# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **World Hepatitis Day and the publication of the Blood Borne Virus Annual Report.** |
| **DATE**  | **28 July 2023** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services.** |

In marking World Hepatitis Day 2023, I am pleased to reaffirm the Welsh Government’s commitment to eliminating hepatitis B and C as a public health threat by 2030 in line with the World Health Organisation’s targets.

Today also marks the publication of the Public Health Wales drafted [Blood Borne Virus annual report](https://phw.nhs.wales/publications/publications1/prevention-diagnosis-and-treatment-of-blood-borne-viruses-in-wales-hepatitis-b-hepatitis-c-and-hiv/). The report provides an up-to-date position on hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV in Wales to the end of 2022. This is the first year that this report has been published bringing together data on hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV in a single report, and provides a basis to track our progress on delivering our commitment to achieve the 2030 elimination targets.

In respect of HIV, new HIV infections have declined by 56.5 per cent over the past ten years. HIV testing is the route into accessing HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) which has been proven to reduce HIV transmission. If a patient is diagnosed with HIV, effective treatment is free on the NHS and people diagnosed promptly can expect long, healthy lives. Implementation of the 30 actions in our HIV Action Plan is proceeding at pace. I will give a full update to Members of the Senedd in the autumn to coincide with World Aids Day. We remain fully committed to meeting the WHO targets of zero new HIV transmissions by 2030, and to eliminating all HIV-related stigma.

The report also highlights the progress that has been made during recent years and the significant work that has ensured services have in many areas exceeded pre-pandemic levels. During 2022, testing rates for hepatitis C reactivity exceeded the previous peak achieved during 2019, with over 75,000 tests conducted and the total number of individuals tested also having exceeded pre-pandemic levels. We are also seeing an increase in repeat testing among groups at higher risk of hepatitis C.

In recent years we have seen a significant decrease in individuals returning confirmatory positive results for hepatitis C infection, with the incidence of newly-diagnosed people falling by more than a third since 2015. This is testament to the hard work, and collaborative effort between service providers that has taken place over recent years.

Despite this, we recognise that there remains significant work to be done if we are to achieve the World Health Organisation’s 2030 elimination targets. Over the coming years, we will need to focus our efforts on populations most at risk of developing hepatitis B and C. Officials will continue to monitor progress as part of the Welsh Government-led Hepatitis B and C Elimination Programme Oversight Group.

I would like to reiterate my gratitude for all the work that has gone into this area, and I would strongly urge anyone who is at risk to get tested, so they can get the treatment they need.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.