



**NHS Lothian: Healthcare worker who helped turn the tide of Edinburgh's HIV epidemic nominated for lifetime achievement award**

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Edinburgh healthcare manager James Shanley has been nominated for a prestigious Our Health Heroes lifetime achievement award for his contribution to the fight against HIV in the city.

Having managed the NHS Lothian Harm Reduction Team for the majority of his professional career, James (62) is soon to officially retire, but his work over the past 3 decades will have a long-lasting impact.

Back in the mid-1980s Edinburgh was known as the 'HIV capital of Europe' with up to 85 percent of the city's heroin users estimated to be HIV positive.

During his career James has led on numerous projects to help counter the wave of HIV and Hepatitis C infections (HCV) that hit the Scottish capital some thirty years ago.

Thanks to James' dedicated contribution and the work of others in the field, the most at-risk groups in the city are now in a much better place, having long shaken off the unwanted accolade, HCV infection levels in Edinburgh and South East Scotland are now well below the national average.

In addition, James' pioneering work in the development of the Needle Exchange Outreach Network (NEON), which improves patient access to services such as opiate substitute treatments (OST), injecting equipment provision and blood-borne virus (BBV)

testing and treatment, will soon become the national standard for Scotland due to its success in combating drug related deaths in the capital.

“James is a true role model for all those he works with and has cared for,” says mental health nurse Con Lafferty, who nominated James for the prestigious award.

“He has helped countless people who inject drugs across our city become substance free, get back into employment and live healthy and productive lives.”

“There is no one more deserving for this award,” adds Con highlighting James’ work leading the team that helped to reduced blood borne virus transmission rates in Edinburgh.

Also backing James for the national award is Tracey Mckigen, Services Director of Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Associated Services, who said: “We are very proud of James in NHS Lothian for everything he has achieved. Throughout his career he has shown incredible commitment and his work has undoubtedly saved many lives, reduced HIV rates, and is helping to eradicate HCV as a public health concern by 2024. We wish James the best of luck with this award as he truly deserves it.”

The [Our Health Heroes](#) Lifetime Contribution Award, delivered by [Skills for Health](#), is sponsored by NHS Employers. Cast your vote for James before 4<sup>th</sup> February by visiting: <https://bit.ly/3mVklSP>

**ENDS**