

1. What steps are being taken to effectively implement the All Wales Abnormal Liver Blood Test Pathway?

The All Wales pathway was based on pilot work developed in the Health Board in 2016 and has continued to run ever since. In addition, we have built considerable Fibroscan capacity through the appointment of a Band 3 Liver practitioner. This capacity has shortened waiting times significantly and has meant that the outpatient service capacity is maintained as approximately 60% of 'straight to fibroscan pathway' patients can be managed in primary care with only 25% requiring a clinic visit (the rest of the patients are Fibroscan FU).

2. Are non-invasive liver fibrosis tests (e.g. FibroScan) currently in use in primary and community care to improve earlier detection of liver disease?

Yes.

Enhanced Liver Fibrosis Test (ELF) will also soon be available, and we are looking to develop models that take Fibroscan closer to the person and are exploring funding options.

Additionally, the Gwent Alcohol Care Team (ACT) has its own dedicated machine and is improving compliance with liver assessment in people who drink heavily (NICE guidance).

3. What steps are being taken to deliver outcomes under the Quality Statement on Liver Disease?

The Health Board is committed to tackling the challenges laid out in the Quality Statement. In terms of equitable and patient centred care we run a patient support group and seek regular feedback to inform service redesign. Patients also have access to an email advice line and a home visit service is available.

With regards to safe and efficient care, the Gwent Liver Unit is fully IQILS accredited and there is also an outpatient transformation plan in progress which is already delivering shorter waiting time for patients (longest wait for new patients is down from 44 weeks to 28 weeks). A Health Board clinician is also the lead for the new Liver Research Cymru partnership.

4. What preventative action is being taken to reduce pre-disposing risk factors for liver disease such as alcohol misuse and obesity?

Gwent is now a Marmot region committed to tackling health inequalities and a major focus of this is around alcohol and obesity. The liver service is working with the Public Health team on the clinical aspects of delivering improvements in healthcare inequalities.

The Gwent ACT is the first 7-day service in Wales and has an assertive outreach programme that supports individuals in their own homes and has begun community support groups which are proving hugely effective.

5. What are the current staffing levels for hepatologists, liver nurse specialists and alcohol care teams? Is this sufficient to meet local need or will further recruitment or training be undertaken?

6 consultants – 5 WTE
3 Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)
1 part time CNS (currently out for advert)
1 Band 3- Liver practitioner

The ACT has:

1 Band 7
4 Band 6
2 Band 4

We believe this is appropriate for the population. There remain ongoing challenges due to wider system pressure around diversion of time to inpatient general medical care, but we are working to address these.