

**Northern Ireland
Needle and Syringe Exchange Service
Report**

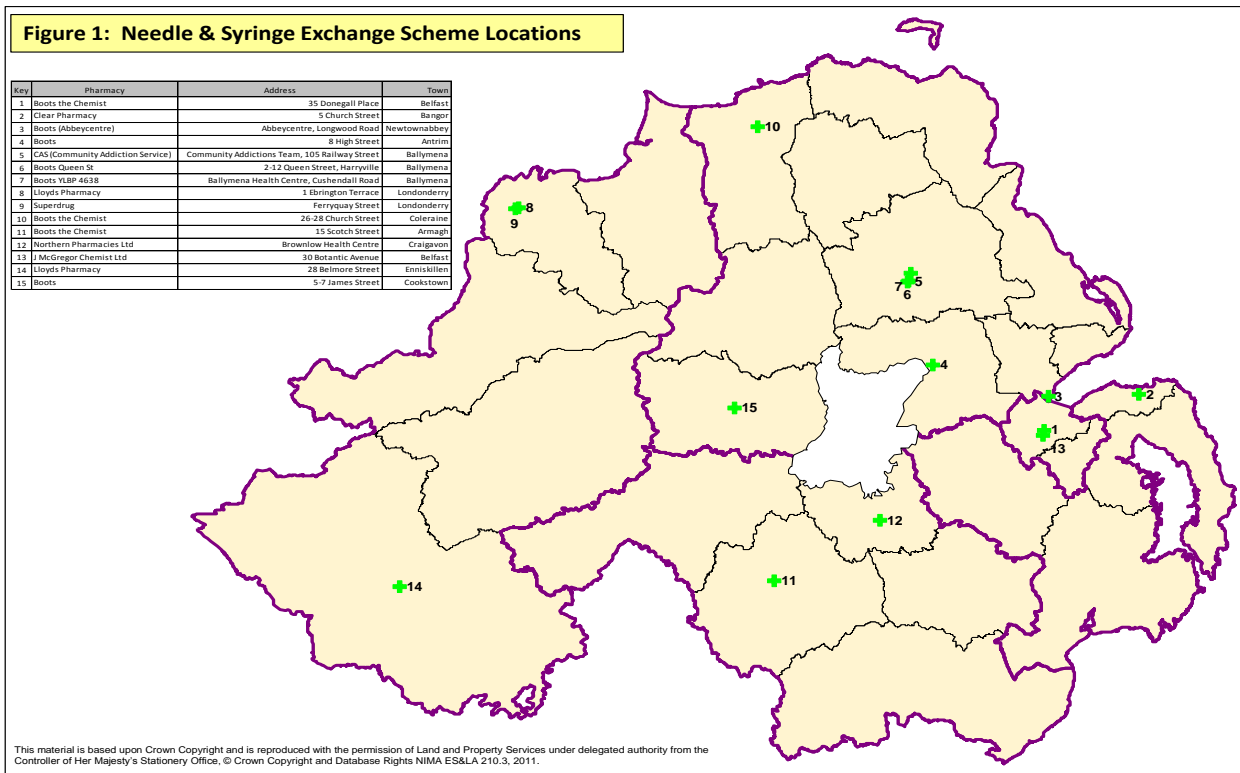
1st April 2015 - 31st March 2016

Annual Report of the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme For the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

This report summarises data that is collected on the operation of the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES). It relates to the twelve-month period between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016. The anonymised data is collected by the 14 pharmacies and 1 Trust-based service that participate in the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES) which was introduced in April 2001.

Participating Pharmacies

Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 the Public Health Agency funded the Scheme through 14 pharmacies based across Northern Ireland and 1 Community Addiction Team Service based in Railway St. Ballymena. A further 6 pharmacies are due to start participating in the scheme by the end of 2016. The current services can be seen in the map (Figure 1).



Number of Visits to the Pharmacies

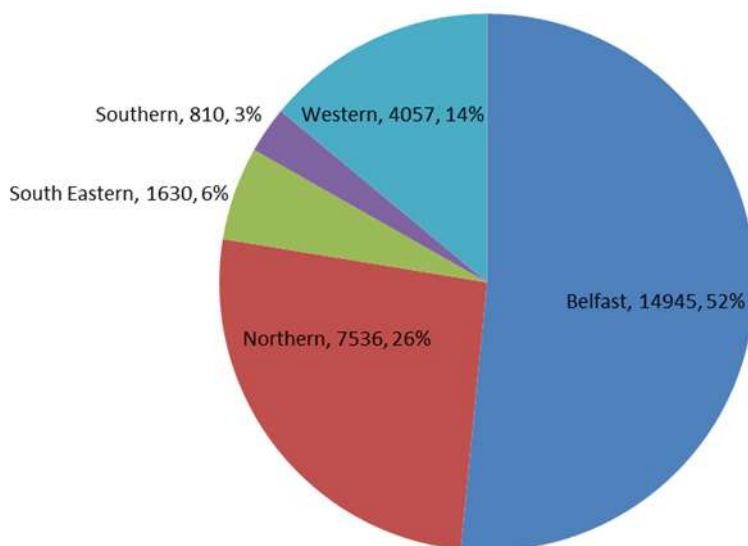
A total of 28,978 visits to facilitate the exchange of needles and syringes were made to the service over the twelve month period between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016. This is an increase in demand of 2,265 (8%) visits on the 2014/15 figure (26,713). Table 1 and Figure 2 below show the number of visits by each Health and Social Care Trust area. The Belfast Trust area had the highest number of visits (52%) and the Southern Trust area the lowest

number of visits (3%). In addition, Belfast Trust experienced a substantial increase (up 16%) in demand while the Southern Trust noted a drop of 8% compared to the previous year.

Table 1: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust area of Pharmacy including percentage change from 2014/15

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No of Visits 2014/15	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2014/15	No of Visits 2015/16	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2015/16	Percentage Change from 2014/15
Belfast	12923	48%	14945	52%	16%
Northern	7314	27%	7536	26%	3%
South Eastern	1590	6%	1630	6%	3%
Southern	878	3%	810	3%	-8%
Western	4008	15%	4057	14%	1%
Total	26713	100%	28978	100%	8%

Figure 2: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme 2015/16 - Number of Visits by Health and Social Care Trust Area.



Number of Visits made by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residents

Data collected by the pharmacies includes the first 4 digits of the client’s postcode e.g. BT12 and this allows a restricted amount of analysis on the Trust area of residence of each client. Table 2 shows the highest percentage of visits made was from residents of Belfast Trust area (43%) and the lowest was from the Southern Trust area (4%). A small number of postcodes (1%) were not submitted to the database and 5 visits were made by non-residents of Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residence

Trust Area of Residency	No of Visits 2014/15	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2014/15	No of Visits 2015/16	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2015/16	Percentage Change from 2014/15
Belfast	10935	41%	12536	43%	15%
Northern	7428	28%	7583	26%	2%
South Eastern	3042	11%	3329	11%	9%
Southern	1105	4%	1061	4%	-4%
Western	4042	15%	4153	14%	3%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	161	1%	316	1%	96%
Total	26713	100%	28978	100%	8%

The number of visits made per 100,000 HSCT population can be seen in Table 3 ranging from the highest, Belfast Trust area (3,543 visits per 100,000 population) to the lowest, Southern Trust area (284 visits per 100,000 population). The percentage change in visits from 2014/15 to 2015/16 is most significant in the Belfast Trust area with a 14% rise in visits by Belfast Trust area residents to Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme pharmacists.

Table 3: Visits per 100,000 Health & Social Care Trust Population

Trust Area of Residency	Number of Visits	Trust Population	Clients per 100,000 population 2015/16	Clients per 100,000 population 2014/15	% Change from 2014/15
Belfast	12536	353,778	3543	3110	14%
Northern	7583	471,188	1609	1548	4%
South Eastern	3329	354,651	939	863	9%
Southern	1061	372,976	284	299	-5%
Western	4153	299,028	1389	1355	2%
Unallocated /Blank Postcodes	316	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	28978	1851621	1565	1451	8%

Population Source: NISRA Population Estimates 2015

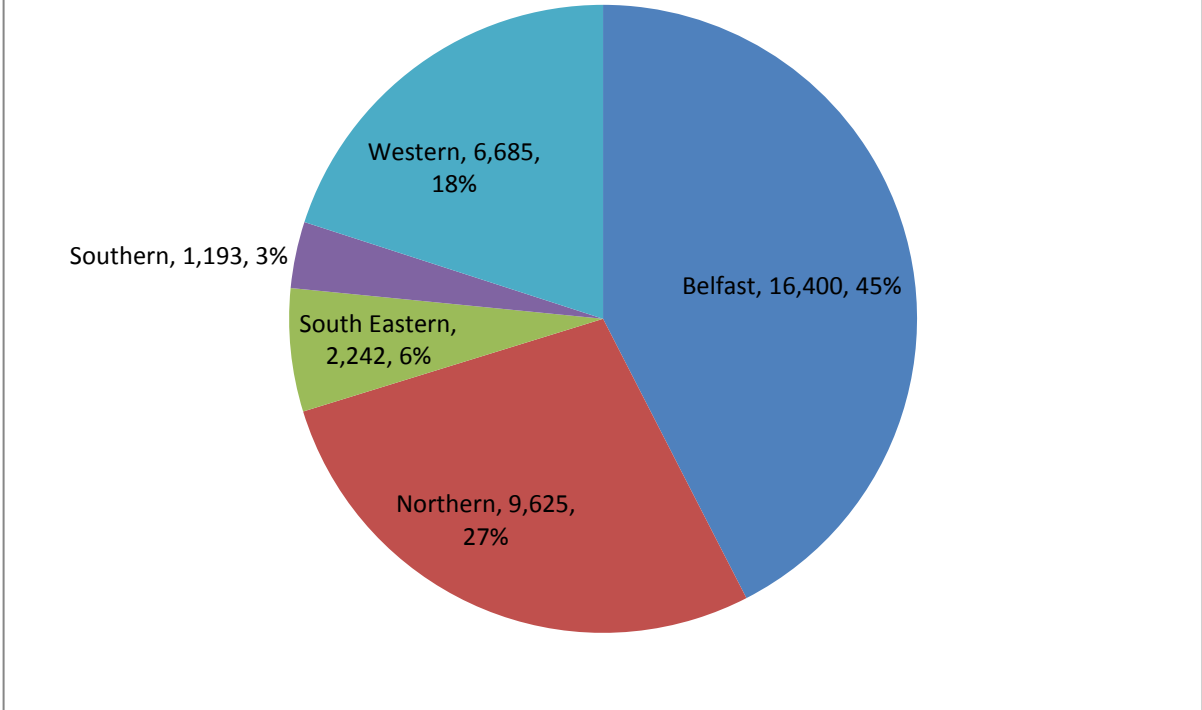
Number of Packs Issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

Table 4 and Figure 3 show the number and percentage of packs issued within each area. Pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area issued the highest number of packs (45%) and the lowest number was issued by pharmacies in the Southern Trust area (3%).

Table 4: Number and Percentage of Packs issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

Trust Area of Pharmacy	Total Packs	% of Total
Belfast	16400	45%
Northern	9625	27%
South Eastern	2242	6%
Southern	1193	3%
Western	6685	18%
Total	36145	100%

Figure 3: Number and percentage of packs issued by Pharmacies in each Health and Social Care Trust Area 2015/16

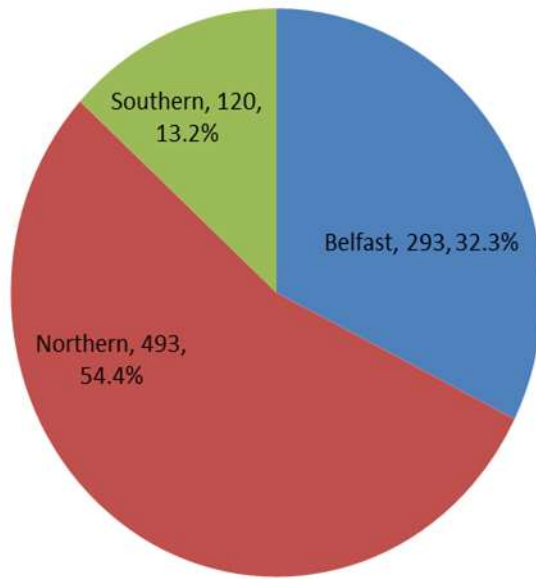


Number and Percentage of Packs Issued to Outreach Workers

During 2015-16, the Public Health Agency funded outreach services in all 5 Trust areas. These services work with people who use substances (drugs or alcohol) harmfully, but who are not ready to enter into treatment, providing interventions to reduce harms to their clients. In three of the Trust areas (Belfast Trust area, Northern Trust area and the Southern Trust area), the services have significant caseloads of injecting drug users, and therefore provide outreach needle exchange to those clients.

The outreach workers visit pharmacies to obtain packs on behalf of clients. Figure 4 shows the number and percentage of packs issued to outreach workers in the period 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016. Of the total packs issued to outreach workers, the highest number, 493 (54.4%), was issued to staff working in the Northern Trust area, while 293 (32.3%) was issued to staff working in the Belfast Trust area and 120(13.2%) was issued to staff working in the Southern Trust area.

Figure 4: Number and Percentage of Packs issued to Outreach Workers



Age of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

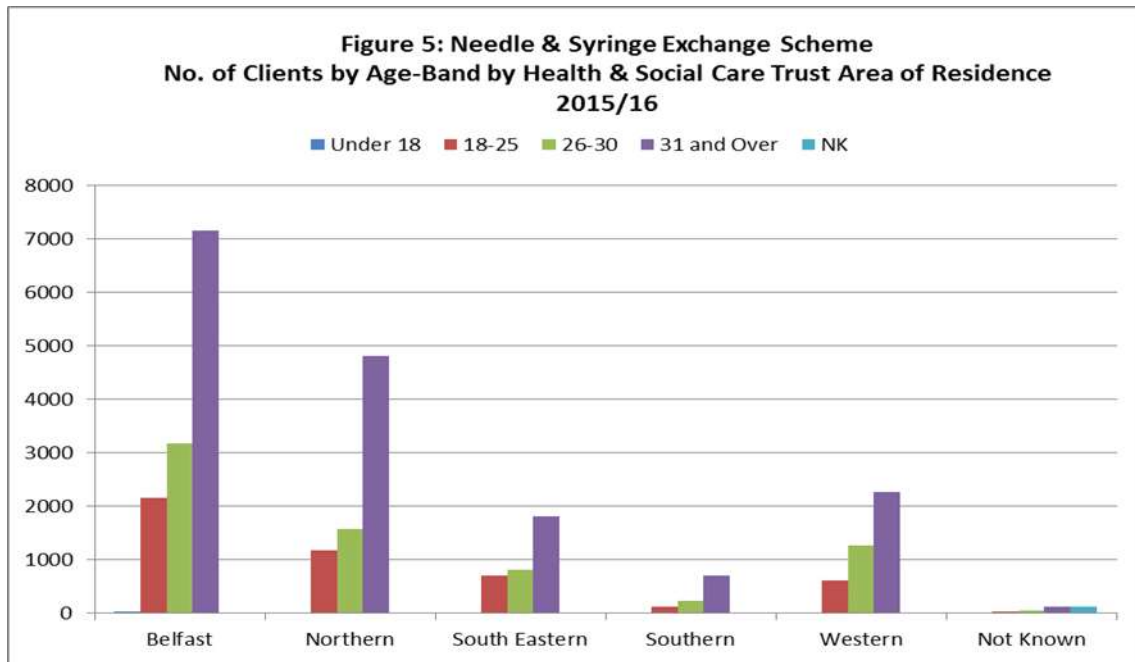
Table 5 and Figure 5 show the numbers and percentages by age band. Please note the figures are shown by Trust of residence of the client.

During 2015-16, the highest percentage of visits to the scheme was from clients aged 31 years and over (58%) which was an increase of 6% on the previous year. The 26-30 year old category accounted for 24% of visits, an increase of 1 percentage point on 2014/15 (23%). In contrast, among those aged 18-25 years, visits decreased from 25% last year to 16% this year, a difference of 9 percentage points. There was no change in the Under 18s.

Table 5: Number and Percentage of Visits by Age-Band by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residence

Age-Band	Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residency of Client						Total
	Belfast	Northern	South-Eastern	Southern	Western	Not Known	
Under 18	35 (0%)	12 (0%)	<12 (0%)	<12 (0%)	<12 (0%)	<5 (0%)	52 (0%)
18-25	2160 (17%)	1173 (15%)	696 (21%)	112 (11%)	617 (15%)	21 (7%)	4779 (16%)
26-30	3169 (25%)	1569 (21%)	812 (24%)	233 (22%)	1260 (30%)	48 (15%)	7091 (24%)
31 and Over	7154 (57%)	4817 (64%)	1808 (54%)	710 (67%)	2272 (55%)	127 (40%)	16888 (58%)
Not Recorded & Outside N.I.	18 (0%)	12 (0%)	<12 (0%)	<12 (1%)	<12 (0%)	120 (38%)	168 (1%)
Total	12536 (100%)	7583 (100%)	3329 (100%)	1061 (100%)	4153 (100%)	316 (100%)	28978 (100%)

Note: < 12 has been used in the table above due to small numbers and in order to avoid potential identification of those in the under 18 age band.



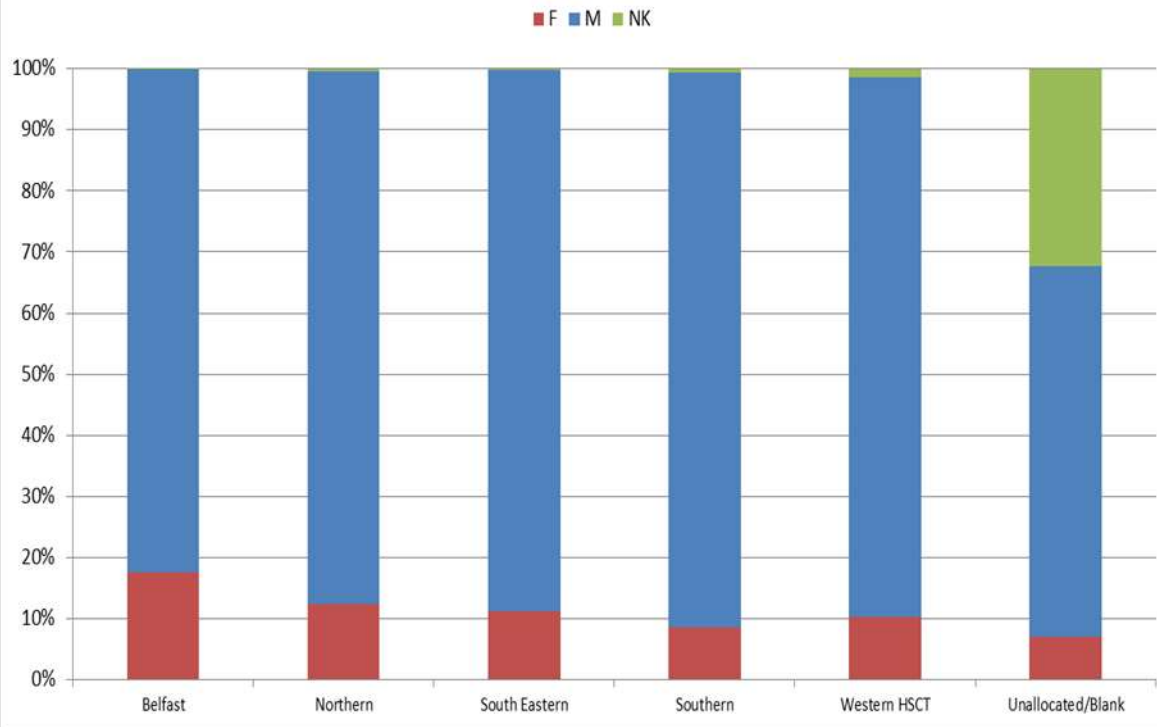
Gender of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

Table 6 and Figure 6 illustrate the number and percentage of visits from males and females using NSES by their Health & Social Care Trust of Residency. Visits were mostly from male clients (85%). The highest percentage of visits from females using the service (18%) was in the Belfast Trust.

Table 6: Number and Percentage of Males & Females using NSES by Trust area of Residence

Trust Area of Residence	Female	% of Trust Total	Male	% of Trust Total	Not Recorded	% of Trust Total	Total of Trust
Belfast	2204	18%	10314	82%	18	0%	12536
Northern	938	12%	6615	87%	30	0%	7583
South Eastern	375	11%	2946	88%	8	0%	3329
Southern	91	9%	963	91%	7	1%	1061
Western	429	10%	3667	88%	57	1%	4153
Not Known	22	7%	192	61%	102	32%	316
Total	4059	14%	24697	85%	222	1%	28978

Figure 6: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme
Percentage of Males & Females using the service by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residency
2015/16



Number of Visits by main drug of injection

Table 7 illustrates the various types of drug users who used the Scheme. Figure 7 charts the trend since 2013/14.

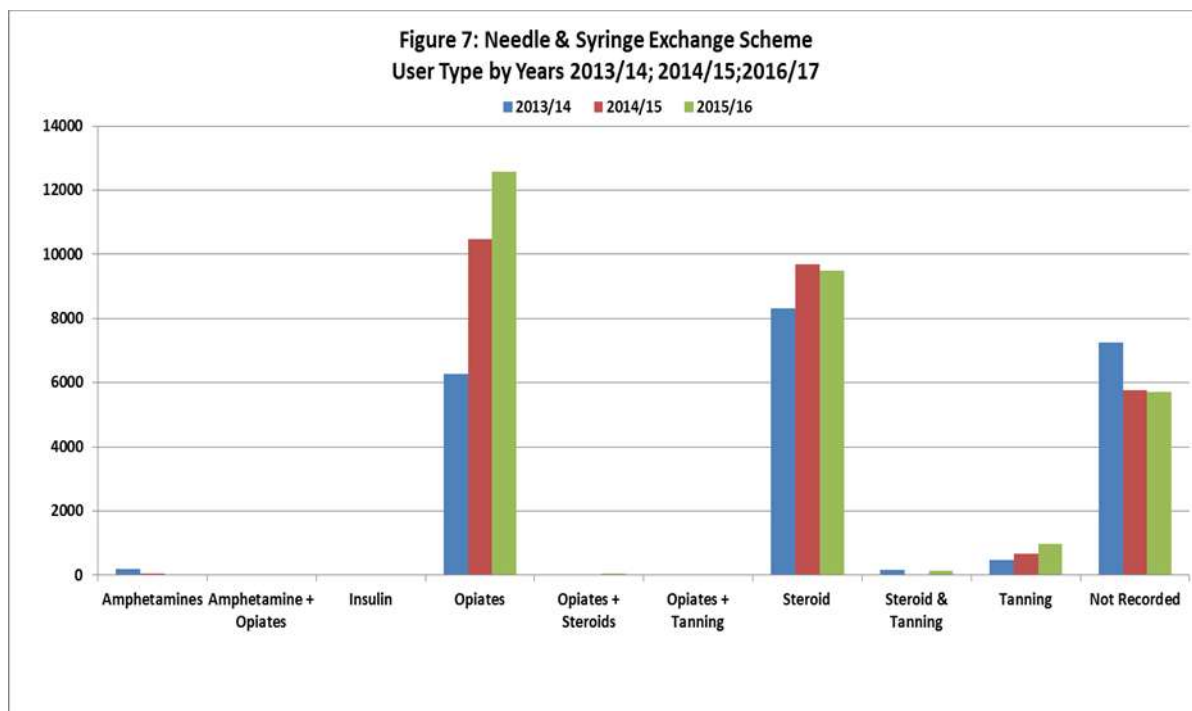
Under the Scheme, data on the main drug clients report injection (“user type”) is collected on those injecting Amphetamines, Opiates, Steroids, Opiate & Steroid, Steroid & Tanning, Tanning and User Type Not Known. Participating pharmacies collected 80% of data on injecting detail which is an increase of 2 percentage points) on last year (78%). Of the total visits to the Scheme it was recorded that 32.76% of users injected steroids rising to 33.23% when steroid & tanning are included in this figure.

Table 7: Number of Visits by main drug of injection and Trust Area of Pharmacy

Main drug of Injection	Trust Area of Pharmacy					Total
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	
Amphetamines	15	<5	<5	5	11	35
	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Amphetamine + Opiates	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Insulin	7	<5	<5	<5	<5	11
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opiates	6070	4768	123	370	1245	12576
	41%	63%	8%	46%	31%	43%
Opiates + Steroids	30	11	5	<5	<5	50
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opiates + Tanning	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5	<5
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Steroid	3439	2244	1213	119	2478	9493
	23%	30%	74%	15%	61%	33%
Steroid & Tanning	33	25	54	8	15	135
	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%
Tanning	496	227	113	31	98	965
	3%	3%	7%	4%	2%	3%
Not Recorded	4855	255	122	275	205	5712
	32%	3%	7%	34%	5%	20%
Total Visits	14945 (100%)	7536 (100%)	1630 (100%)	810 (100%)	4057 (100%)	28978 (100%)

Over the last 3 years, the recording of user type has increased from 68% of visits in 2013/14 to 78% in 2014/15 and 80% in 2015/16. The Public Health Agency is continuing to encourage and support pharmacists to collect this data.

Figure 7: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme User Type by Years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15



User Type Assigned	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Amphetamines	204	50	35
Amphetamine + Opiates	<5	<5	<5
Insulin	<5	<5	11
Opiates	6271	10482	12576
Opiates + Steroids	32	21	50
Opiates + Tanning	5	<5	<5
Steroid	8322	9681	9493
Steroid & Tanning	175	33	135
Tanning	467	672	965
Not Recorded	7259	5774	5712

Number and Percentage of Return of Cin Bins

Tables 8 and Figure 8 show the number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies.

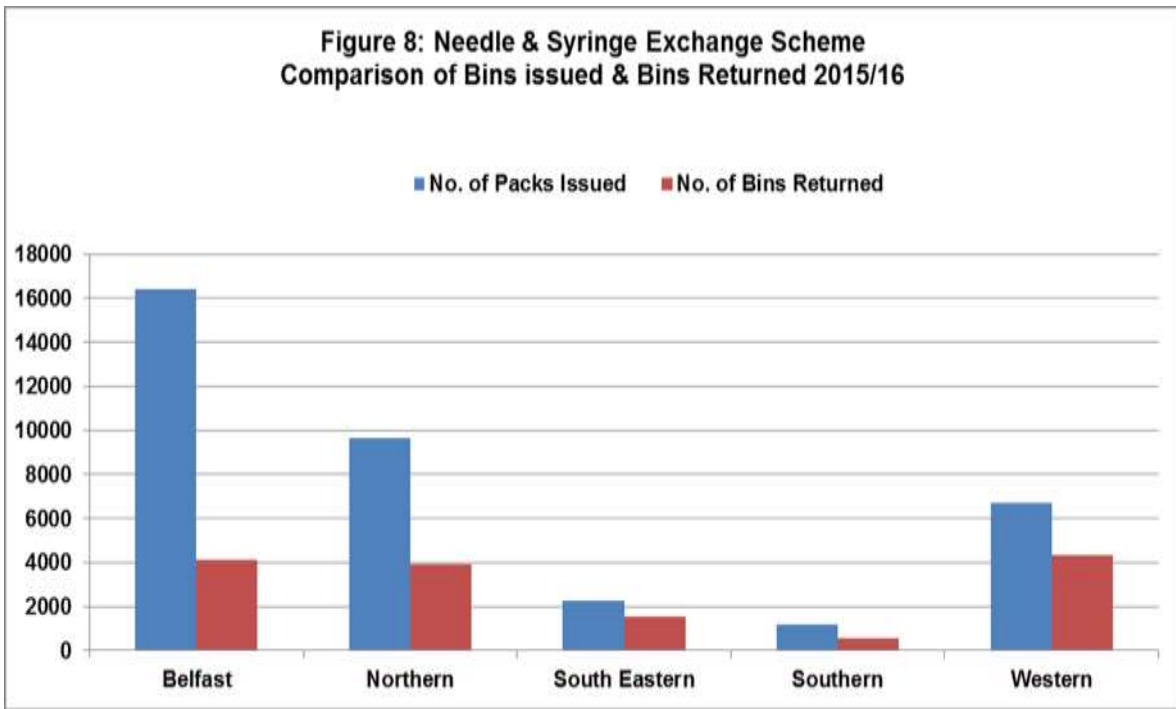
A cin bin (incinerator bin) is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes and the aim is for clients to return their used bins to the pharmacy for secure disposal. Each pack contains a bin. Clients may request extra bins and these are accounted for in the figures. During 2015/16 data shows that 40% of bins issued to users were returned, showing that the return rate has decreased by 5 percentage points since 2014/15. Pharmacies in the South Eastern Trust area continue to have the highest number of bins returned (68%), closely followed by the Western Trust (65%); both areas have lower rates of opiate users and more steroid users. The lowest return rate of 25% was by pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area, a decrease of 6 percentage points since 2014/15.

The Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board have been actively working with participating pharmacies to increase return rates. In addition to this, the PHA have been actively working with Belfast City Council and disposal units have been established in public places in Belfast to reduce the occurrence of discarded needles. A 24 hour contact line has also been set up by the Council for the collection of any discarded needles.

In 2016, the Public Health Agency worked with community pharmacies to carry out a survey with Needle Exchange clients to identify where and how unreturned injecting equipment is disposed of, and how clients can be supported to return their used equipment. The results of this survey will be used to inform future interventions.

Table 8: Number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No. of Packs Issued	No. of Bins Returned	% of Bins Returned
Belfast	16400	4095	25%
Northern	9625	3921	41%
South Eastern	2242	1524	68%
Southern	1193	573	48%
Western	6685	4334	65%
Grand Total	36145	14447	40%



Cross Boundary Flow

Table 9 illustrates the cross-boundary flow of clients accessing the Scheme. In comparing the Health & Social Care Trust of residence of the client and the Trust area of the pharmacy that they visit it is noteworthy that 52.8% of visits from the South-Eastern Trust are to visit a pharmacy in the Belfast Trust. Of the visits from clients who are residents of the Southern Trust 14.8% are visits to Belfast Trust pharmacies and 10.6% are visits to Northern Trust pharmacies. In the Western Trust 95% of visits are to a Western Trust Pharmacy. Table 10 shows the percentage change in visits by Trust residents to pharmacies between 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Table 9: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence of the Clients and the Trust area of Pharmacies Visited in 2015/16

Trust Area of Residency of Clients using NSES	Trust Area of Pharmacies					Total
	Belfast Pharmacies	Northern Pharmacies	South Eastern Pharmacies	Southern Pharmacies	Western Pharmacies	
Belfast	11949 (95.3%)	465 (3.7%)	107 (0.9%)	<25 (<0.2%)	<25 (<0.2%)	12536 (100%)
Northern	839 (11.1%)	6694 (88.3%)	<25 (<0.3%)	<25 (<0.3%)	32 (0.4%)	7583 (100%)
South Eastern	1757 (52.8%)	49 (1.5%)	1509 (45.3%)	<25 (<0.8%)	<25 (<0.8%)	3329 (100%)
Southern	157 (14.8%)	112 (10.6%)	<30 (<2.8%)	762 (71.8%)	<30 (<2.8%)	1061 (100%)
Western	37 (0.9%)	163 (3.9%)	<25 (<0.6%)	<25 (<0.6%)	3947 (95%)	4153 (100%)
Not Recorded & Outside N. Ireland	206 (65.2%)	53 (16.8%)	<25 (<7.9%)	<25 (<7.9%)	31 (9.8%)	316 (100%)

Note: due to disclosure reasons some figures have been anonymised in the table above.

Table 10: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence of the Clients and the Trust area of Pharmacies Visited – total and percentage change in visits between 2014/15 and 2015/16

Trust Area of Residency of Clients using NSES	Trust Area of Pharmacies					Total
	Belfast Pharmacies	Northern Pharmacies	South Eastern Pharmacies	Southern Pharmacies	Western Pharmacies	
Belfast	1690 (16%)	86 (16%)	6 (5%)	<5 (<167%)	<5 (<56%)	1601 (15%)
Northern	60 (8%)	130 (2%)	<6 (<40%)	<6 (<100%)	32 (50%)	155 (2%)
South Eastern	229 (15%)	18 (58%)	64 (4%)	<20 (<80%)	<20 (<154%)	287 (9%)
Southern	23 (13%)	46 (70%)	10 (91%)	68 (8%)	11 (61%)	44 (4%)
Western	24 (39%)	90 (123%)	<7 (<350%)	<7 (<64%)	52 (1%)	111 (3%)
Not Recorded & Outside N. Ireland	90 (78%)	24 (83%)	<22 (<550%)	<22 (<733%)	22 (244%)	155 (96%)
Total	2022 (16%)	222 (3%)	40 (3%)	68 (8%)	49 (1%)	2265 (8%)

Note: due to disclosure reasons some figures have been anonymised in the table above. Figures in italics also represent negative reductions.