

Preventing blood-borne virus infection in people who inject drugs in the UK: systematic review, stakeholder interviews, psychosocial intervention development and feasibility randomised controlled trial

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

Opioid substitution therapy and needle exchanges have reduced blood-borne viruses (BBVs) among people who inject drugs (PWID). Interventions that provide PWID with skills, and strategies, to reduce risk behaviours are needed.

What we did

Interventions that reduced sharing of injecting equipment and unprotected sex, alongside the views of PWID and other key stakeholders, were used to develop a three-session, gender-specific group intervention to improve injecting techniques and BBV transmission knowledge, and to promote good vein care and strategies to avoid risky injecting and sex situations. A study was done to find out whether or not PWID would attend and take part in the intervention and what they thought about it. Ninety-nine PWID from harm reduction services in London, York, Glasgow and Wrexham were allocated at random to receive:

- the group intervention plus an information leaflet on BBV transmission ($n = 52$) or
- the information leaflet only ($n = 47$).

What we found

Twenty-four per cent of men and 11% of women attended all three sessions and 48% of men and 43% of women were interviewed 1 month after the intervention. The intervention was considered acceptable by both staff who delivered it and the people who attended it. PWID who attended at least one session tended to engage in fewer high-risk injecting behaviours, to plan more for withdrawal and to be more confident about finding a vein than those who did not attend any sessions.

Conclusions

More frequent injectors, and those who were homeless or female, were less likely to attend the intervention. Further development and testing is needed to meet the needs of all PWID.

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