

**Health and Social Care  
Committee**

Eluned Morgan MS  
Minister for Health and Social Services  
Welsh Government

8 July 2022

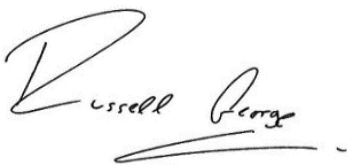
Dear Eluned

Follow up on Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee recommendations: Hepatitis C:  
Progress towards achieving elimination in Wales

In June 2019, the Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee published its report on Hepatitis C: Progress towards achieving elimination in Wales. At our meeting on 4 May, we agreed to write to you to seek an update on the recommendations made by our predecessor Committee.

We would be grateful if you could respond to the issues raised in the annex by **1 September 2022**.

Yours sincerely



Russell George MS

Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

# Annex: recommendations made by the Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on its report on Hepatitis C: Progress towards achieving elimination in Wales

## Background

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Hepatitis C was the focus of a spotlight inquiry by the Fifth Senedd Health, Social Care and Sport Committee in June 2019. A key driver for this inquiry was aiming to better understand how likely it is Welsh Government will achieve WHO targets to reduce viral hepatitis incidence by 90 per cent and to reduce mortality due to hepatitis B and C by 65 per cent by 2030.

The Committee made four recommendations in its report, covering issues including producing a comprehensive national elimination strategy for hepatitis C, running a targeted awareness raising campaign and providing training for health professionals, writing to health board Finance Directors and Chief Executives about targets, and providing additional investment to improve hepatitis C testing in Welsh prisons.

In August 2019 the Welsh Government accepted recommendation 3 and accepted recommendations 1, 2 and 4. in principle.

The Hepatitis C Trust responded to our Priorities for the Sixth Senedd consultation (which closed in September 2021). The Trust told us that little progress has been achieved on the previous Committee's recommendations, and that the impact of Covid-19 has further set back progress towards elimination. It went on to say that hepatitis C services have been impacted more strongly in Wales than other UK nations during the pandemic:

*"While treatment rates fell markedly in all nations in the immediate wake of the first wave, by July 2020 treatment initiations in England were 42% lower than the previous year. By contrast, by August 2020 treatment initiations in Wales were still 71% lower than the year before".*

The Trust referenced the Blood-Borne Virus Recovery Strategy being developed by Public Health Wales. It also noted that Wales is now the only UK nation not to have a target of achieving hepatitis C elimination in advance of the World Health Organisation's 2030 target, with England and Northern Ireland having set an ambition of elimination by 2025 and Scotland by the even more ambitious target of 2024.

We would be grateful if you could respond to the issues below by **1 September 2022**.

## Update on recommendations

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1. Please provide an update on the implementation of each recommendation, including actions that have been taken, any planned actions, and, where appropriate, details of

associated resourcing, planned timescales, and how the impact and outcomes of actions and spend have been (or will be) evaluated and measured.

#### Other issues

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2. Please provide information and data on treatment initiations since 2020.
3. Please provide an update on the Blood-Borne Virus Recovery Strategy and any accompanying wider Welsh Government support.
4. Please confirm the Welsh Government's target for elimination (and whether there are any plans for a more ambitious target in line with the other nations), and whether the Welsh Government is confident it will meet its target.

