# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Eliminating hepatitis B and C as a public health threat** |
| **DATE** | **03 February 2023** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan, Minister for Health and Social Services.** |

I am pleased to announce the publication of the *[Eliminating hepatitis (B and C) as a public health threat in Wales – Actions for 2022-23 and 2023-24](https://www.gov.wales/eliminating-hepatitis-b-and-c-public-health-threat-actions-2022-2023-and-2023-2024-whc2023001)* Welsh Health Circular. This will help Wales to deliver our commitment to achieve the World Health Organisation’s targets to eliminate hepatitis B and C as a public health threat by 2030.

In recent years, we have made some real progress towards these goals. Some 4,000 people have successfully been treated for hepatitis C but recent modelling estimates there are still around 8,000 people in Wales living with hepatitis C.

Hepatitis B screening is now included in our antenatal screening programme and hepatitis B vaccination is part of the routine childhood immunisation programme, which means that acute hepatitis B infection in Wales is now rare in children. However, it remains a problem among unvaccinated adults.

Hepatitis B and C services were severely impacted by the pandemic. I am pleased this Welsh Health Circular sets out how the NHS will not only recover services to pre-pandemic levels but reinvigorate the drive to eliminate hepatitis B and C as a public health threat by 2030. There are 13 key actions for health boards, Area Planning Boards and Public Health Wales to ensure frontline services are provided with the support needed to achieve these elimination targets.

The benefits of eliminating hepatitis B and C are wide ranging, both to individuals and to wider society. By identifying and treating people with hepatitis B and C, we can prevent the development of hepatitis-related liver disease and its complications, which have a significant and detrimental impact on people’s mental and physical health. Additionally, there are significant cost and resource implications to the NHS in treating hepatitis-related liver disease.

Officials have established a Hepatitis B and C Elimination Programme Oversight Group, which includes a wide range of stakeholders to provide a renewed strategic focus on elimination and will report to the Chief Medical Officer and Ministers on a regular basis.

The actions have been developed by this group with a focus on identifying those who need testing and treatment; simplifying service delivery so testing and treatment is accessible to meet the needs of individuals, and supporting people through the testing and treatment process.

I am grateful for all the hard work that has gone into this area to date, and look forward to continued support in our drive to eliminate hepatitis B and C as a public health threat.