

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

1st April 2016 - 31st March 2017

Annual Report of the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

For the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

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 2016 and 31st March 2017. The anonymised data was collected during this 12 month period by the 18 pharmacies and 1 Trust-based service that participate in the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES) which was introduced in April 2001.

The data in this report is collated by area of Trust: Trust areas are coterminous with Local Commissioning Group (LCG) areas.

Participating Pharmacies

Between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017 the Public Health Agency funded the Scheme through 18 pharmacies based across Northern Ireland and 1 Community Addiction Team Service based in Railway St. Ballymena. Two additional pharmacies (*Gordon's chemist in Newtownards in the South Eastern trust area and Mourne pharmacy in the Western trust area*) started participating in this scheme after this period. Their figures are not recorded in this report.

Table 1: Participating Pharmacies by Trust Area of Pharmacy

Trust Area of Pharmacy	Pharmacy	Address	Town
Belfast	Boots (Belfast)	35 Donegall Place BT1 5AW	Belfast
Belfast	J McGregor Chemist Ltd	30 Botanic Avenue BT7 1JQ	Belfast
Northern	Boots (Antrim)	8 High Street BT41 4AN	Antrim
Northern	CAS (Community Addiction Service)	Community Addictions Team, 105 Railway Street BT42 2AF	Ballymena
Northern	Boots Queen St.	2-12 Queen Street, Harryville BT42 2BB	Ballymena
Northern	Boots YLBP 4638	Ballymena Health Centre, Cushendall BT43 6HQ	Ballymena
Northern	Boots (Coleraine)	26-28 Church Street BT52 1AR	Coleraine
Northern	Boots (Cookstown)	5-7 James Street BT80 8AA	Cookstown
Northern	Boots (Abbeycentre)	Abbeycentre, Longwood Road BT37 9UH	Newtownabbey
South Eastern	Clear Pharmacy	5 Church Street BT20 3HX	Bangor
South Eastern	Gordons (Downpatrick)	35-37 Market Street BT30 6LP	Downpatrick
South Eastern	Gordons (Lisburn)	56 Bow Street BT28 1BN	Lisburn
Southern	Boots (Armagh)	15 Scotch Street, BT61 7BY	Armagh
Southern	Northern Pharmacies Ltd	Brownlow Health Centre BT65 5BE	Craigavon
Southern	McKeagney	5 John Mitchell Place BT34 2BP	Newry
Western	Lloyds Pharmacy	28 Belmore Street BT74 6AA	Enniskillen
Western	Gordons (Limavady)	Unit 2, 57-61 Main Street BT49 EP	Limavady
Western	Lloyds Pharmacy	1 Ebrington Terrace BT47 6JS	Londonderry
Western	Superdrug	Ferryquay Street BT48 6JD	Londonderry

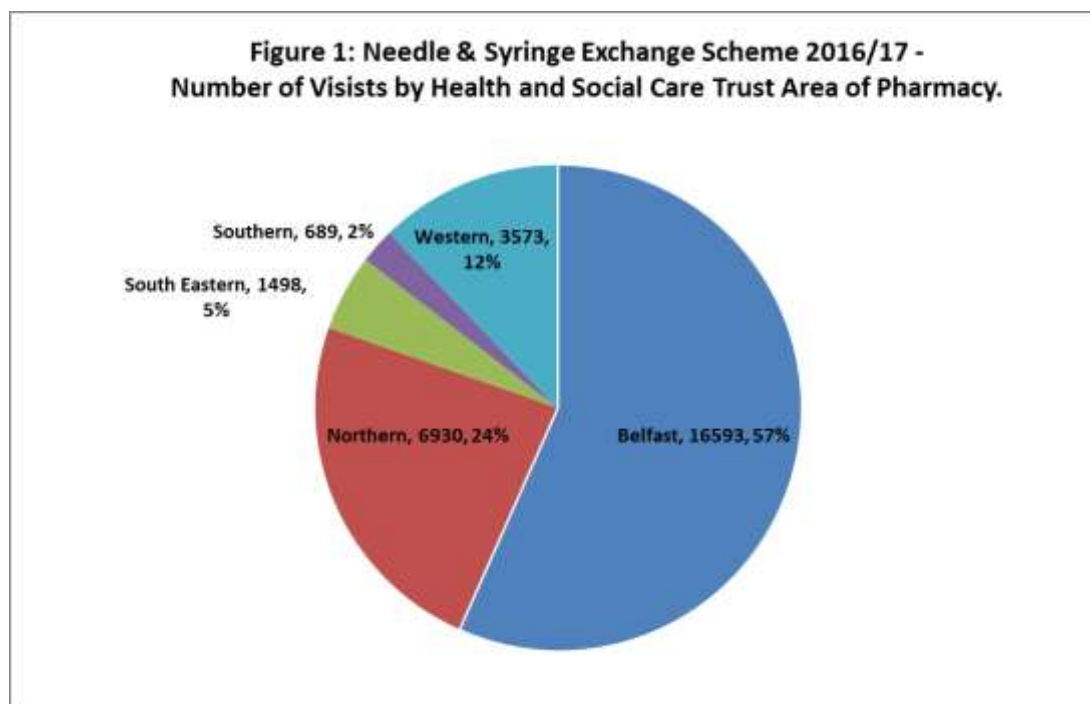
Number of Visits to the Pharmacies

A total of 29,283 visits to facilitate the exchange of needles and syringes were made to the service over the twelve month period between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017. This is an increase in demand of 305 (1%) visits on the 2015/16 figure (28,978). Table 2 and Figure 1 below show the number of visits by each Health and Social Care Trust area of Pharmacy. The Belfast Trust area had the highest number of visits (57%) and the Southern Trust area

the lowest number of visits (2%). In addition, Pharmacies in the Belfast area experienced a substantial increase (up 11%) in demand while the Southern Trust area noted a drop of 15% compared to the previous year.

Table 2: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy 20016/17 including percentage change from 2015/16

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No of Visits 2015/16	% of Visits by Trust Area of Pharmacy 2015/16	No of Visits 2016/17	% of Visits by Trust Area of Pharmacy 2016/17	Percentage Change from 2015/16
Belfast	14945	52%	16593	57%	11%
Northern	7536	26%	6930	24%	-8%
South Eastern	1630	6%	1498	5%	-8%
Southern	810	3%	689	2%	-15%
Western	4057	14%	3573	12%	-12%
Total	28978	100%	29283	100%	1%



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 3 shows the highest percentage of visits made was from residents of Belfast Trust area (47%) and the lowest was from the Southern Trust area (4%). A small number of postcodes (1%) were not submitted to the database and 10 visits were made by non-residents of Northern Ireland.

Table 3: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residence

Trust Area of Residency	No of Visits 2015/16	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2015/16	No of Visits 2016/17	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2016/17	Percentage Change from 2015/16
Belfast	12536	43%	13733	47%	10%
Northern	7583	26%	7191	25%	-5%
South Eastern	3329	11%	3402	12%	2%
Southern	1061	4%	1039	4%	-2%
Western	4153	14%	3659	12%	-12%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	316	1%	259	1%	-18%
Total	28978	100%	29283	100%	1%

The number of visits made per 100,000 HSCT population can be seen in Table 4 ranging from the highest, Belfast Trust area (3,872 visits per 100,000 population) to the lowest, Southern Trust area (275 visits per 100,000 population). The percentage change in visits from 2015/16 to 2016/17 is most significant in the Belfast & Western Trust areas with a 9% rise in visits by Belfast Trust area residents and a 12% decrease in Western trust residents to Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme pharmacists.

Table 4: Visits per 100,000 Health & Social Care Trust Area Population

Trust Area of Residency	Number of Visits	Trust Population	Clients per 100,000 population 2016/17	Clients per 100,000 population 2015/16	% Change from 2015/16
Belfast	13733	354,706	3872	3543	9%
Northern	7191	473,076	1520	1609	-6%
South Eastern	3402	356,693	954	939	2%
Southern	1039	377,231	275	284	-3%
Western	3659	300,431	1218	1389	-12%
Unallocated/ Blank Postcodes	259	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	29283	1862137	1573	1565	0%

Population Source: NISRA Population Estimates 2016

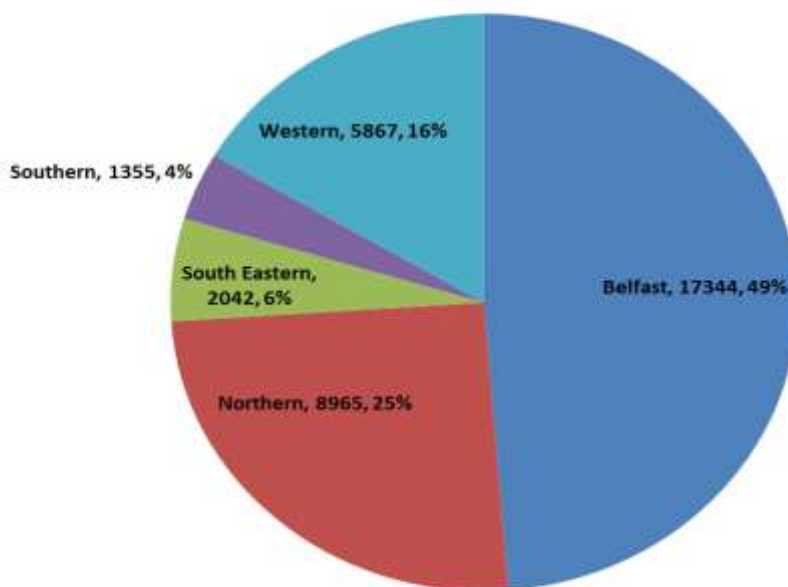
Number of Packs Issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

Table 5 and Figure 2 show the number and percentage of packs issued within each area. Pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area issued the highest number of packs (49%) and the lowest number was issued by pharmacies in the Southern Trust area (4%).

Table 5: Number and Percentage of Packs issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

Trust Area of Pharmacy	Total Packs	% of Total
Belfast	17344	49%
Northern	8965	25%
South Eastern	2042	6%
Southern	1355	4%
Western	5867	16%
Total	35573	100%

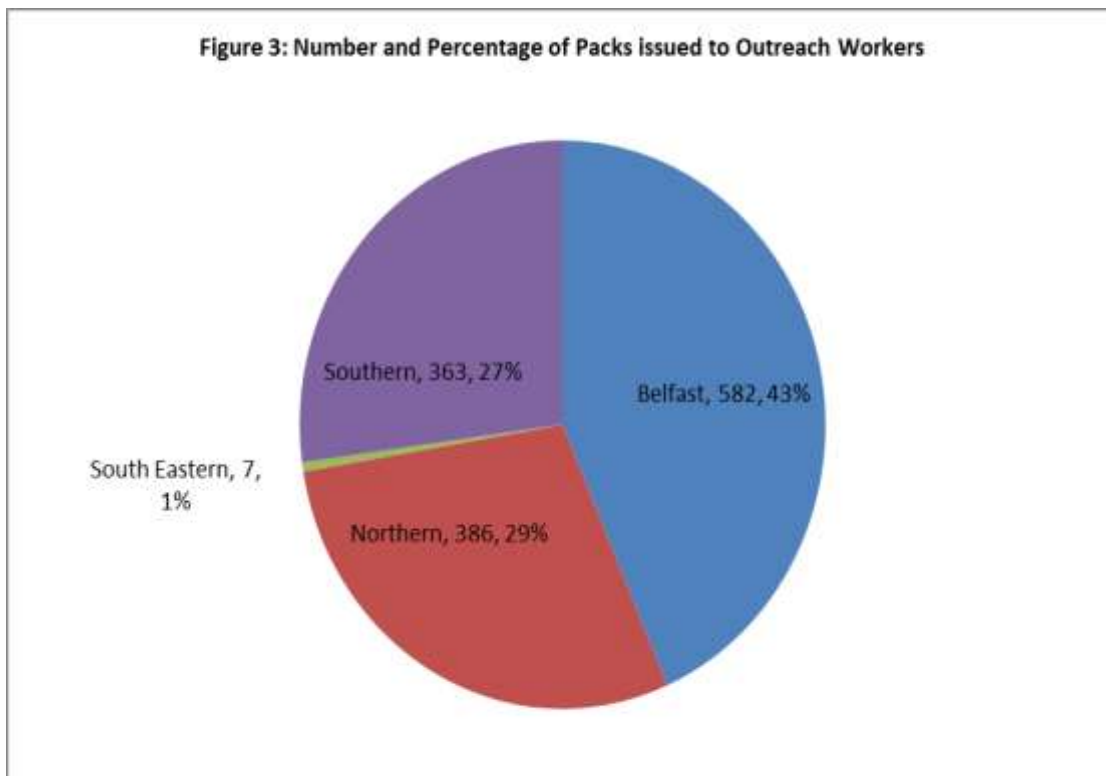
Figure 2: Number and percentage of packs issued by Pharmacies in each Health and Social Care Trust Area 2016/17



Number and Percentage of Packs Issued to Outreach Workers

During 2016-17, 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. These services provide outreach needle exchange to relevant clients.

The outreach workers visit pharmacies to obtain packs on behalf of clients. Figure 3 shows the number and percentage of packs issued to outreach workers in the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. Of the total packs issued to outreach workers, the highest number, 582 (43%), was issued to staff working in the Belfast Trust area, while 386 (29%) was issued to staff working in the Northern Trust area and 363(27%) was issued to staff working in the Southern Trust area.



Age of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

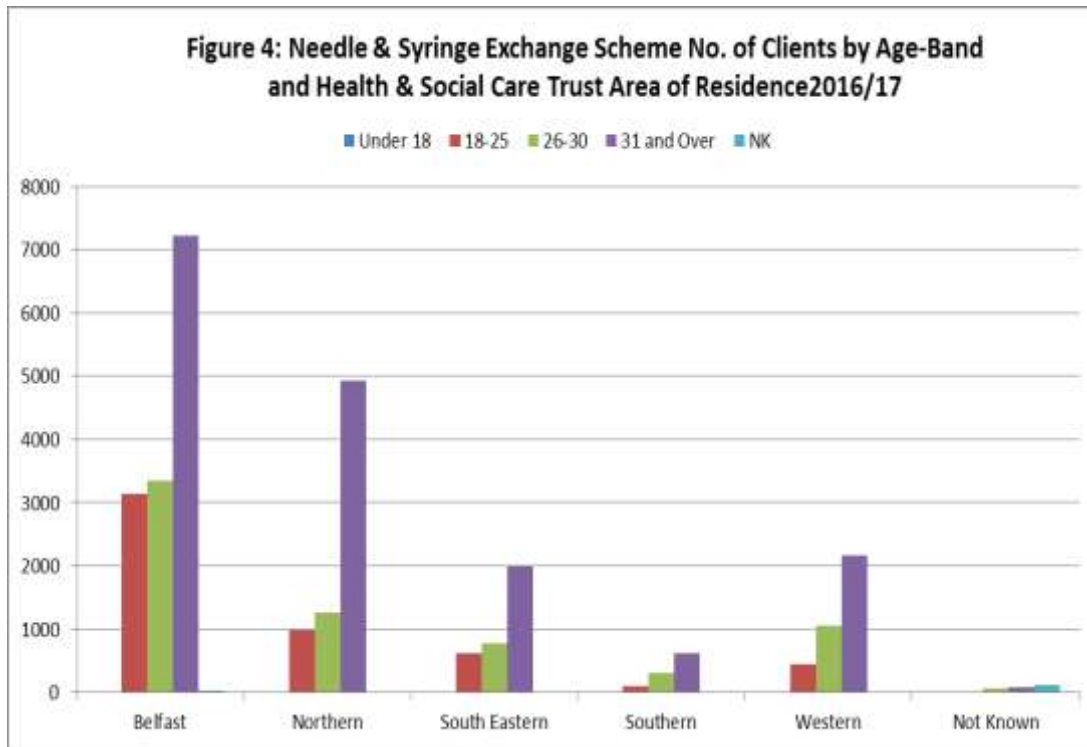
Table 6 and Figure 4 show the numbers and percentages by age band. Please note the figures are shown by Trust Area of residence of the client.

During 2016-17, the highest percentage of visits to the scheme was from clients aged 31 years and over (58%) the same percentage as the previous year. The 26-30 year old category accounted for 23% of visits, a decrease of 1 percentage point on 2015/16 (24%). In contrast, among those aged 18-25 years, visits increased from 16% last year to 18% this year. In the under 18 category, there was a reduction from 52 (0%) visits last year to 7 (0%) in 2016/17.

Table 6: 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	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	0 (0%)	<20 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (0%)
18-25	3135 (23%)	975 (14%)	618 (18%)	104 (10%)	443 (12%)	14 (5%)	5289 (18%)
26-30	3351 (24%)	1269 (18%)	782 (23%)	305 (29%)	1046 (29%)	56 (22%)	6809 (23%)
31 and Over	7227 (53%)	4934 (69%)	1997 (59%)	613 (59%)	2167(59%)	80 (31%)	17018 (58%)
Not Recorded & Outside N.I.	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	17 (2%)	<20 (0%)	109 (42%)	160 (1%)
Total	13733 (100%)	7191 (100%)	3402 (100%)	1039 (100%)	3659 (100%)	259 (100%)	29283 (100%)

Note: < 20 has been used in the table above due to small numbers and in order to avoid potential identification of those in the "Under 18" and "Not Recorded & Outside N.I." age-bands.



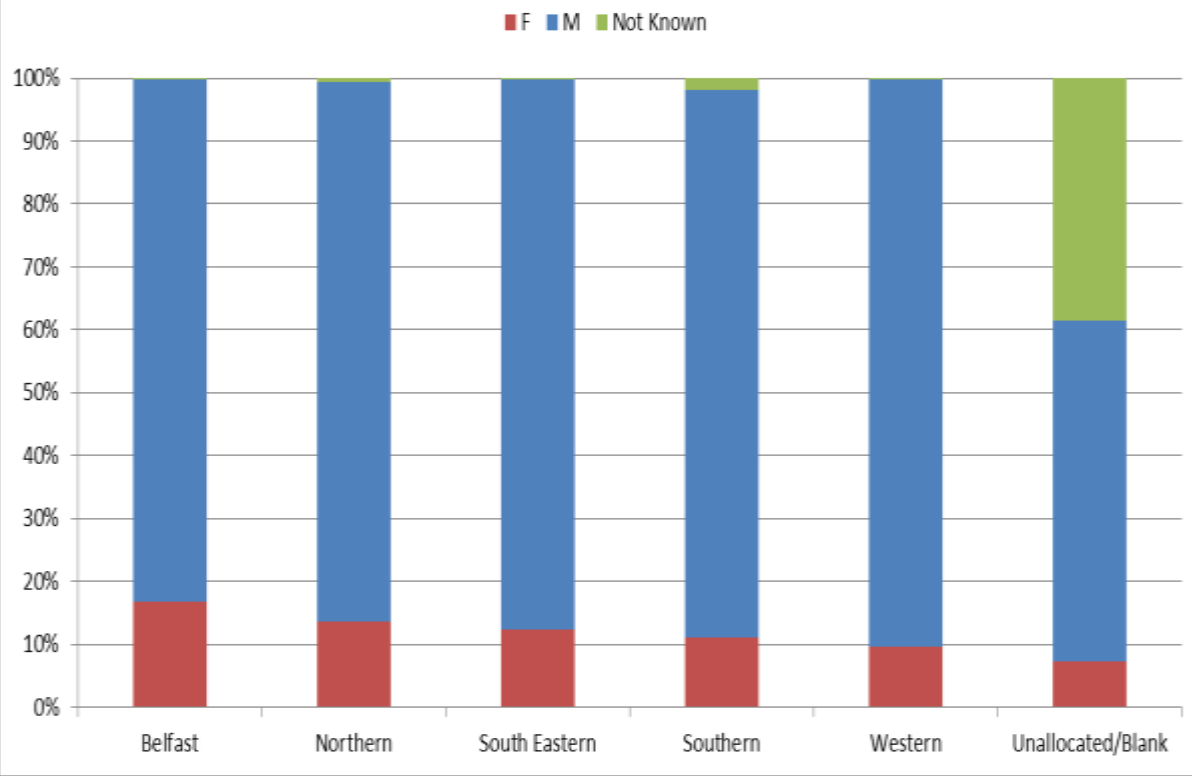
Gender of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

Table 7 and Figure 5 illustrate the number and percentage of visits from males and females using NSES by their Health & Social Care Trust Area of Residency. Visits were mostly from male clients (85%). The highest percentage of visits from females using the service (17%) was in the Belfast Trust area.

Table 7: 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	2302	17%	11403	83%	28	0%	13733
Northern	971	14%	6181	86%	39	1%	7191
South Eastern	422	12%	2974	87%	6	0%	3402
Southern	115	11%	905	87%	19	2%	1039
Western	354	10%	3300	90%	5	0%	3659
Not Known	19	7%	140	54%	100	39%	259
Total	4183	14%	24903	85%	197	1%	29283

**Figure 5: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme
Percentage of Males & Females using the service by Health & Social Care Trust Area of
Residency 2016/17**



Number of Visits by main drug of injection

Table 8 illustrates the various types of drug users who used the Scheme. Figure 6 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.

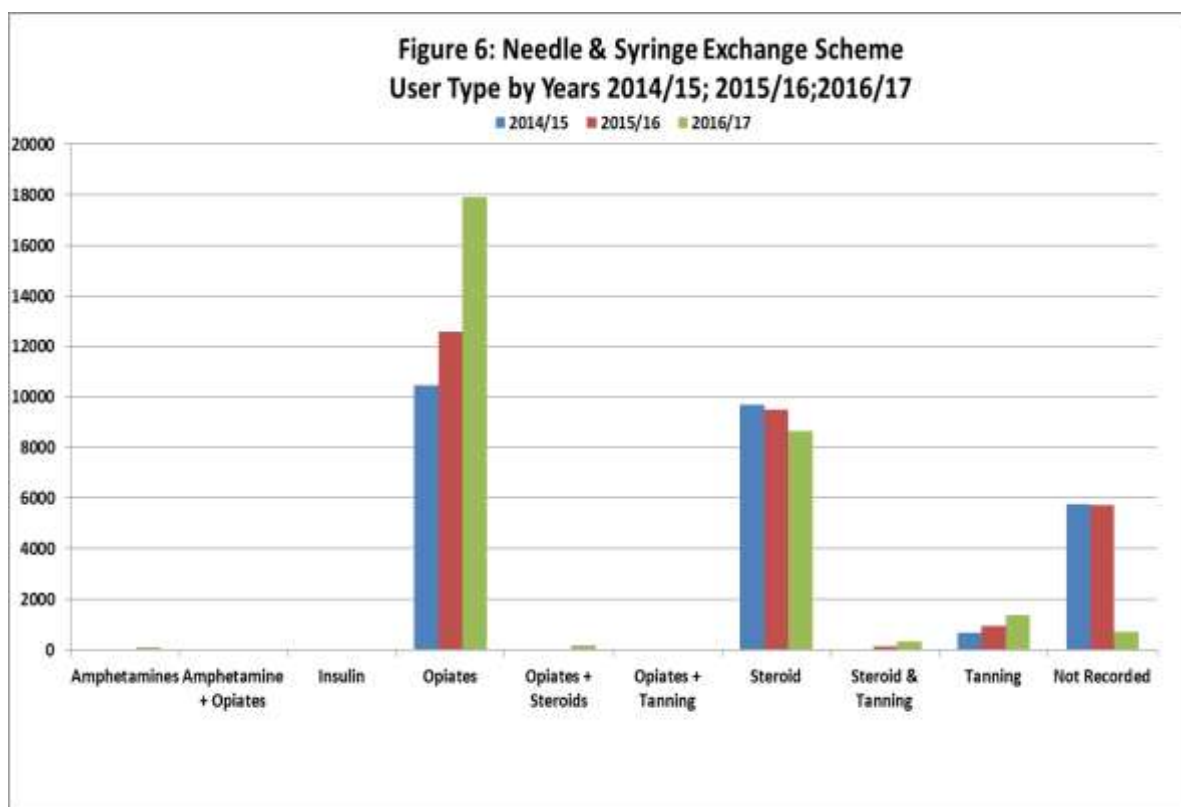
Table 8: Number of Visits by main drug of injection and Trust Area of Pharmacy

Main drug of Injection	Trust Area of Pharmacy					Total
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	
Amphetamines	12	16	<20	<20	54	92
	0%	0%	<5%	<5%	2%	0%
Amphetamine + Opiates	0	0	0	<20	0	<20
	0%	0%	0%	<5%	0%	<5%
Insulin	<20	<20	0	0	0	<20
	<5%	<5%	0%	0%	0%	<5%
Opiates	12298	4210	94	454	845	17901
	74%	61%	6%	66%	24%	61%
Opiates + Steroids	56	81	<20	<20	30	188
	0%	1%	<5%	<5%	1%	1%
Opiates + Tanning	<20	<20	0	0	0	<20
	<5%	<5%	0%	0%	0%	<5%
Steroid	3045	1924	1101	131	2444	8645
	18%	28%	73%	19%	68%	30%
Steroid & Tanning	95	126	93	16	28	358
	1%	2%	6%	2%	1%	1%
Tanning	717	374	140	11	125	1367
	4%	5%	9%	2%	3%	5%
Not Recorded	366	196	64	50	47	723
	2%	3%	4%	7%	1%	2%
Total Visits	16593 (100%)	6930 (100%)	1498 (100%)	689 (100%)	3573(100%)	29283 (100%)

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

Over the last 3 years, the recording of user type has increased from 78% of visits in 2014/15 to 80% in 2015/16 and 98% in 2016/17. The Public Health Agency is continuing to encourage and support pharmacists to collect this data.

Figure 6: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme User Type by Years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17



User Type Assigned	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Amphetamines	50	35	92
Amphetamine + Opiates	<5	<5	<5
Insulin	<5	11	<5
Opiates	10482	12576	17901
Opiates + Steroids	21	50	188
Opiates + Tanning	<5	<5	<5
Steroid	9681	9493	8645
Steroid & Tanning	33	135	358
Tanning	672	965	1367
Not Recorded	5774	5712	723

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

Number and Percentage of Return of Cin Bins

Tables 9 and Figure 7 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. During 2016/17 data shows that 39% of bins issued to users were returned, showing that the return rate has decreased by 1 percentage points since 2015/16. Pharmacies in the South Eastern Trust area continue to have the highest number of bins returned (70%), closely followed by the Western Trust area(67%); both areas have lower rates of opiate users and more steroid users. The lowest return rate of 24% was by pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area, a decrease of 1 percentage points since 2015/16.

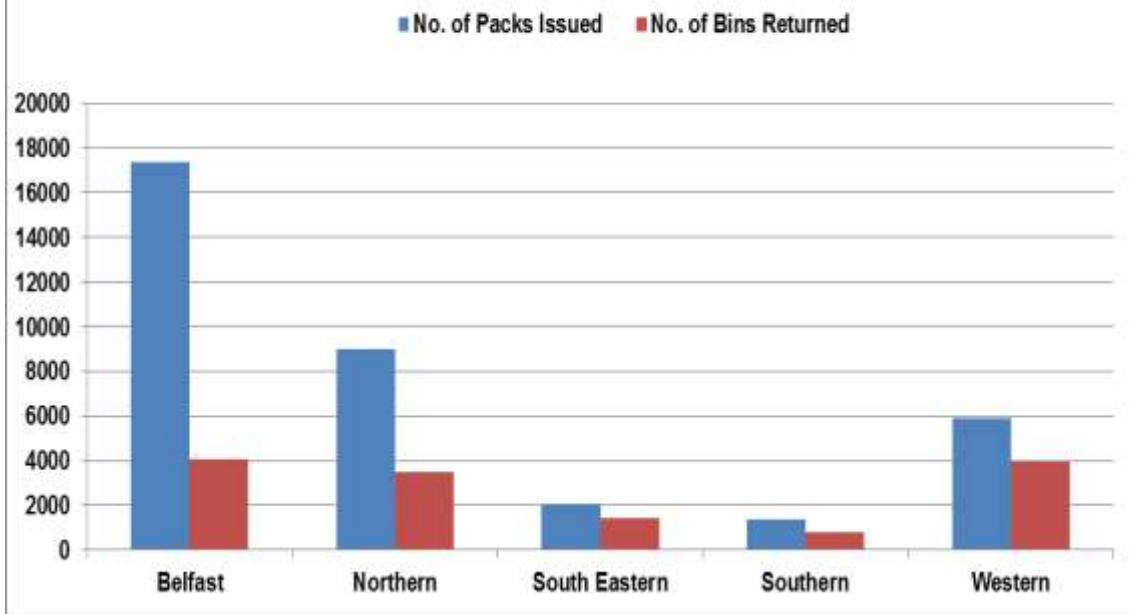
The Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board have been actively working with participating pharmacies to increase return rates. In addition to this, the PHA has been actively working with Belfast City Council and disposal units have been established in public places in Belfast to reduce 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 suggest that some clients do not return cin bins on every visit because a single cin bin is large enough to hold needles obtained over a number of visits. In some cases therefore, low return rates may in part be accounted for by people bringing needles obtained over a number of visits back in one cin bin.

Table 9: 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	17344	4078	24%
Northern	8965	3468	39%
South Eastern	2042	1435	70%
Southern	1355	806	59%
Western	5867	3951	67%
Grand Total	35573	13738	39%

**Figure 7: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme
Comparison of Bins issued & Bins Returned 2016/17**



Cross Boundary Flow

Table 10 illustrates the cross-boundary flow of clients accessing the Scheme. In comparing the Health & Social Care Trust area of residence of the client and the Trust area of the pharmacy that they visit, it is noteworthy that 58% of visits from the South-Eastern Trust area are to visit a pharmacy in the Belfast Trust area. Of the visits from clients who are residents of the Southern Trust area 32% are visits to Belfast Trust area pharmacies and 7% are visits to Northern Trust area pharmacies. In the Western Trust area 95% of visits are to a Western Trust area Pharmacy. Table 10 shows the percentage change in visits by Trust area of residents to pharmacies between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Table 10: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence of the Clients and the Trust area of Pharmacies visited in 2016/17

Trust Area of Residency of Clients using NSES	Trust Area of Pharmacies					
	Belfast Pharmacies	Northern Pharmacies	South Eastern Pharmacies	Southern Pharmacies	Western Pharmacies	Total
Belfast	13107 (95%)	497 (4%)	108 (1%)	8 (0%)	13 (0%)	13733 (100%)
Northern	965 (13%)	6158 (86%)	6 (0%)	18 (0%)	44 (1%)	7191 (100%)
South Eastern	1972 (58%)	49 (1%)	1376 (40%)	0 (0%)	5 (0%)	3402 (100%)
Southern	328 (32%)	77 (7%)	<20 (<10%)	611 (59%)	<20 (<10%)	1039 (100%)
Western	52 (1%)	120 (3%)	0 (0%)	8 (0%)	3479 (95%)	3659 (100%)
Not Recorded & Outside N. Ireland	169 (65%)	29 (11%)	<20 (<10%)	44 (17%)	<20 (<10%)	259 (100%)

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