

Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Service Report

1st April 2017 - 31st March 2018

Annual Report of the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme For the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018

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 2017 and 31st March 2018. The anonymised data was collected during this 12 month period by the 21 services 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 2017 and 31st March 2018 the Public Health Agency funded the Scheme through 19 pharmacies based across Northern Ireland, 1 Drug Outreach team in Belfast and 1 Community Addiction Team Service based in Railway St. Ballymena. One additional pharmacy (*Mourne pharmacy in the Western trust area*) started supplying figures in this scheme after this period. Their figures are not included in this report.

Table 1: Participating Pharmacies by Trust Area of Pharmacy

Trust Area of Pharmacy	Pharmacy	Address	Town
Belfast	Boots (Belfast)	35-47 Donegall Place, BT1 5AW	Belfast
Belfast	J McGregor Chemist Ltd	30 Botanic Avenue, BT7 1JQ	Belfast
Belfast	Drug Outreach Team	159 Durham Street, BT12 4GB	Belfast
Northern	Boots (Antrim)	8 High Street, BT41 4AN	Antrim
Northern	CAS (Community Addiction Service)	Community Addictions Team, 105a Railway Street, BT42 2AF	Ballymena
Northern	Boots Queen St.	2-12 Queen Street, Harryville, BT42 2BB	Ballymena
Northern	Boots YLBP 4638	Ballymena Health Centre, 86 Cushendall Road, BT43 6HH	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	42 Newtownards Road Bangor, BT20 4BP	Bangor
South Eastern	Gordons (Downpatrick)	35-37 Market Street, BT30 6LP	Downpatrick
South Eastern	Gordons (Lisburn)	56 Bow Street, BT28 1BN	Lisburn
South Eastern	Gordons (Newtownards)	2A Regent Street, BT23 4LH	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 0EP	Limavady
Western	Lloyds Pharmacy	1 Ebrington Terrace, BT47 6JS	Londonderry
Western	Superdrug	Ferryquay Street, BT48 6JD	Londonderry

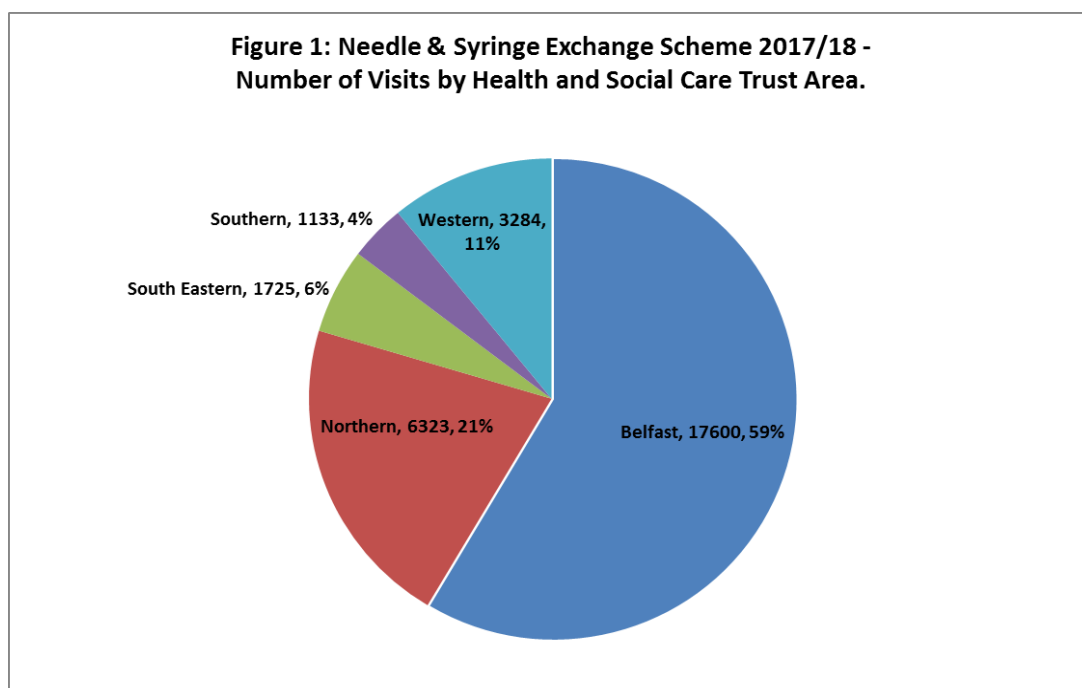
Number of Visits to the Pharmacies

A total of 30,065 visits to facilitate the exchange of needles and syringes were made to the service over the twelve month period between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018. This is an increase in demand of 782 (3%) visits on the 2016/17 figure (29,283). 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 (59%) and the Southern Trust area the lowest number of visits (4%). In addition, pharmacies in the Southern Trust area experienced a substantial increase (up 64%) in demand while the Northern Trust area noted a drop of 9% compared to the previous year.

Table 2: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy 2017/18 including percentage change from 2016/17

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No of Visits 2016/17	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2016/17	No of Visits 2017/18	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2017/18	Percentage Change from 2016/17
Belfast	16593	57%	17600	59%	6%
Northern	6930	24%	6323	21%	-9%
South Eastern	1498	5%	1725	6%	15%
Southern	689	2%	1133	4%	64%
Western	3573	12%	3284	11%	-8%
Total	29283	100%	30065	100%	3%



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 (48%) and the lowest was from the Southern Trust area (5%). A small number of postcodes (1%) were not submitted to the database and 9 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 2016/17	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2016/17	No of Visits 2017/18	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2017/18	Percentage Change from 2016/17
Belfast	13733	47%	14523	48%	6%
Northern	7191	25%	6408	21%	-11%
South Eastern	3402	12%	3812	13%	12%
Southern	1039	4%	1451	5%	40%
Western	3659	12%	3476	12%	-5%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	259	1%	395	1%	53%
Total	29283	100%	30065	100%	3%

The number of visits made per 100,000 HSCT population can be seen in Table 4 ranging from the highest, Belfast Trust area (4,084 visits per 100,000 population) to the lowest, Southern Trust area (382 visits per 100,000 population). The percentage change in visits from 2016/17 to 2017/18 is most significant in the Southern Trust with a 39% rise in visits by Southern Trust area residents and an 11% decrease in Northern trust residents to Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme pharmacies.

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

Trust Area of Residency	Number of Visits	Trust Population	Visits per 100,000 population 2016/17	Visits per 100,000 population 2017/18	% Change from 2016/17
Belfast	14523	355,593	3872	4084	5%
Northern	6408	474,773	1520	1350	-11%
South Eastern	3812	358,708	954	1063	11%
Southern	1451	380,312	275	382	39%
Western	3476	301,448	1218	1153	-5%
Unallocated /Blank Postcodes	395	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	30065	1870834	1573	1607	2%

Population Source: NISRA Population Estimates 2017

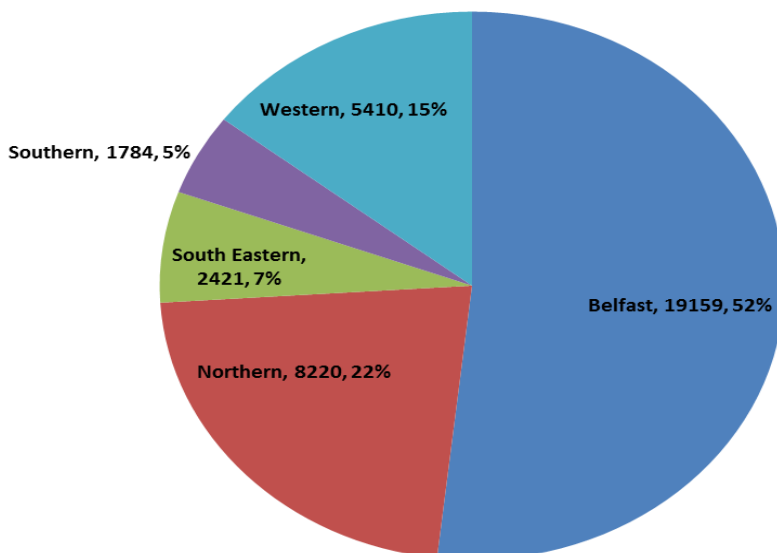
Number of Packs Issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

A total number of 36,994 packs have been issued across all HSC Trust areas. 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 (52%) and the lowest number was issued by pharmacies in the Southern Trust area (5%).

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	19159	52%
Northern	8220	22%
South Eastern	2421	7%
Southern	1784	5%
Western	5410	15%
Total	36994	100%

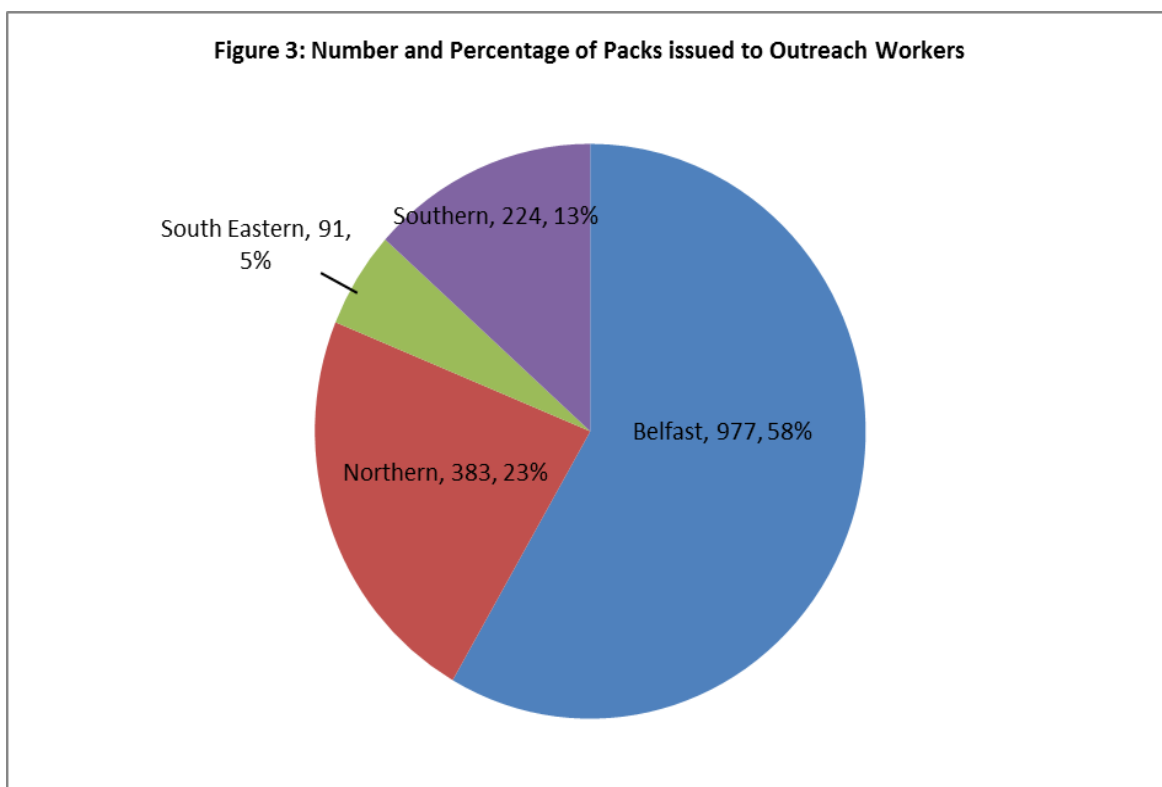
Figure 2: Number and percentage of packs issued by Pharmacies in each Health and Social Care Trust Area 2017/18 Trust Area



Number and Percentage of Packs Issued to Outreach Workers

During 2017-18, 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 2017 to 31st March 2018. Of the 1675 packs issued to outreach workers, the highest number, 977 (58%), was issued to staff working in the Belfast Trust area, while 383 (23%) was issued to staff working in the Northern Trust area and 224(13%) was issued to staff working in the Southern Trust area.



Age of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

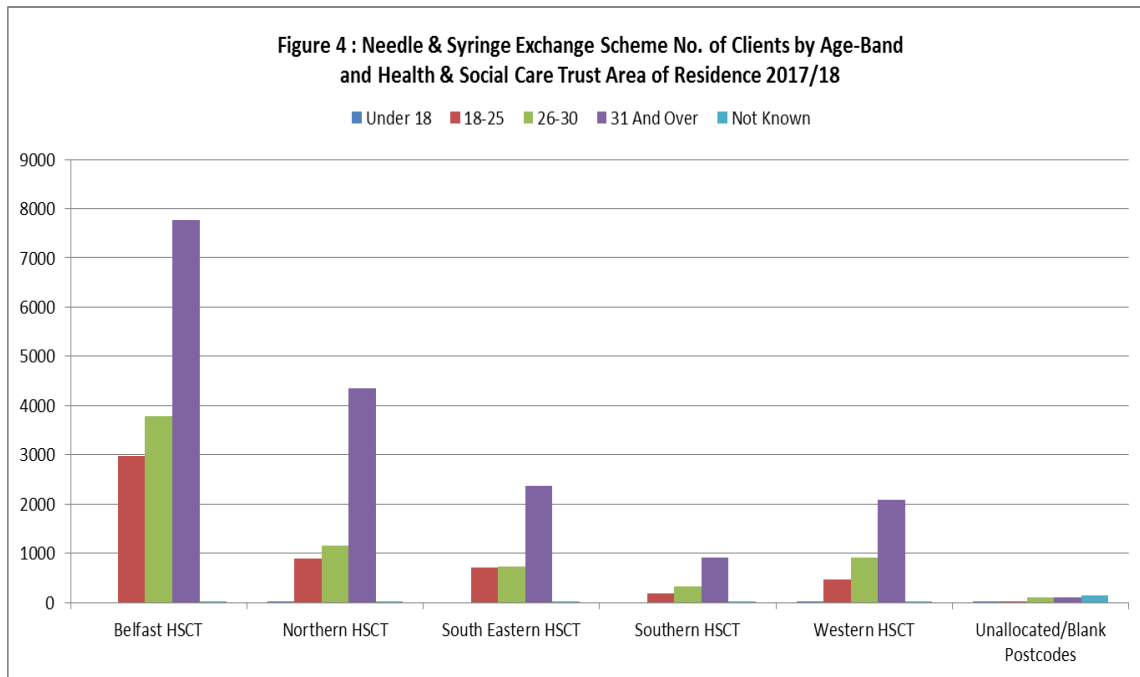
Table 6 and Figure 4 show the numbers and percentages by age band. Please note the figures are shown by Trust Area of residence of the client.

During 2017-18, the highest percentage of visits to the scheme was from clients aged 31-40 years (39%). The 26-30 year old category accounted for 23% of visits, the same as last year in 2016/17. In contrast, among those aged 18-25 years, visits decreased from 18% last year to 17% this year. In the under 18 category, there was a small reduction from 7 (0%) visits last year to 6 (0%) in 2017/18.

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	0 (0%)	<30 (0%)	<30 (0%)	<30 (0%)	<30 (0%)	<30 (0%)	6 (0%)
18-25	2967 (20%)	891 (14%)	703 (18%)	190 (13%)	461 (13%)	32 (8%)	5244 (17%)
26-30	3777 (26%)	1148 (18%)	737 (19%)	336 (23%)	919 (26%)	111 (28%)	7028 (23%)
31-40	5489 (38%)	2829 (44%)	1322 (35%)	671 (46%)	1407 (40%)	72 (18%)	11790 (39%)
41-50	1872 (13%)	1395 (22%)	785 (21%)	219 (15%)	583 (17%)	27 (7%)	4881 (16%)
51+	411 (3%)	126 (2%)	256 (7%)	<30 (0%)	102 (3%)	<30 (0%)	927 (3%)
Not Recorded	7 (0%)	<30 (0%)	<30 (0%)	7 (0%)	<30 (0%)	148 (37%)	189 (1%)
Grand Total	14523 (100%)	6408 (100%)	3812 (100%)	1451 (100%)	3476 (100%)	395 (100%)	30065 (100%)

Note: <30 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" age-bands.



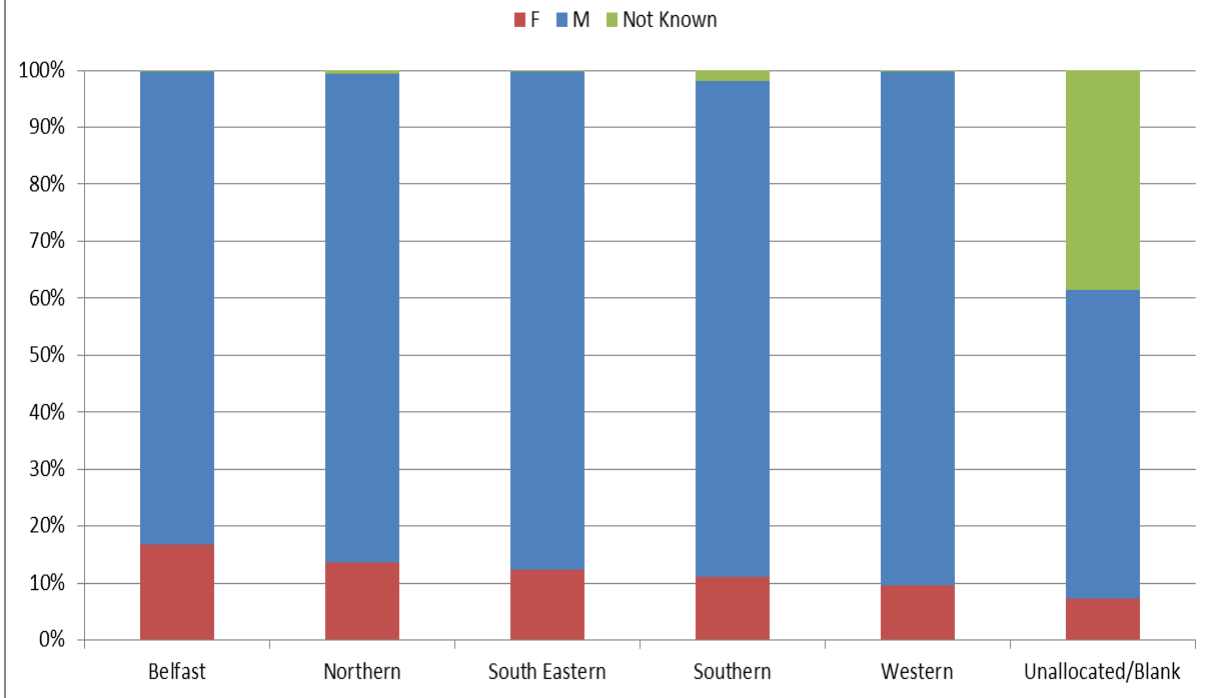
Gender of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

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 (84%). The highest percentage of visits from females using the service (18%) 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	2685	18%	11825	81%	13	0%	14523
Northern	909	14%	5484	86%	15	0%	6408
South Eastern	431	11%	3361	88%	20	1%	3812
Southern	157	11%	1282	88%	12	1%	1451
Western	436	13%	3029	87%	11	0%	3476
Not Known	32	8%	241	61%	122	31%	395
Total	4650	15%	25222	84%	193	1%	30065

**Figure 5: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme
Percentage of Males & Females using the service by Health & Social Care Trust Area of
Residency 2017/18**



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 2015/16.

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 97% of data on injecting detail which is a decrease of 1 percentage point on last year (98%). Of the total visits to the Scheme it was recorded that 27.32% of users injected steroids rising to 28.79% when steroid & tanning and Opiates & Steroids are included in this figure. 94% of steroid users were Male and only 5% Female. When steroid & tanning and Opiates & Steroids are included with the steroid figure 94% are Male and 6% are Female.

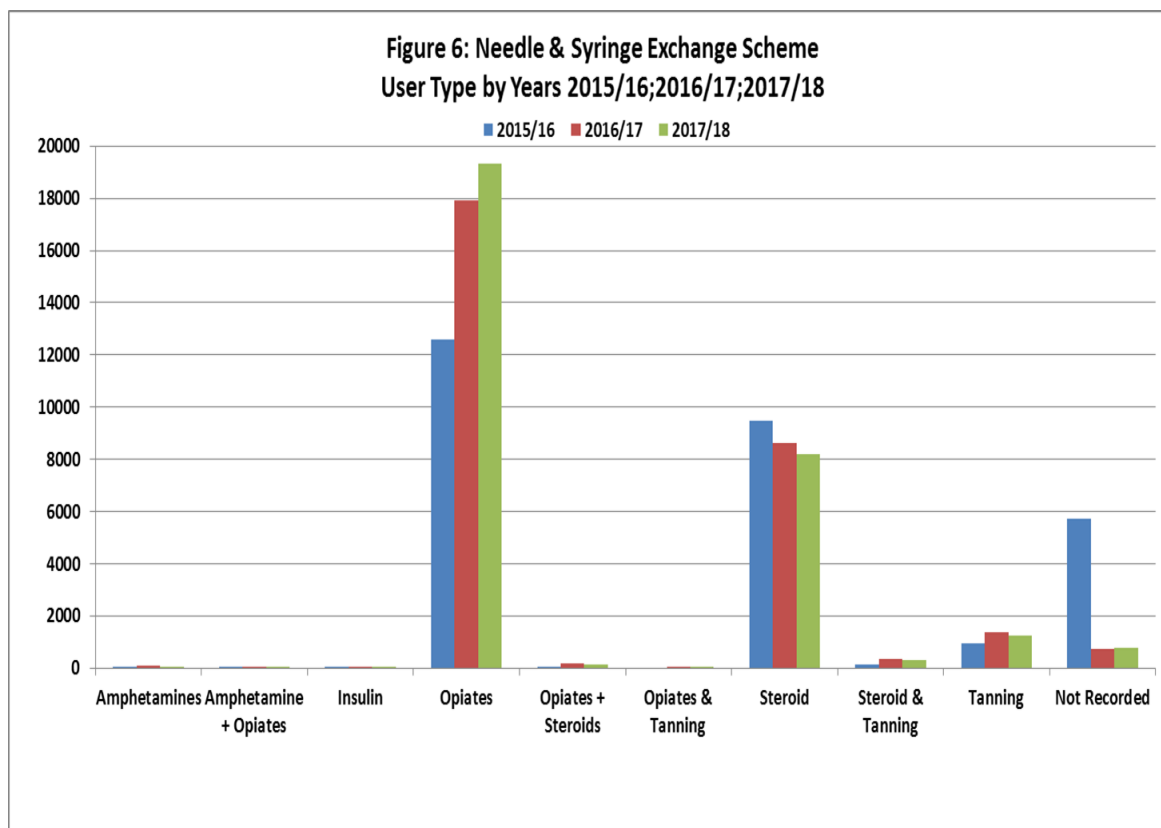
Table 8: Number of Visits by main drug of injection and Trust Area of Pharmacy

Main drug of Injection	Trust Area of Pharmacy					Total
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	
Amphetamines	23	<20	<20	12	13	57
	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Amphetamines + Opiates	0	0	0	0	<20	<20
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Insulin	<20	<20	0	0	0	<20
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opiates	13605	3680	284	883	867	19319
	77%	58%	16%	78%	26%	64%
Opiates + Steroids	54	35	26	<20	<20	116
	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Opiates + Tanning	<20	0	<20	<20	0	<20
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Steroid	3019	1802	1107	146	2141	8215
	17%	28%	64%	13%	65%	27%
Steroid & Tanning	86	80	99	13	22	300
	0%	1%	6%	1%	1%	1%
Tanning	656	299	168	32	98	1253
	4%	5%	10%	3%	3%	4%
Not Recorded	154	417	38	41	122	772
	1%	7%	2%	4%	4%	3%
Total Visits	17600 (100%)	6323 (100%)	1725 (100%)	1133 (100%)	3284 (100%)	30065 (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 80% of visits in 2015/16 to 98% in 2016/17 and dropped slightly to 97% in 2017/18. 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 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18



User Type Assigned	Number of Visits 2015/16	Number of Visits 2016/17	Number of Visits 2017/18
Amphetamines	35	92	57
Amphetamine + Opiates	<10	<10	<10
Insulin	11	<10	<10
Opiates	12576	17901	19319
Opiates + Steroids	50	188	142
Opiates & Tanning	<10	<10	<10
Steroid	9493	8645	8215
Steroid & Tanning	135	358	300
Tanning	965	1367	1253
Not Recorded	5712	723	772

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

Number and Percentage of Return of Cin Bins

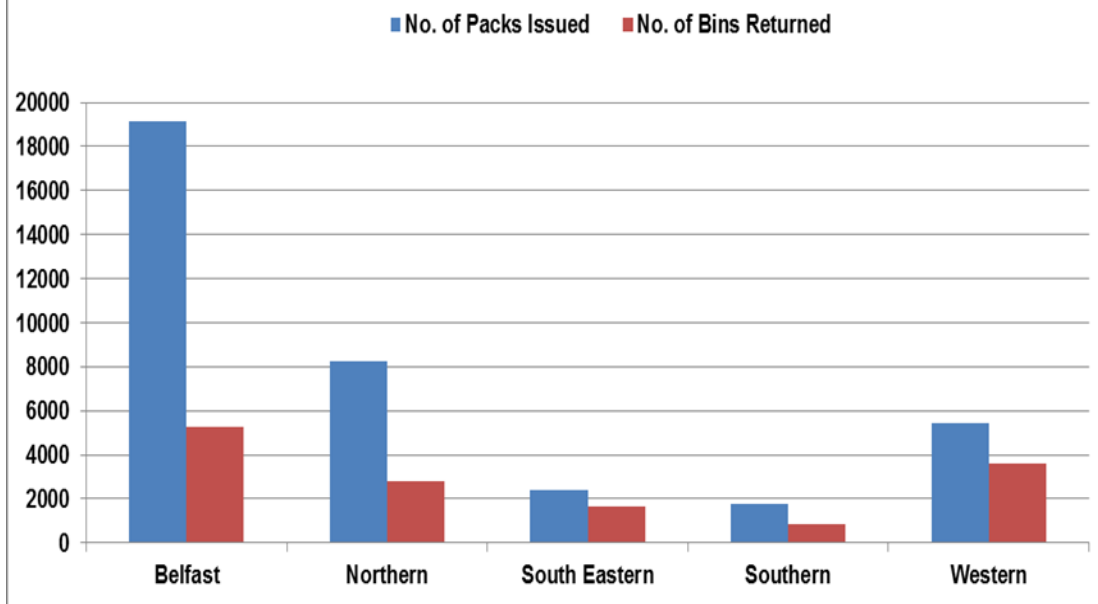
A cin bin (incinerator bin) is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes and the aim is for clients to return their used bins to the pharmacy for secure disposal. Each pack contains a bin. During 2017/18 data shows that 38% of bins issued to users were returned, showing that the return rate has decreased by 1 percentage points since 2016/17. Pharmacies in the South Eastern Trust area continue to have the highest number of bins returned (68%), closely followed by the Western Trust area(66%); both areas have lower rates of opiate users and more steroid users. The lowest return rate of 27% was by pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area, an increase of 3 percentage points since 2016/17.

Tables 9 and Figure 7 show the number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies.

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	19159	5244	27%
Northern	8220	2814	34%
South Eastern	2421	1639	68%
Southern	1784	850	48%
Western	5410	3580	66%
Grand Total	36994	14127	38%

**Figure 7: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme
Comparison of Bins issued & Bins Returned 2017/18**



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 closely 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.

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 56% of visits by residents 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 21% are visits to Belfast Trust area pharmacies and 5% are visits to Northern Trust area pharmacies. In the Western Trust area 91% of visits are to a Western Trust area Pharmacy.

Table 10: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence of the Clients and the Trust area of Pharmacies visited in 2017/18

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	13930 (96%)	462 (3%)	111 (1%)	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	14523 (100%)
Northern	859 (13%)	5475 (85%)	6 (0%)	25 (0%)	43 (1%)	6408 (100%)
South Eastern	2151 (56%)	66 (2%)	1575 (41%)	7 (0%)	13 (0%)	3812 (100%)
Southern	304 (21%)	69 (5%)	<20 (0%)	1057 (73%)	<20 (0%)	1451 (100%)
Western	86 (2%)	202 (6%)	<20 (0%)	<20 (0%)	3179 (91%)	3476 (100%)
Not Recorded & Outside N. Ireland	270 (68%)	49 (12%)	26 (7%)	28 (7%)	22 (6%)	395 (100%)

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