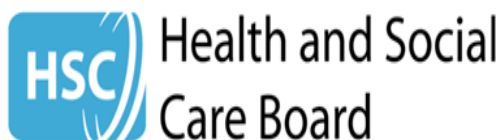


# **Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Service Report**

**1st April 2018 - 31st March 2019**



The Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme is vital to the health and wellbeing of the entire community, helping to reduce the potential of drug-related litter, lowering the risk of HIV and Hepatitis B and C within the wider population, and putting those who use the service in direct contact with a health professional who can help them in engaging with treatment services to address their drug misuse. Needle exchange services are based in areas where there is an existing pattern of people who inject, but help protect everyone in the community. Anyone who injects substances can use a needle exchange service, and this includes people who inject opioids, steroids, tanning agents or stimulants.

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 2018 and 31st March 2019. The anonymised data was collected during this 12 month period by the 23 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 service provider

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the Public Health Agency funded the Scheme through 21 pharmacies based across Northern Ireland, 1 Drug Outreach team in Belfast and 1 Community Addiction Team Service based in Railway St. Ballymena.

**Table 1: Participating Service Provider by Trust Area of Service Provider**

Trust Area of Pharmacy	Pharmacy	Address	Town
Belfast	Boots (Belfast)	35-47 Donegall Place, BT1 5AW	Belfast
Belfast	Chemist Connect	59 High Street Belfast, BT1 2AB	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	Newtownards
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	Medicare - Mourne Pharmacy	5 John Mitchell Place, BT82 9BD	Strabane
Western	Superdrug	Ferryquay Street, BT48 6JD	Londonderry

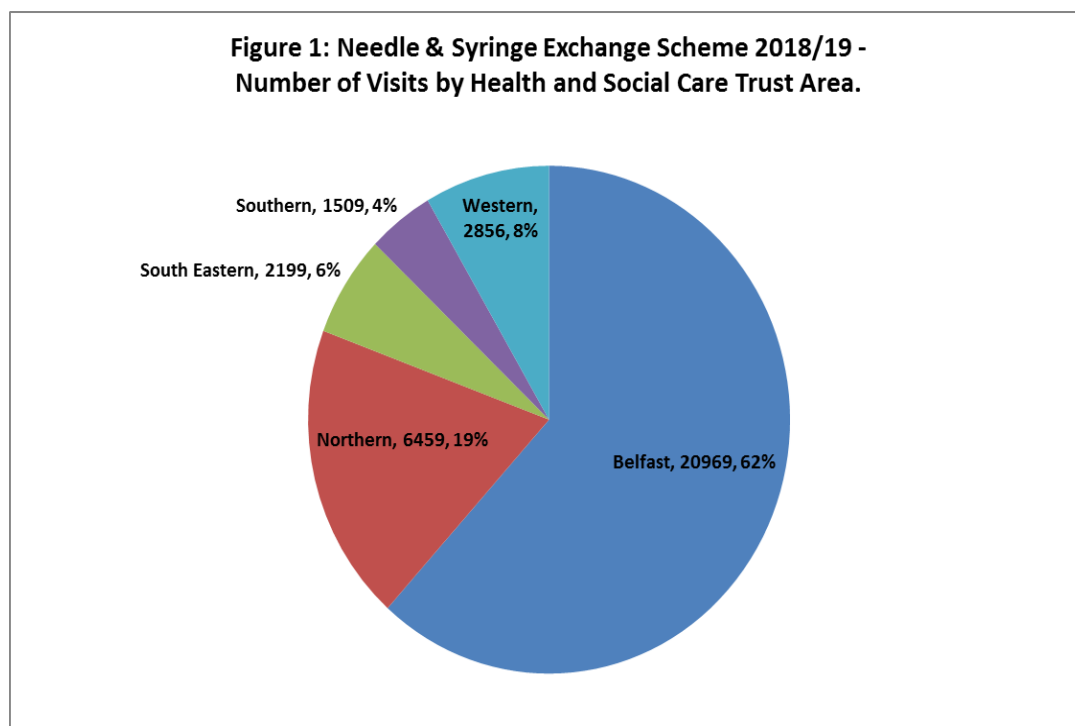
## Number of Visits to the Pharmacies

A total of 33,992 visits to facilitate the exchange of needles and syringes were made to the service over the twelve month period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. This is an increase in use of 3927 (13%) visits on the 2017/18 figure (30,065). 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 (62%) and the Southern Trust area the lowest number of visits (4%). However, pharmacies in the Southern Trust area experienced the largest increase in usage (up 33%) on the past year in demand while the Western Trust area noted a drop of 13% compared to the previous year.

**Table 2: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy 2018/19 including percentage change from 2017/18**

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No of Visits 2017/18	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2017/18	No of Visits 2018/19	% of Visits by Trust of Pharmacy 2018/19	Percentage Change from 2017/18
Belfast	17600	59%	20969	62%	19%
Northern	6323	21%	6459	19%	2%
South Eastern	1725	6%	2199	6%	27%
Southern	1133	4%	1509	4%	33%
Western	3284	11%	2856	8%	-13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30065</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33992</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13%</b>



## 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 (51%) and the lowest was from the Southern Trust area (5%). A small number of postcodes (1%) were not submitted to the database and 33 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 2017/18	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2017/18	No of Visits 2018/19	% of Visits by Trust Area of Residency 2018/19	Percentage Change from 2017/18
Belfast	14523	48%	17386	51%	20%
Northern	6408	21%	6740	20%	5%
South Eastern	3812	13%	4661	14%	22%
Southern	1451	5%	1841	5%	27%
Western	3476	12%	2914	9%	-16%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	395	1%	450	1%	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30065</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33992</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>13%</b>

The number of visits made per 100,000 HSCT population can be seen in Table 4 ranging from the highest, Belfast Trust area (4,862 visits per 100,000 population) to the lowest, Southern Trust area (480 visits per 100,000 population). The percentage change in visits from 2017/18 to 2018/19 was highest in the Southern Trust with a 26% rise in visits by Southern Trust area residents while there was a 16% decrease in Western 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 2017/18	Visits per 100,000 population 2018/19	% Change from 2017/18
Belfast	17386	357,625	4084	4862	19%
Northern	6740	476,942	1350	1413	5%
South Eastern	4661	361,329	1063	1290	21%
Southern	1841	383,541	382	480	26%
Western	2914	302,204	1153	964	-16%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	450	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>33992</b>	<b>1881641</b>	<b>1607</b>	<b>1807</b>	<b>12%</b>

Population Source: NISRA Population Estimates 2018

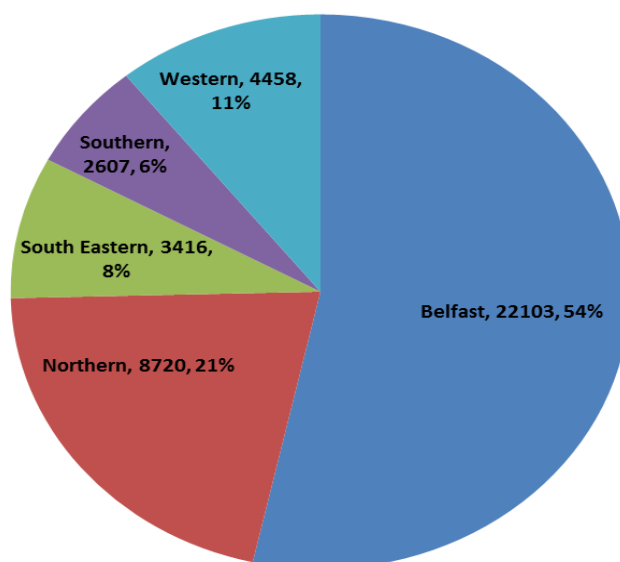
### Number of Packs Issued by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy

A total number of 41,304 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 (54%) and the lowest number was issued by pharmacies in the Southern Trust area (6%).

**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	22103	54%
Northern	8720	21%
South Eastern	3416	8%
Southern	2607	6%
Western	4458	11%
Total	41304	100%

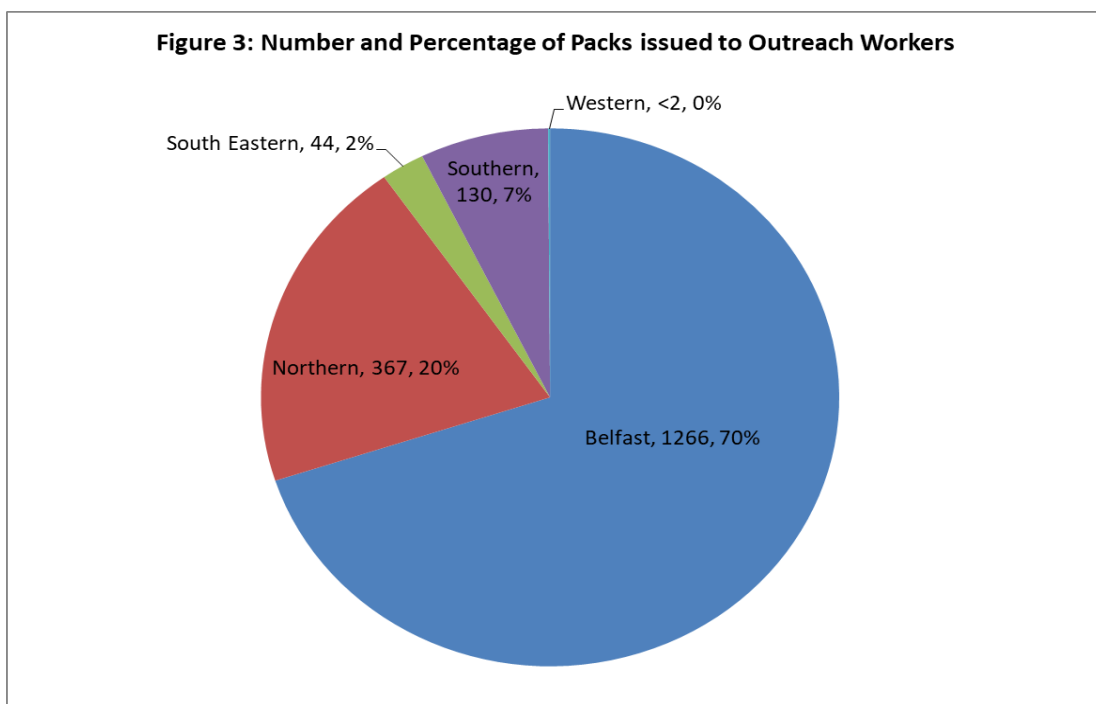
**Figure 2: Number and percentage of packs issued by Pharmacies in each Health and Social Care Trust Area 2018/19 Trust Area**



### Number and Percentage of Packs Issued to Outreach Workers

During 2018-19, 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, thereby providing interventions to reduce harms to their clients in a more accessible manner. 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. Of the 1809 packs issued to outreach workers, the highest number, 1266 (70%), was issued to staff working in the Belfast Trust area, while 367 (20%) was issued to staff working in the Northern Trust area and 130 (7%) was issued to staff working in the Southern Trust area.



## Age of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

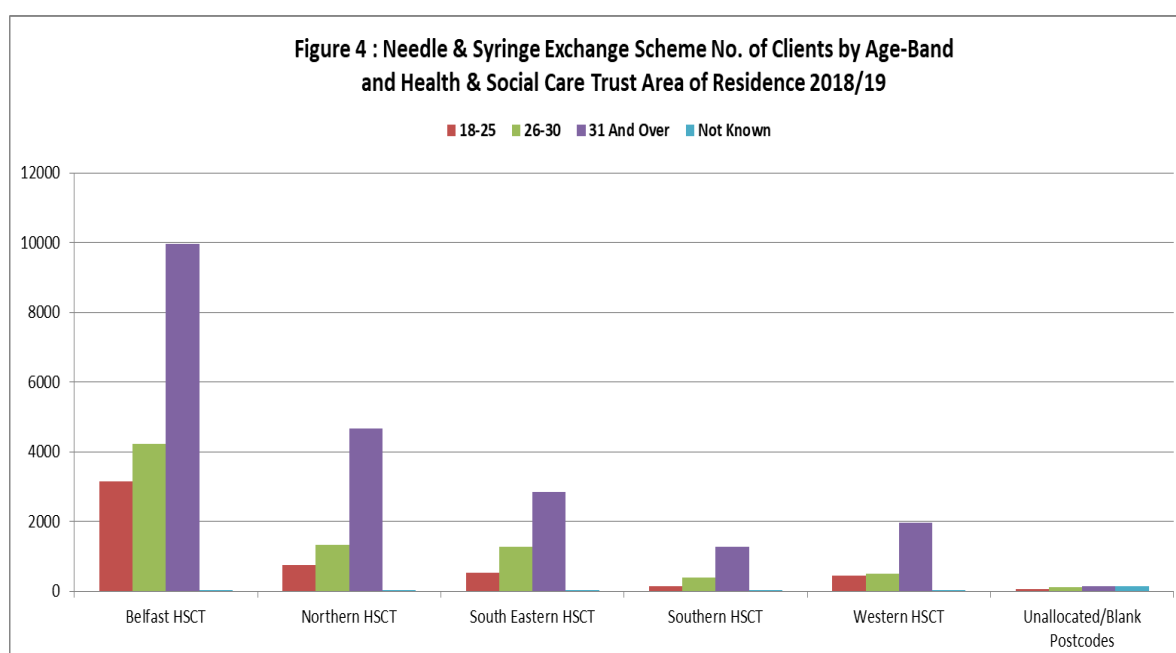
Table 6 and Figure 4 show the numbers and percentages by age band. Please note the figures are shown by Trust Area of residence of the client.

During 2018-19, the highest percentage of visits to the scheme was from clients aged 31-40 years (41%). The 26-30 year old category accounted for 23% of visits, the same as last year in 2017/18. In contrast, among those aged 18-25 years, visits decreased from 17% last year to 15% this year.

**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	
18-25	3150 (18%)	742 (11%)	540 (12%)	152 (8%)	435 (15%)	60 (13%)	5079 (15%)
26-30	4230 (24%)	1320 (20%)	1268 (27%)	397 (22%)	511 (18%)	107 (24%)	7833 (23%)
31-40	7050 (41%)	2834 (42%)	1621 (35%)	944 (51%)	1277 (44%)	95 (21%)	13821 (41%)
41-50	2365 (14%)	1701 (25%)	886 (19%)	253 (14%)	531 (18%)	31 (7%)	5767 (17%)
51+	563 (3%)	<350 (0%)	<350 (0%)	89 (5%)	<350 (0%)	8 (2%)	1295 (4%)
Not Recorded	28 (0%)	<350 (0%)	<350 (0%)	6 (0%)	<350 (0%)	149 (33%)	197 (1%)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17386 (100%)</b>	<b>6740 (100%)</b>	<b>4661 (100%)</b>	<b>1841 (100%)</b>	<b>2914 (100%)</b>	<b>450 (100%)</b>	<b>33992 (100%)</b>

*Note: <350 has been used in the table above due to small numbers and in order to avoid potential identification of those in the “51+” and “Not Recorded” age-bands.*

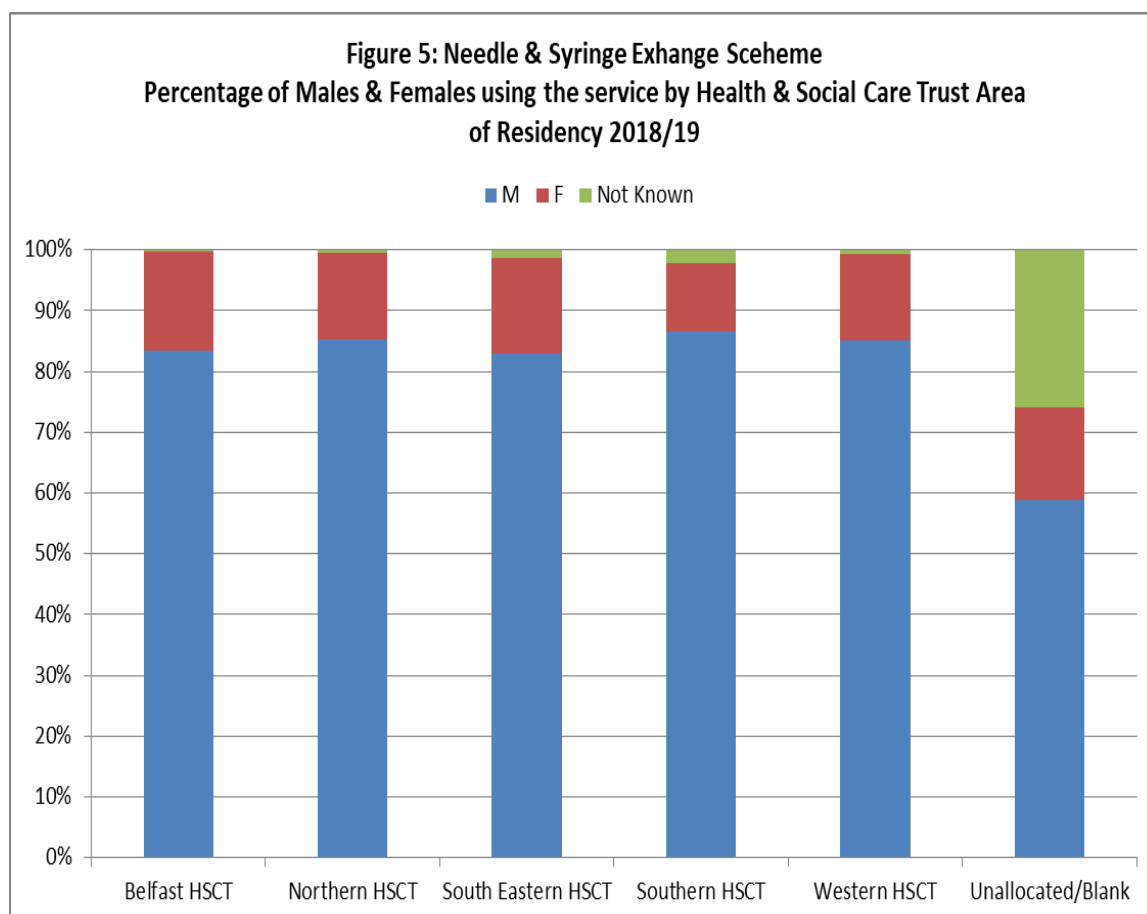


## Gender of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

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 (16%) was in the Belfast and South Eastern Trust areas.

**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	2823	16%	14507	83%	56	0%	17386
Northern	966	14%	5747	85%	27	0%	6740
South Eastern	732	16%	3864	83%	65	1%	4661
Southern	207	11%	1593	87%	41	2%	1841
Western	413	14%	2481	85%	20	1%	2914
Not Known	68	15%	265	59%	117	26%	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>5209</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>28457</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>33992</b>





## 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 2016/17.

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 96% of data on injecting detail which is a decrease of 1 percentage point on last year (97%). Of the total visits to the Scheme it was recorded that 21.73% of users injected steroids rising to 22.87% 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 still male and 5% are still female.

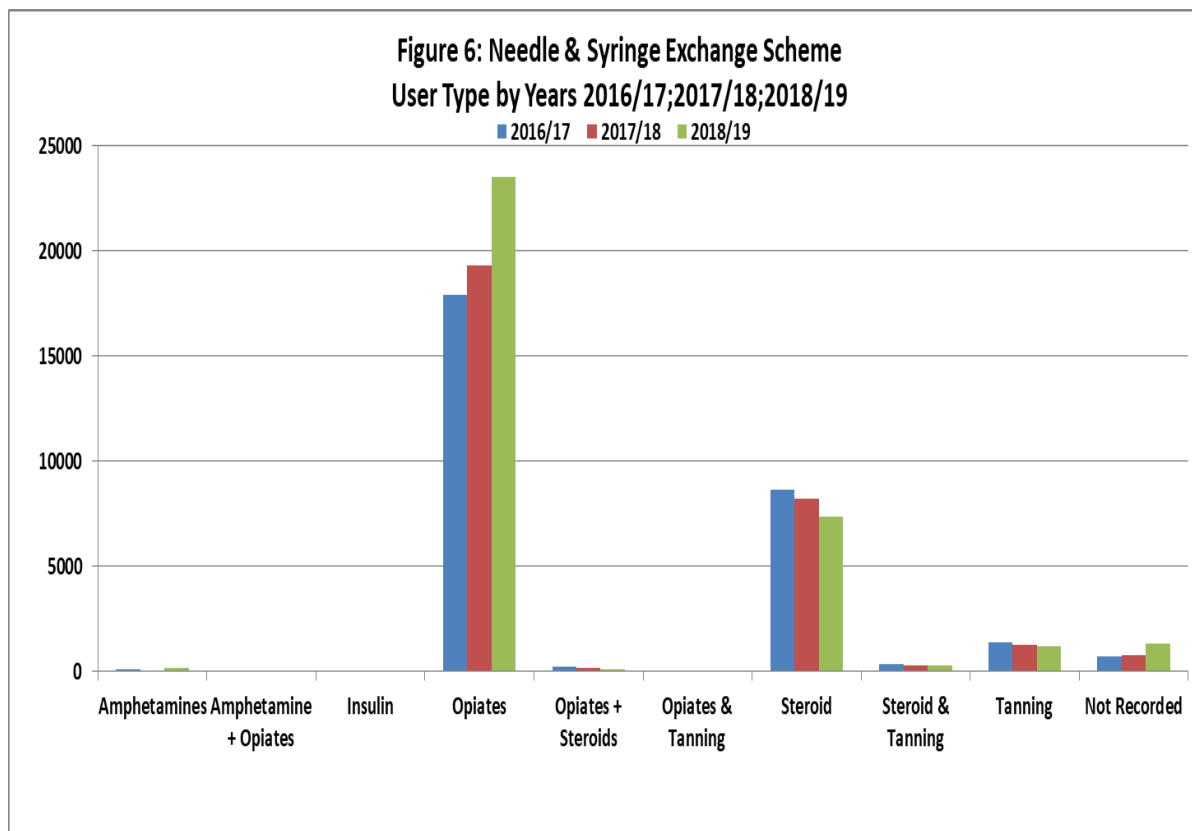
**Table 8: Number of Visits by main drug of injection and Trust Area of Pharmacy**

Main drug of Injection	Trust Area of Pharmacy					Total
	Belfast	Northern	South Eastern	Southern	Western	
Amphetamines	53	<20	<20	65	13	145
	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Amphetamine + Opiates	<20	0	<20	<20	<20	9
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Insulin	8	<20	6	<20	<20	21
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Opiates	17314	3657	873	1072	637	23553
	83%	57%	40%	71%	22%	69%
Opiates + Steroids	20	23	<20	<20	17	78
	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Opiates + Tanning	<20	<20	<20	<20	0	8
	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Steroid	2563	2013	920	197	1694	7387
	12%	31%	42%	13%	59%	22%
Steroid & Tanning	58	100	98	10	42	308
	0%	2%	4%	1%	1%	1%
Tanning	453	342	179	60	137	1171
	2%	5%	8%	4%	5%	3%
Not Recorded	491	308	102	97	314	1312
	2%	5%	5%	6%	11%	4%
<b>Total Visits</b>	<b>20969 (100%)</b>	<b>6459 (100%)</b>	<b>2199 (100%)</b>	<b>1509 (100%)</b>	<b>2856 (100%)</b>	<b>33992 (100%)</b>

**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 decreased slightly from 98% of visits in 2016/17 to 97% in 2017/18 and the figure dropped slightly again to 96% in 2018/19. 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 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19**



User Type Assigned	Number of Visits 2016/17	Number of Visits 2017/18	Number of Visits 2018/19
Amphetamines	92	57	145
Amphetamine + Opiates	<10	<10	9
Insulin	<10	<10	21
Opiates	17901	19319	23553
Opiates + Steroids	188	142	78
Opiates & Tanning	<10	<10	8
Steroid	8645	8215	7387
Steroid & Tanning	358	300	308
Tanning	1367	1253	1171
Not Recorded	723	772	1312

*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 2018/19 data shows that 35% of bins issued to users were returned, showing that the return rate has decreased by 3 percentage points since 2017/18. Pharmacies in the Western Trust area have the highest number of bins returned (63%), closely followed by the South Eastern Trust area (55%); both areas have lower rates of opiate users and more steroid users. The lowest return rate of 26% was by pharmacies in the Belfast Trust area, a decrease of 1 percentage points since 2017/18.

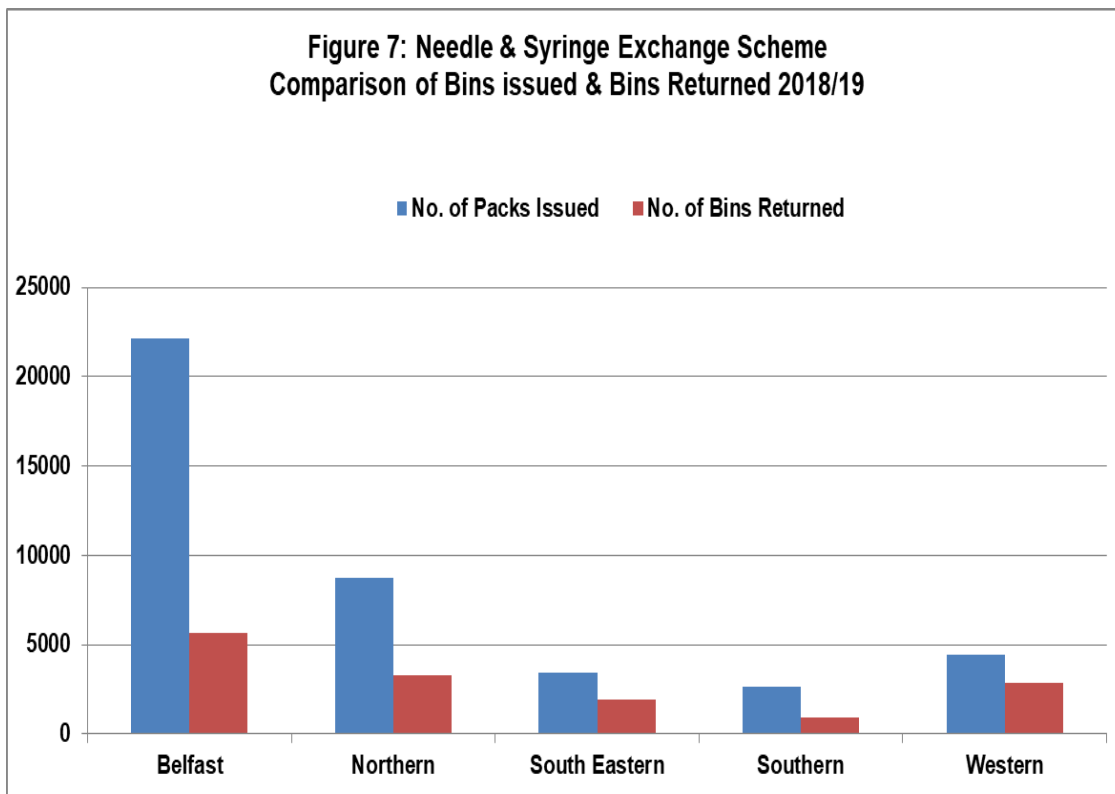
Tables 9/10 and Figure 7 show the number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies.

**Table 9: Number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy 2018/19**

Trust Area of Pharmacy	No. of Packs Issued	No. of Bins Returned	% of Bins Returned
Belfast	22103	5652	26%
Northern	8720	3297	38%
South Eastern	3416	1895	55%
Southern	2607	949	36%
Western	4458	2827	63%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>41304</b>	<b>14620</b>	<b>35%</b>

**Table 10: Percentage comparison of bins returned to pharmacies by Health & Social Care Trust Area of Pharmacy from 2016/17 to 2018/19**

Trust Area of Pharmacy	16/17 % of Bins Returned	17/18 % of Bins Returned	18/19 % of Bins Returned
Belfast	24%	27%	26%
Northern	39%	34%	38%
South Eastern	70%	68%	55%
Southern	59%	48%	36%
Western	67%	66%	63%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>35%</b>



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.

If you come across any sharps/needles in the city centre there is a mechanism in place to report these to Belfast City Council. These will be removed and disposed of in a safe manner by their team. The details for reporting these are below.

Telephone: 028 9027 0469 during office hours (8.00am – 5.00pm)

Telephone: 07850 499 622 out of hours (5.00pm – 8.00am - Including weekends, Public & Bank holidays)

Email (for non-emergency reporting): [sharps@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:sharps@belfastcity.gov.uk)

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 11 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 55% 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 18% are visits to Belfast Trust area pharmacies and 4% are visits to Northern Trust area pharmacies. In the Western Trust area 94% of visits are to a Western Trust area Pharmacy.

**Table 11: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence of the Clients and the Trust area of Pharmacies visited in 2018/19**

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	16694 (96%)	529 (3%)	129 (1%)	19 (0%)	15 (0%)	17386 (100%)
Northern	1012 (15%)	5655 (84%)	8 (0%)	17 (0%)	48 (1%)	6740 (100%)
South Eastern	2560 (55%)	61 (1%)	2014 (43%)	<40 (0%)	<40 (0%)	4661 (100%)
Southern	327 (18%)	66 (4%)	17 (1%)	1421 (77%)	10 (1%)	1841 (100%)
Western	62 (2%)	100 (3%)	<40 (0%)	<40 (0%)	2747 (94%)	2914 (100%)
Not Recorded & Outside N. Ireland	314 (70%)	48 (11%)	<40 (0%)	26 (6%)	<40 (0%)	450 (100%)

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