

## Background

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The provision of Injecting Equipment was introduced in the 1980's to reduce HIV amongst people who inject drugs. With this, and the provision of opioid substitution therapy, rates of HIV infection in this group have remained low in the UK.

We are currently seeing a rise in new HIV infections in this population group in Glasgow. Routes of transmission are likely to be both sharing of injecting equipment and unprotected sexual intercourse. **At this time it is important that we refresh the key facts about HIV and understand prevention strategies for people who inject drugs.**

### Key control measures for HIV in people who inject drugs:

- Raise awareness of HIV transmission as a risk in injecting drug use (and also sexual risk)
- Update understanding of what it means to be HIV positive
- Ensure suitable harm reduction services are in place, including Injecting Equipment Provision (IEP) and treatment of addiction
- Increase testing to identify those that have been infected with HIV
- Successfully establish people living with HIV on treatment, to reduce further transmission to others (Treatment as Prevention – TaSP) and to optimise their outcome.

## HIV Key Facts

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- HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus. The virus attacks the immune system, and weakens your ability to fight infections and disease.
- HIV is found in body fluids – blood, semen, vaginal and anal fluids and breastmilk. It is most commonly transmitted by:
  - Having anal or vaginal sex without a condom
  - Sharing needles and syringes
  - Sharing water, spoons, filters and other paraphernalia used to inject drugs
  - From an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding
  - Contaminated blood and blood products
- You cannot catch HIV from sweat, urine, sneezing or social contact such as touching, shaking hands or sharing dishes and cutlery.
- There is no cure for HIV, but there are treatments which reduce the virus to undetectable levels, which enable most people to live a long and healthy life and means they are not infectious to others.

## Signs and Symptoms of HIV

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- Most people who are infected with HIV experience a short, flu-like illness that occurs two to six weeks after infection. After this, HIV often causes no symptoms for several years.
- The virus continues to be active and causes progressive damage to your immune system. This process can take about 10 years, during which you will feel and appear well.
- The only way to know if you have HIV is to take a test.

## Key messages for people who inject drugs

- **The best way to avoid bloodborne viruses (BBV) such as HIV and hepatitis is not to inject drugs.** If possible, stop use all together. If you can't stop consider alternatives to injecting. Foil for smoking heroin is now available from all community addiction teams and pharmacies to help facilitate this.
- **If you are injecting – don't share equipment.** You can't tell by looking at someone if they have HIV or hepatitis. Use a new set of sterile injecting equipment every time you inject. This includes spoons, water and all other equipment used to prepare and inject drugs.
- **Always use a condom for sex.** Pharmacies the Glasgow Drug Crisis Centre and a range of other services provide a range of free condoms.
- **Get tested.** The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.

Get Sterile Injecting Equipment ...Get Free Condoms...Get Tested

## Where to get a test

- Testing is available in a range of health care settings.
- No special pre-test counselling is required.

**Drug and Alcohol Recovery/Harm Reduction Services:** BBV testing is available to all patients attending Community Addiction Teams.

**GPs:** All GPs should provide BBV testing. Appointment required for HAT drop-in GP service.

**Sandyford Sexual Health Services:** A list of venues and opening times is available at [www.sandyford.org](http://www.sandyford.org)

**Terrence Higgins Trust:** operate a drop-in rapid testing service, on a Tuesday from 17:00-20:00 at their offices at Breckenridge House 274 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Results are available while you wait, but if it is 'reactive', THT will facilitate referral to an NHS service (Sandyford or GP) to confirm the result. Tel: 0141 332 3838.

**Waverley Care:** can provide dried blood spot testing at their offices in Queens Crescent, St Georges Cross, Glasgow. An appointment is required. Tel: 0141 332 2520. [www.waverleycare.org](http://www.waverleycare.org)

**Brownlee BBV Testing Service:** operates one afternoon a week at Gartnavel Hospital. Appointment required Tel: 0141 211 1089

**Pharmacy: DBS testing is also available at:**

- Abbey Pharmacy, 144 Trongate, Glasgow G1 5EN. Tel: 0141 552 2528.
- Rowlands Pharmacy, 210 Springburn Way Glasgow G21 1DU. Tel: 0141 558 5259

**Third Sector Services** including **Glasgow Drug Crisis Centre** and the **Simon Community Hub** on London Road can also provide DBS testing.

## Treatment

While there is no cure for HIV there is now very effective treatments available that control the virus – often involving only one tablet a day. Treatments reduce the virus to undetectable levels, enabling most people to live a long and healthy life and they are unlikely to be infectious to others.

HIV can often be described as a manageable long-term condition and if people are diagnosed and adhere to their treatment they can live well and have a similar life expectancy as the rest of the population

All adults diagnosed with HIV in Glasgow attend the Brownlee Centre for Infectious Diseases. An outreach HIV treatment clinic also operates from the Homeless Addiction Team at Hunter Street.

## For information and further training contact:

### Contact:

Dr Catriona Milošević  
Consultant in Public Health Medicine  
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde  
Public Health Protection Unit  
T: 0141 201 4917  
E: Catriona.Milosevic@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Louise Carroll  
Public Health Programme Manager - BBV  
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde  
Public Health Protection Unit  
T: 0141 201 4640 (Direct) 0141 201 4917  
E: louise.carroll@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

### Further Information on HIV:

<b>HPS Weekly Report – Scottish HIV Statistics to 30 September 2017</b>	<a href="http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/documents/ewr/pdf2017/1747.pdf">http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/documents/ewr/pdf2017/1747.pdf</a>
<b>HIV in the UK: 2016 Report</b>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602942/HIV_in_the_UK_report.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602942/HIV_in_the_UK_report.pdf</a>
<b>WHO UNAIDS Factsheet 2017</b>	<a href="http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf">http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_FactSheet_en.pdf</a>
<b>90-90-90 – An Ambitious Treatment Target to help end the HIV epidemic</b>	<a href="http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/90-90-90">http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/90-90-90</a>
<b>NAM AidsMap (information on HIV- AIDS)</b>	<a href="http://www.aidsmap.com/">http://www.aidsmap.com/</a>
<b>i-BASE (information on HIV Treatment)</b>	<a href="http://i-base.info/">http://i-base.info/</a>