been provided, but this paused during the lockdown phase of COVID-19.  In May the partnership got the go ahead from NHSE to change the bid from testing and treating the wider population to targeting people in temporary and emergency accommodation.

The programme takes a multi-agency partnership approach between BCP Drug & Alcohol Commissioning Team (DACT), Royal Bournemouth Hospital (RBH) Liver Team, Hep C Trust, NHSE Co-ordinator, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership (AWP - Community BBV Service for BCP) and BCP Housing Department.

BCP Housing liaised with the hotels who provided a communal space for testing and some also provided a waiting area.  Support workers and security in the hotels were made aware when the team were going in for testing and encouraged residents to remain in the hotel until they had been tested.  Posters were placed in communal areas a couple of days before the testing day, and leaflets placed under residents’ doors.

RBH Liver Team undertook risk assessments and provided PPE for everyone.  On the day of testing a team of three practitioners went into the hotels.  Residents were asked to complete a questionnaire with their details.  Testing in the first instance was by oral swab, and the result is confirmed within 10 minutes.  If the oral swab is positive a dry blood spot test is undertaken which is sent to the laboratory for confirmation testing and genotype.  A practitioner then explains to the individual what this means and what steps will be taken next.

All results from the lab are sent to a central point and results are entered into the drug and alcohol case management system if they are open to treatment and onto a spreadsheet for the hospital (in treatment and not in treatment individuals). People are contacted in person to inform them of their results.  If they are positive, they are offered support from the Hep C Trust prior to and during treatment which usually commences within 2-3 weeks.

A text message was also sent to all individuals accessing the treatment systems across the Dorset region offering support to anyone who is concerned that they may have Hepatitis C.  About a dozen people responded, and they were offered a test if they did not know their status and if they did know their status the hospital has then contacted them to commence treatment.  The Hep C Trust is leading on this aspect along with the AWP BBV Community Nurse.

Within the first few weeks of the programme approximately 180 people were tested with 70 testing positive.  11 people commenced Hep C Treatment and the remainder are waiting for the paperwork for ODN and drugs.

All the large hotels and assessment housing for supporting people were visited, as well as the YMCA which is a second stage housing provision for single homeless individuals.  The next phase is targeting the homeless / temporarily accommodated population in Weymouth as well as the other second stage housing in BCP

The bonus of the partnership undertaking this model is that the nurses have caught up with a few people who they have been chasing for years to commence treatment, they have also come across a number of people who had previously been treated but never engaged for their last test, so they did not know if the treatment had worked.  They have now been tested for this.

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