



## **"Alright My Liver?" screening programme in the South West finds hundreds with liver damage, potentially saving lives**

The results of the "Alright My Liver?" pilot liver screening programme, set to be unveiled at this week's leading liver conference in the UK, underscore the critical importance of community-based liver screening. The findings indicate that nearly 1 in 10 individuals identified as high risk screened in the South West were found to have liver damage, underscoring the pressing need for early detection of liver disease.

Launched in 2022, as one of the first NHSE community liver health check schemes, "Alright My Liver?" led by the University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW) and supported by the Somerset, Wiltshire, Avon & Gloucestershire (SWAG) cancer alliance, is at the forefront of combatting the alarming rise in liver cirrhosis, advanced liver disease cases, in the South West.

Liver cirrhosis, a silent but deadly condition, has now become a leading cause of death among 35-49 year-olds in the UK. It often goes undiagnosed for years, leading to potentially fatal complications such as liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma) and gastrointestinal bleeding. The primary risk factors include alcohol use, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and viral hepatitis, with individuals facing deprivation being four times more likely to experience premature death from liver disease.

Dr Annie Archer, Hepatology Specialty Registrar, and a driving force behind "Alright My Liver?" at UHBW, shared her thoughts on the groundbreaking initiative: "The team at Alright My Liver? is delighted to be able to offer early detection in the South West. We have seen too many people suffer the late complications of liver disease, and we want to change this.

"Liver disease disproportionately affects some of the most vulnerable people in the UK, and it is therefore important that we make our services easier to access. Alright My Liver? is piloting one way of doing this, and we are delighted with the results so far."

At the "Alright My Liver?" screening events in the South West, participants receive personalised advice, undergo fingerprick testing for viral hepatitis, and receive a quick scan to assess liver scarring. In its inaugural year of operation, 2458 individuals have been screened in the South West, identifying probable liver cirrhosis in 190 cases. What sets this initiative apart is the comprehensive support

provided to individuals, including follow-up assistance by a Pathway Navigator who can arrange transportation for appointments. This holistic approach has significantly improved attendance rates, ensuring that patients in the South West receive their formal diagnosis of liver cirrhosis and begin treatment, including 6-monthly tests to monitor for liver cancer.

The results of the screening programme are being presented at the British Association for the Study of the Liver, taking place in Brighton between 19th and 22nd September 2023.

Pamela Healy, chief executive at the British Liver Trust said: 'Finding people with an early stage of liver damage is vital to curb the liver disease epidemic in the UK. Three-quarters of people are diagnosed with liver disease in the hospital when it is too late for any effective treatment or intervention. If liver damage is found early, there is an opportunity to stop liver disease progression or even reverse the damage.'

"The "Alright My Liver?" is a beacon of hope in the fight against liver disease, and its success in the South West may pave the way for expanded services across the nation. "