



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

Title	Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Quarterly Report. 1 April 2023- 30 June 2023
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Target Audience	Needle and syringe exchange providers, drug treatment services, pharmacy staff, health professionals working in substance use
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Section 1: Background

The Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES) 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 use. Thirty-one needle exchange services are commissioned across Northern Ireland 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.

Throughout 2022 PHA fully implemented a new online database to record needle exchange activity alongside anonymous, non-identifiable client data. This database is called the Neo360 Harm Reduction Information System and became fully operational across all NSES sites on 1 December 2022. This database permits live data to be accessed which in turn will allow for a timely and effective public health response to any detected trends.

This report summarises data that has been collated by Neo360 within the three-month period between 1 April 2023 and 30 June 2023. Needle exchange activity was recorded in 28 active sites throughout this period. Three additional NSES sites did not record any NSES transactions during this period. One new site was commissioned this quarter, Queen's Quarter Housing in Belfast.

Within this reporting period 1,687 new clients registered to use the service, bringing the overall total of clients registered (since the online database was first phased into use on 11 July 2022) to 5,324 clients. This number is understood to be inflated due to the number of clients re-registering on the system mainly due to concerns regarding their anonymity, providers continually work with clients to try to keep this figure accurate and reassure clients that the data collated does not identify them.

In terms of unique client usage for the reporting period, there was a total of 4,163 unique clients across Northern Ireland for this reporting period. When this report is run per Trust area (as reported in individual trust reports) this totals 3293 unique service users which implies that 898 clients are crossing Trust boundaries to access multiple needle exchange services.

This report includes the regional data across Northern Ireland, followed by a breakdown per trust, **correct as of 1 July 2023**. The following information is collated:

- Total number of transactions;
- Transaction by provider type;
- Transaction by trust location;
- Age of client at registration;
- Gender of client at registration;
- Recorded substance/s used.

Needle and Syringe Exchange Service providers

Between 1 April 2023 and 30 June 2023 the Public Health Agency funded the Scheme through the following providers:

Table 1: Participating Service Provider by Trust Area in reporting period

Trust Area	Provider	Provider Type
Belfast	Custody Health Care	Statutory Provider
	Extern	Community-based
	The Welcome Organisation	Community based
	Queen's Quarter Housing	Hostel Provider
	Belfast Drug Outreach Team	Low Threshold Service
	Chemist Connect	Pharmacy
	Maguires	Pharmacy
	Belfast Health Inclusion Service	Statutory Provider
South Eastern	The Simon Community	Low Threshold Service
	Clear Pharmacy, Bangor	Pharmacy
	Gordons, Downpatrick	Pharmacy
	Gordons, Lisburn	Pharmacy
	Gordons, Newtownards	Pharmacy
Northern	Boots, Ballymena Health Centre	Pharmacy
	Boots, Antrim	Pharmacy
	Boots, Coleraine	Pharmacy
	Boots, Cookstown	Pharmacy
	Boots, Newtownabbey	Pharmacy
	Boots, Queen's Street Ballymena	Pharmacy
Western	Bradleys, Derry/Londonderry	Pharmacy
	Bradleys, Enniskillen	Pharmacy
	Gordons, Limavady	Pharmacy
	Mournes, Strabane	Pharmacy
	Superdrug, Derry/Londonderry	Pharmacy
Southern	Extern	Low Threshold Service
	Boots, Armagh	Pharmacy
	Northern Pharmacies, Craigavon	Pharmacy
	McKeagneys, Newry	Pharmacy

Section 2: Regional NSES Data Review

NSES Transactions

From April – June 2023 there were a total of **8,180 NSES transactions** carried out across Northern Ireland. This shows a reduction of 617 exchanges from the previous quarter.

Figure 1: Number of NSES transactions by Provider Type

Figure 1 reflects that the community-based providers completed 44.7% of the transactions for the period whilst the 20 community pharmacy sites completed over 52.2% of the transactions.

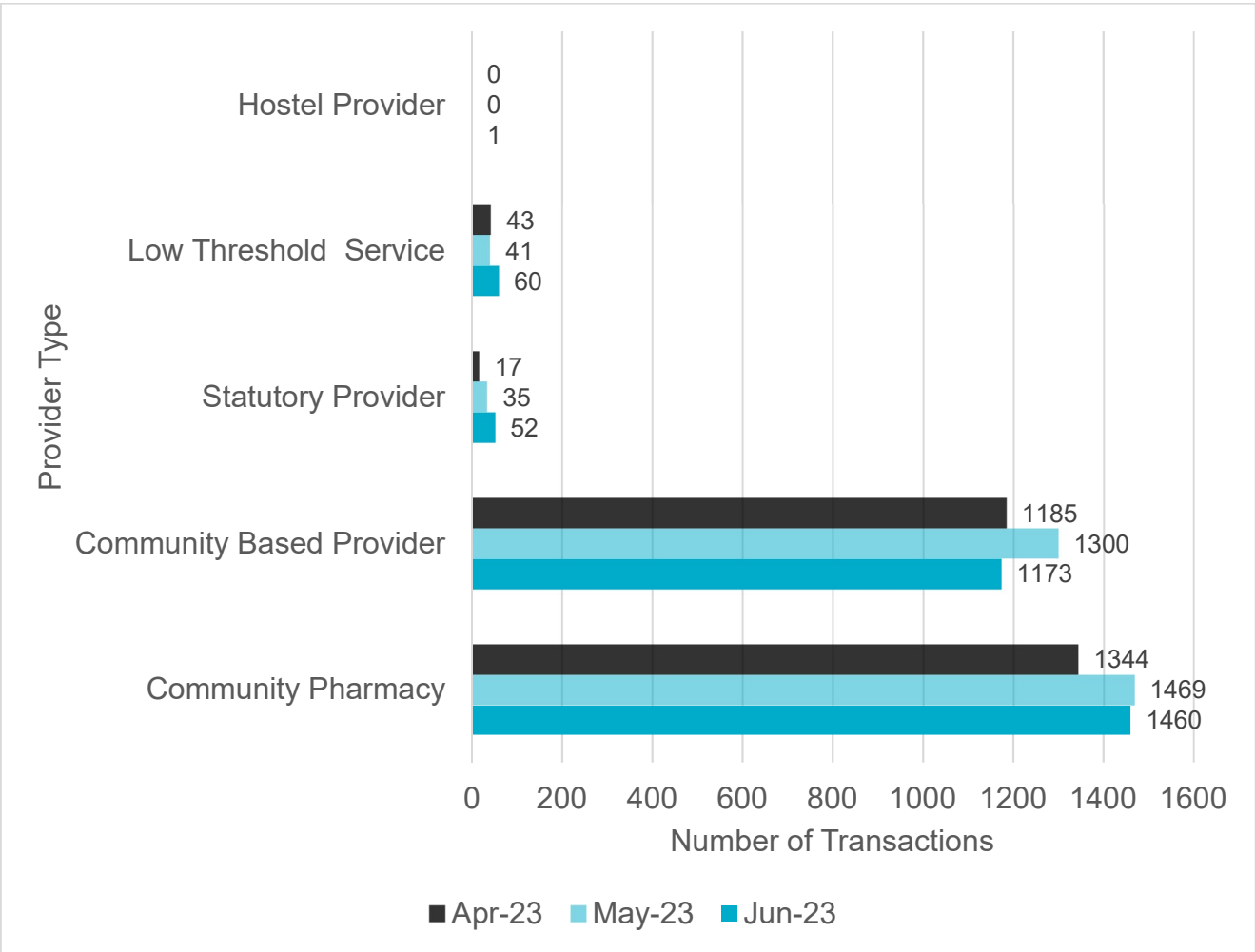
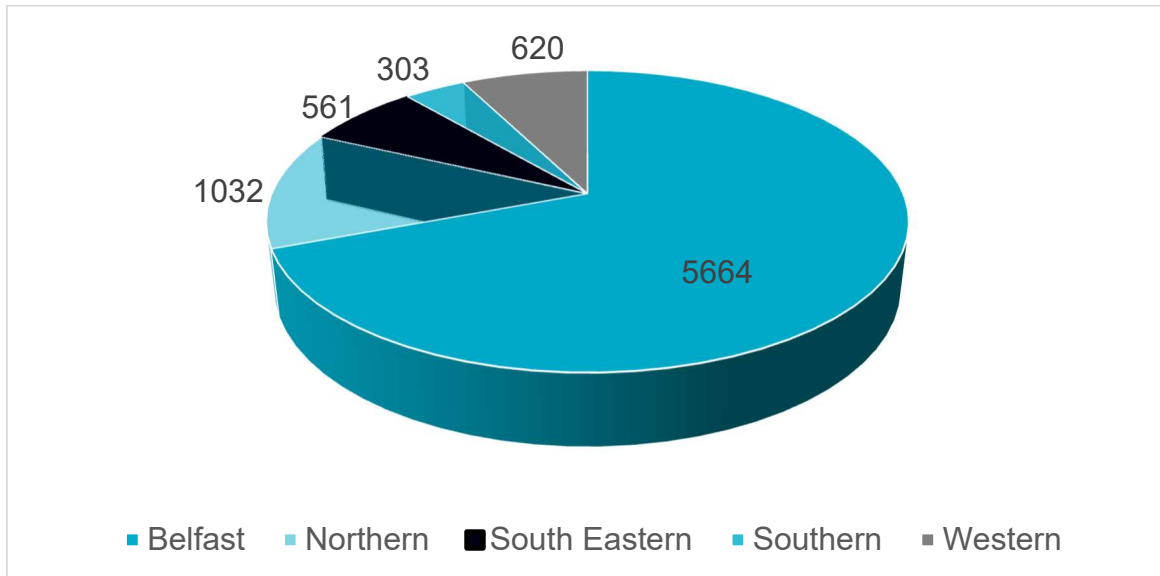


Figure 2: Number of transactions by each Health and Social Care Trust area

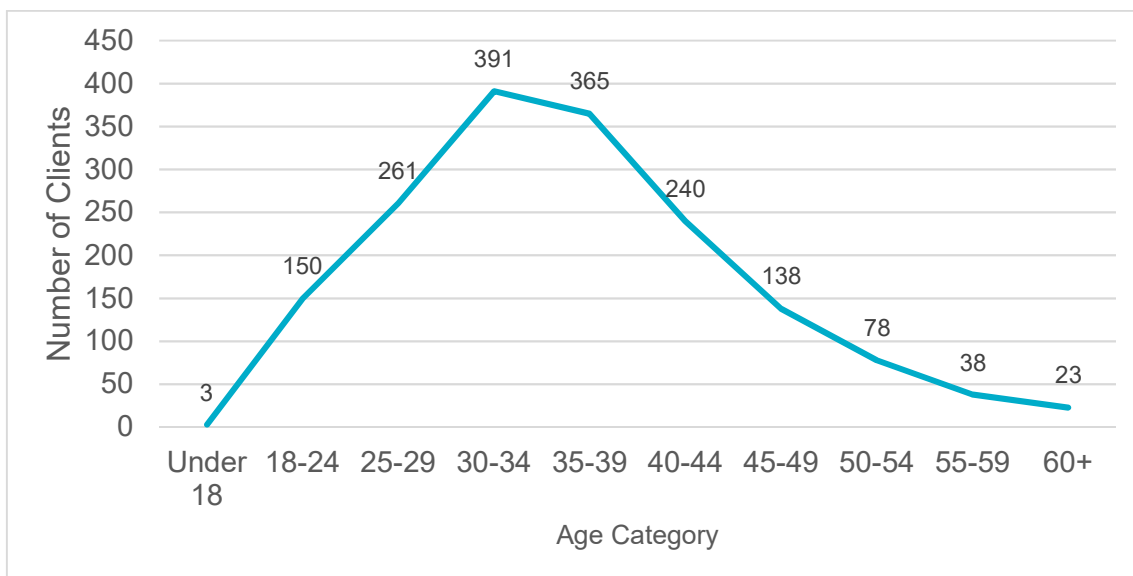


The highest number of overall transactions continue to take place in BHSCT area (69.2%) and the lowest percentage of transactions continue to take place in the SHSCT area (3.7%)

NSES User Profile

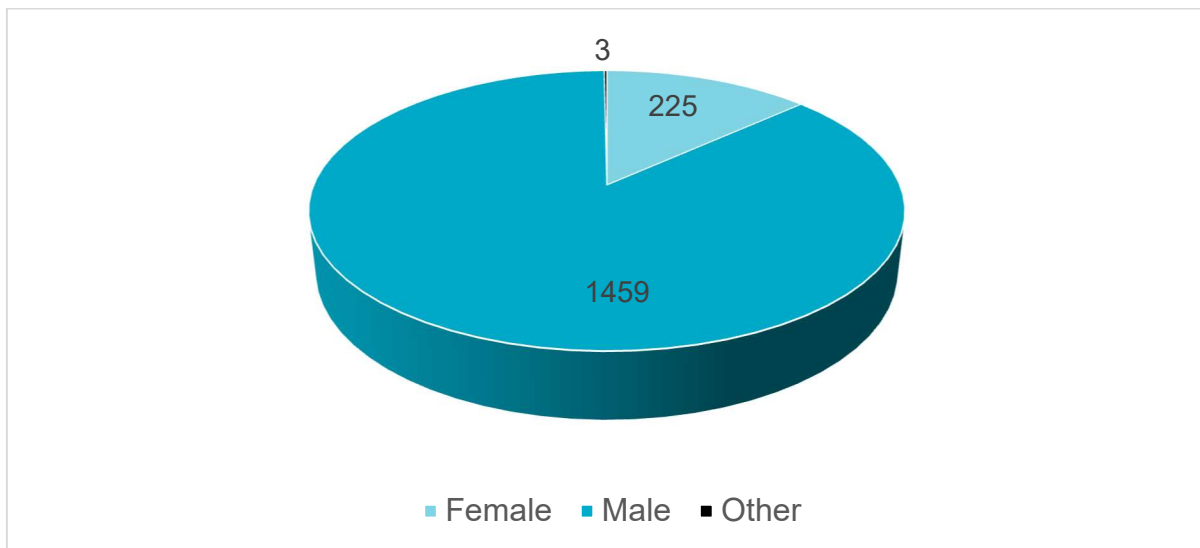
The age and gender profile of the 1,687 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Current Age of new Clients registered in reporting period



The most common age category for new clients remains the same as previous quarter at 30-34 years, closely followed by those aged 35-39.

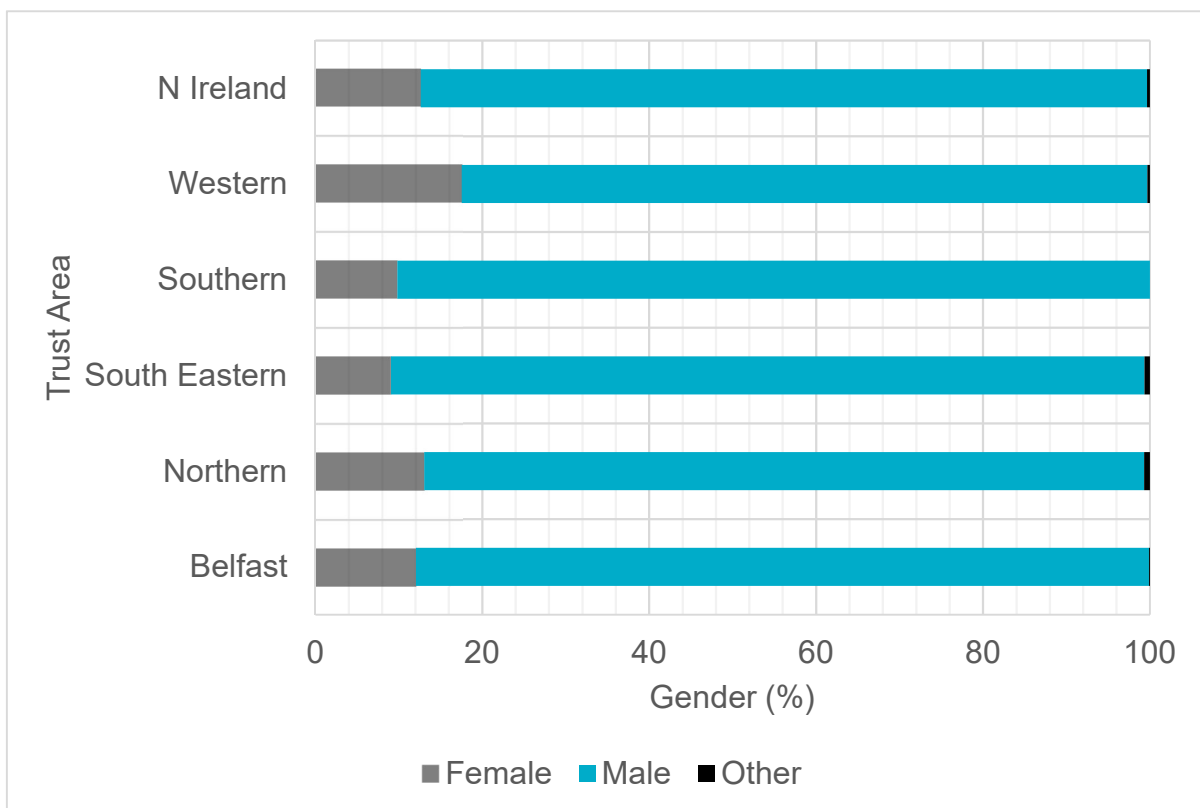
Figure 4: Gender of Clients at registration



This pie chart reflects that the NSES is used primarily by males with 86.5% of registered clients in this quarter being male.

Figure 5: Gender (%) of clients by Trust area

Figure 5 shows the gender breakdown by trust of clients registering for needle exchange this quarter. Western Trust area continues to reflect the largest number of female clients however overall this remains a male dominated service.

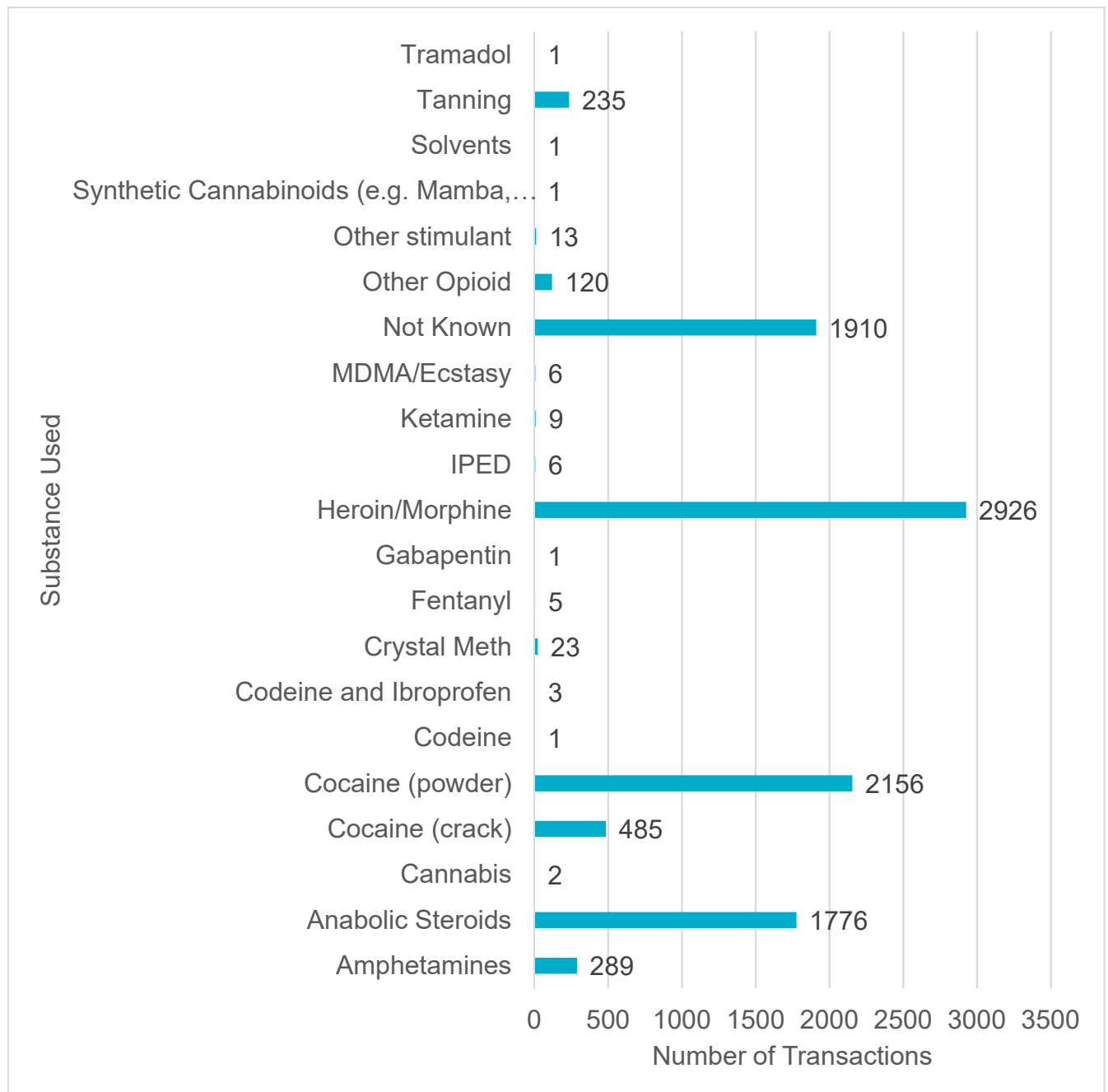


Recorded Substance Used

The graph below reflects the reported substances used by clients for each transaction. Clients may report more than one substance in response to this.

Figure 6 reflects that of the 8180 transactions in this reporting period, 8059 reports of substance used were recorded across 20 substances/categories with 1910 transactions deciding not to disclose substance used.

Figure 6: Reported substances used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023



Heroin/morphine has the largest reported usage within needle exchange clients. Cocaine powder and anabolic steroids are the second and third most reported substances respectively, across the region.

Table 2: Number of clients using most reported substances from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023

Substance	Number of NSES unique clients using
Anabolic Steroids	1184
Heroin/Morphine	467
Cocaine (powder)	357

Although heroin/morphine were reported most frequently during transactions, the number of unique clients using anabolic steroids by far exceeded those using heroin/morphine or cocaine.

Table 3: Quantity of Needles Dispensed

Please see below a breakdown of the needles dispensed across all needle exchange sites for the reporting period. A total of 161,024 needles were dispensed across needle exchange in Northern Ireland.

Category	Item	Total
Needles	16mm [5/8 inch] orange	2,890
Needles	25mm [1 inch] blue	2,318
Needles	25mm [1 inch] orange	4,688
Needles	30mm [1 1/4 inch] blue	37,296
Needles	38mm [1 1/2 inch] black	1,326
Needles	40mm [1 1/2 inch] green	34,905
Syringes	0.5ml Fixed Syringe	35,239
Syringes	1 ml 30G Unisharp fixed	42,362
Total Needles Dispensed		161,024

Basic principles are that the shorter needles are used for surface vein injecting (arms, hand, feet etc), and the longer ones for deeper veins (legs and groin) and steroids which are intramuscular injections.

The 0.5ml and the 1ml Unisharp are the mainstay of all injecting equipment, they are the shortest and thinnest needles and also the lowest dead space syringes. It is positive from a harm reduction perspective these continue to be used frequently within needle exchange with 77,601 (48.2%) in total dispensed in the reporting period.

The highest dispensed single needles are blue (30mm) and green (40mm) with a total of 72,201 (44.9%) dispensed in the reporting period. These are the largest needles and are used for both groin injecting and steroid injecting.

Use of Foils

In promoting harm reduction, staff within needle exchange sites are encouraged to dispense foils which will support smoking, thus, reducing the harm caused through injecting. Fifteen sites dispensed foils this quarter with a total of 1688 packets (20 foils per pack) being distributed.

Returns

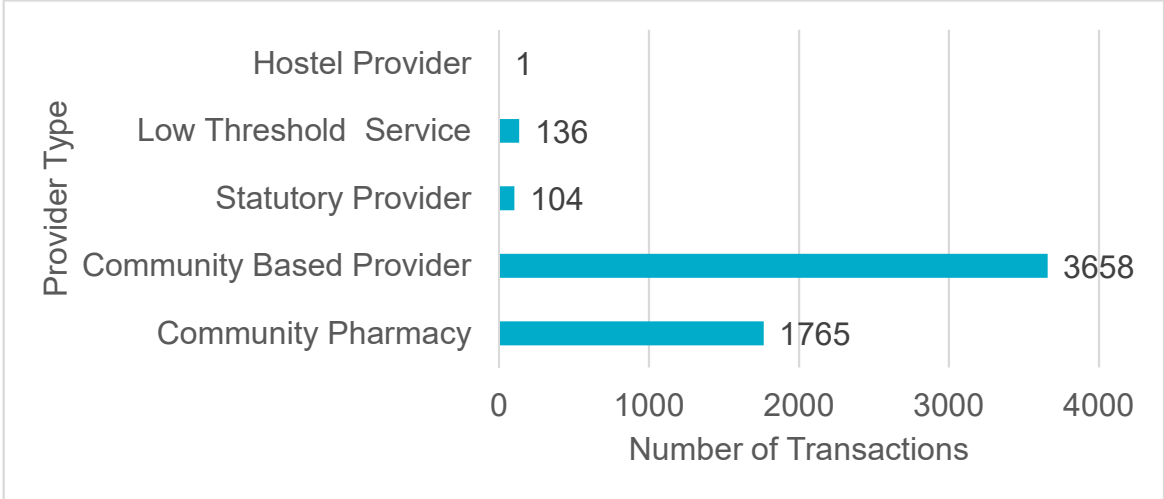
We have amended the system to record estimated needles returned as opposed to number of bins. This quarter 8948 estimated needles were returned within exchanges. This is a return rate of 5.5% of those needle dispensed.

Section 3: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Area NSES Data

In the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Area (BHSCT) within the reporting period there were:

- 5664 NSES transactions completed;
- 1579 unique clients using NSES;
- 669 new clients registered for NSES;
- 168 anonymous transactions completed.

Figure 7: Number of Transactions per Provider Type in BHSCT

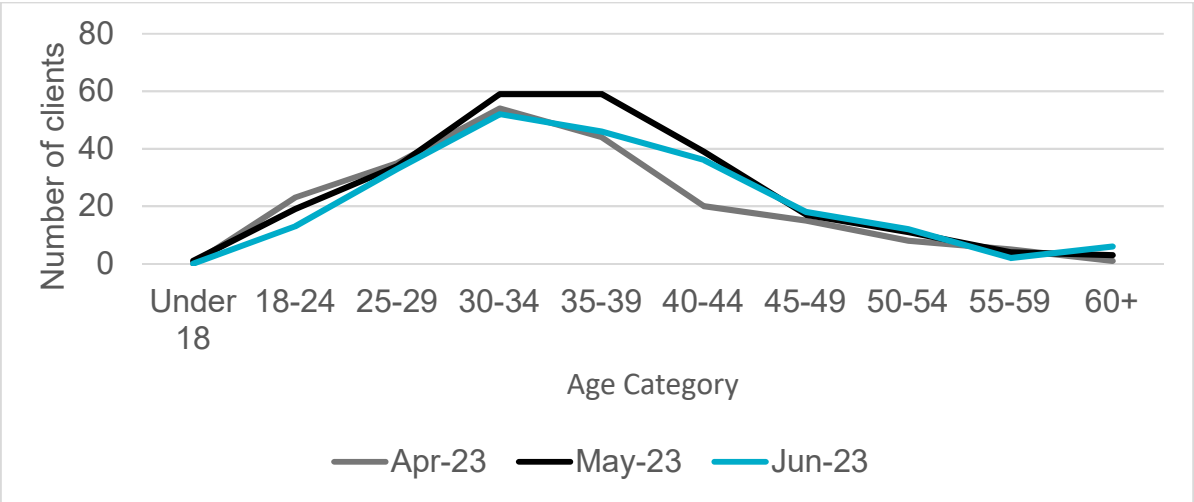


Within the BHSCT area 64.6% of transactions are completed by community providers.

NSES User Profile

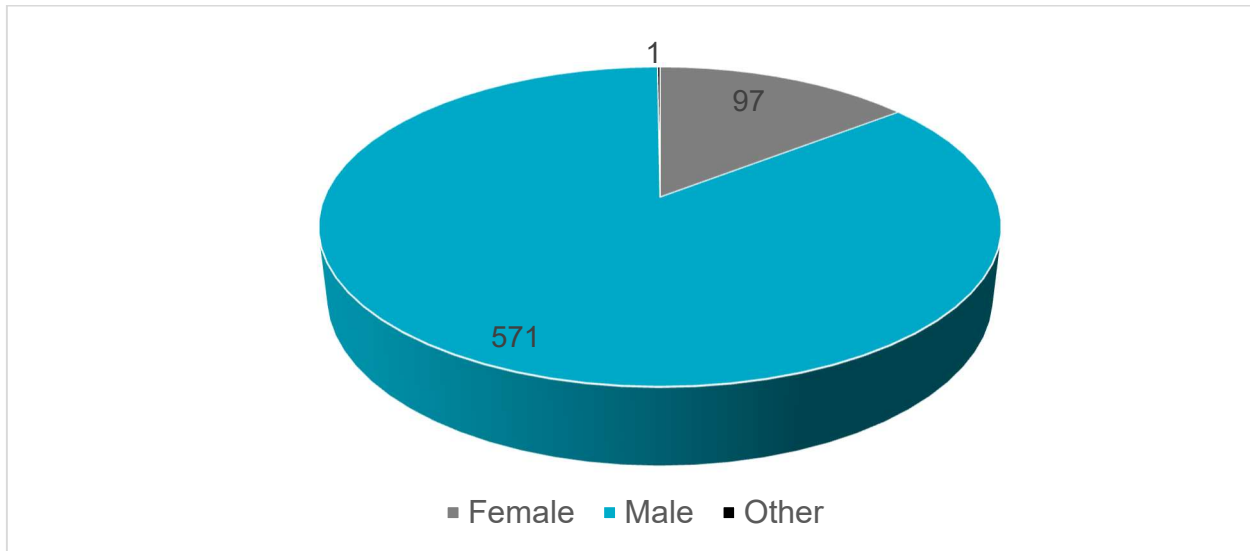
The age and gender profile of the 669 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 8 and 9

Figure 8: Age of Clients at registration in BHSCT



The most common overall age group of new client in BHSCT was age 30-34 years.

Figure 9: Gender of Clients at registration in BHSCT



The majority of new clients registered were male (85%).

Figure 10: Recorded Substance Used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 in BHSCT

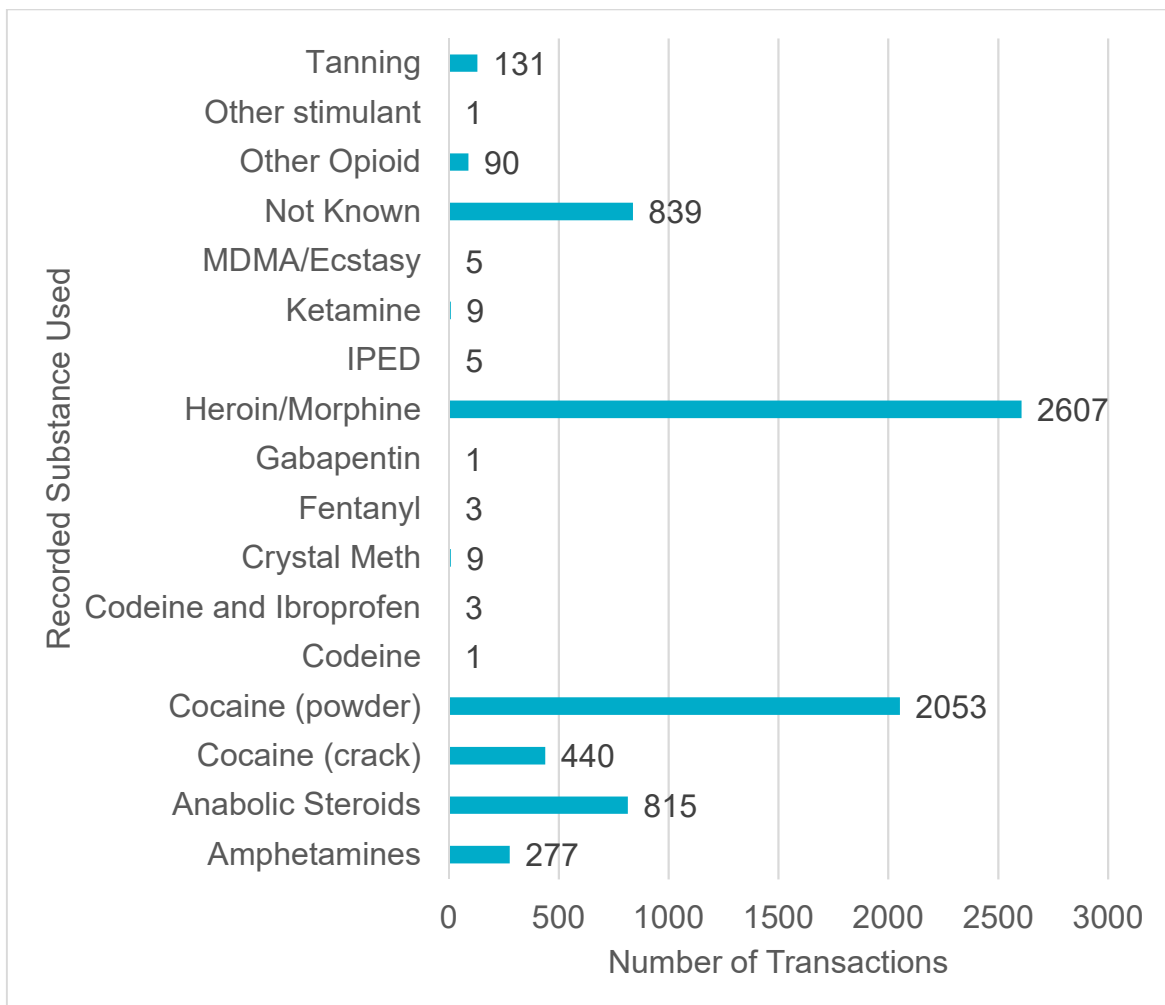


Figure 10 reflects that of the 5664 transactions in this reporting period, 6450 reports of substance used were recorded with 16 substances/categories. The unknown option was selected within 839 transactions.

The largest recorded substance used in needle exchange was heroin/morphine followed by cocaine (powder) and anabolic steroids. All of which had significant increases in reporting since last quarter.

Section 4: Northern Health and Social Care Trust Area NSES Data

In the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Area (NHSCT) within the reporting period there were:

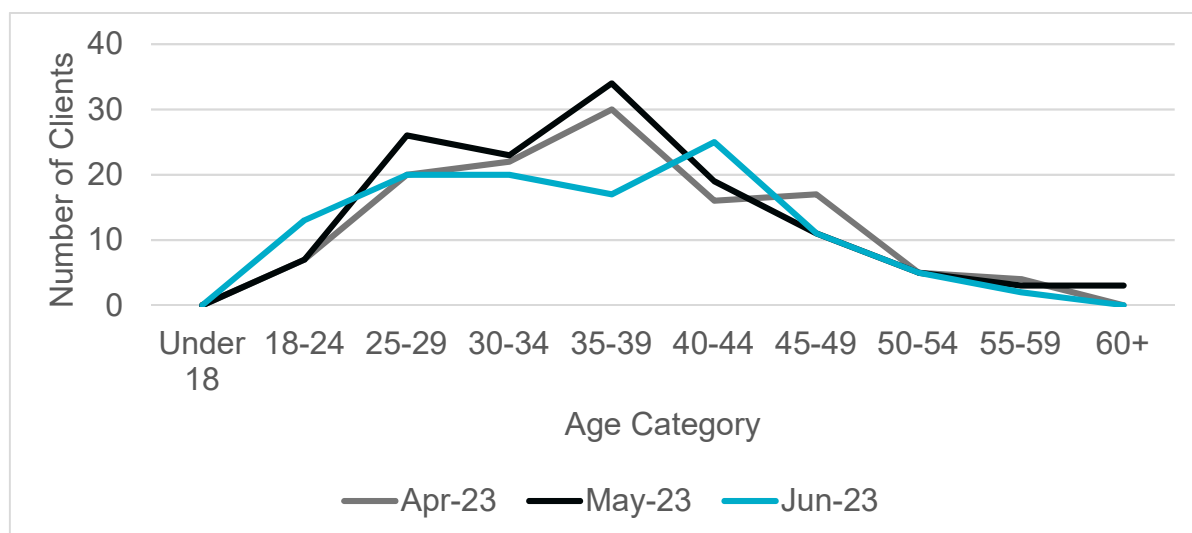
- 1032 NSES transactions completed;
- 692 Unique clients using NSES;
- 365 new clients registered for NSES;
- 5 anonymous transactions completed.

All transactions within the NHSCT area were carried out by Community Pharmacy.

NSES User Profile

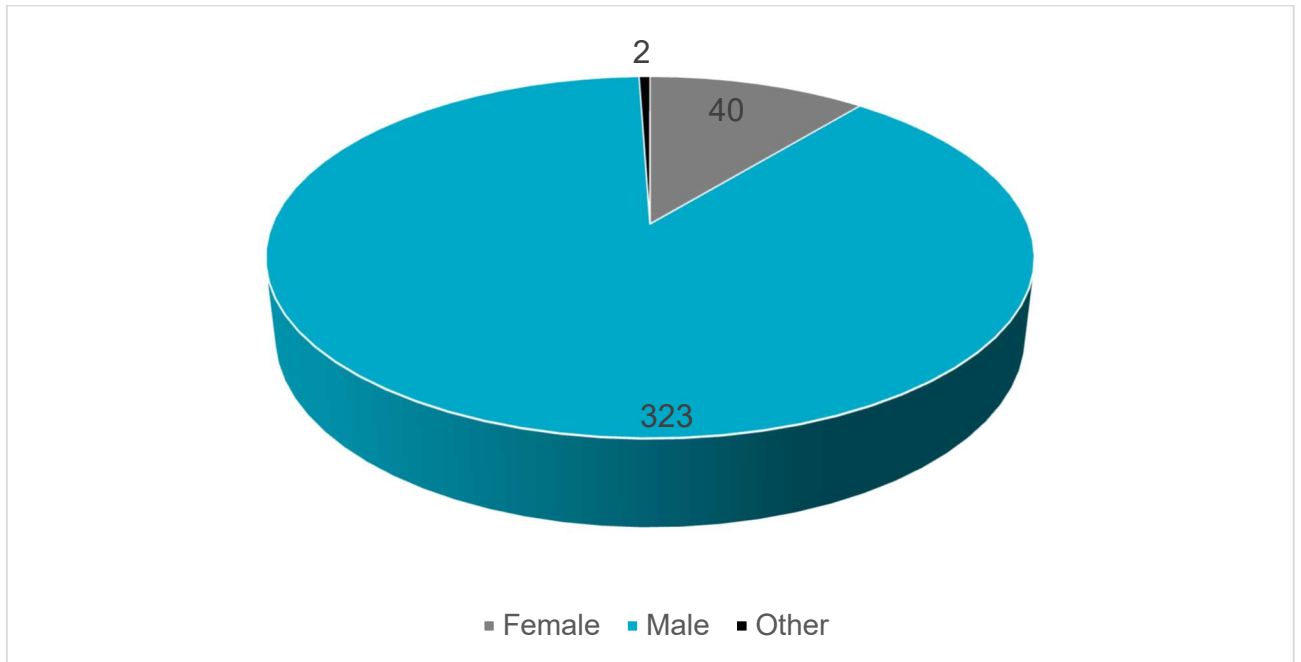
The age and gender profile of the 365 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 11 and 12.

Figure 11: Current Age of Clients in NHSCT registered in reporting period



The most common overall age group of client in NHSCT was age 35-39 years.

Figure 12: Gender of Clients at registration in NHSCT



The majority of new clients registered were male (88%).

Figure 13: Recorded Substance Used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 in NHSCT

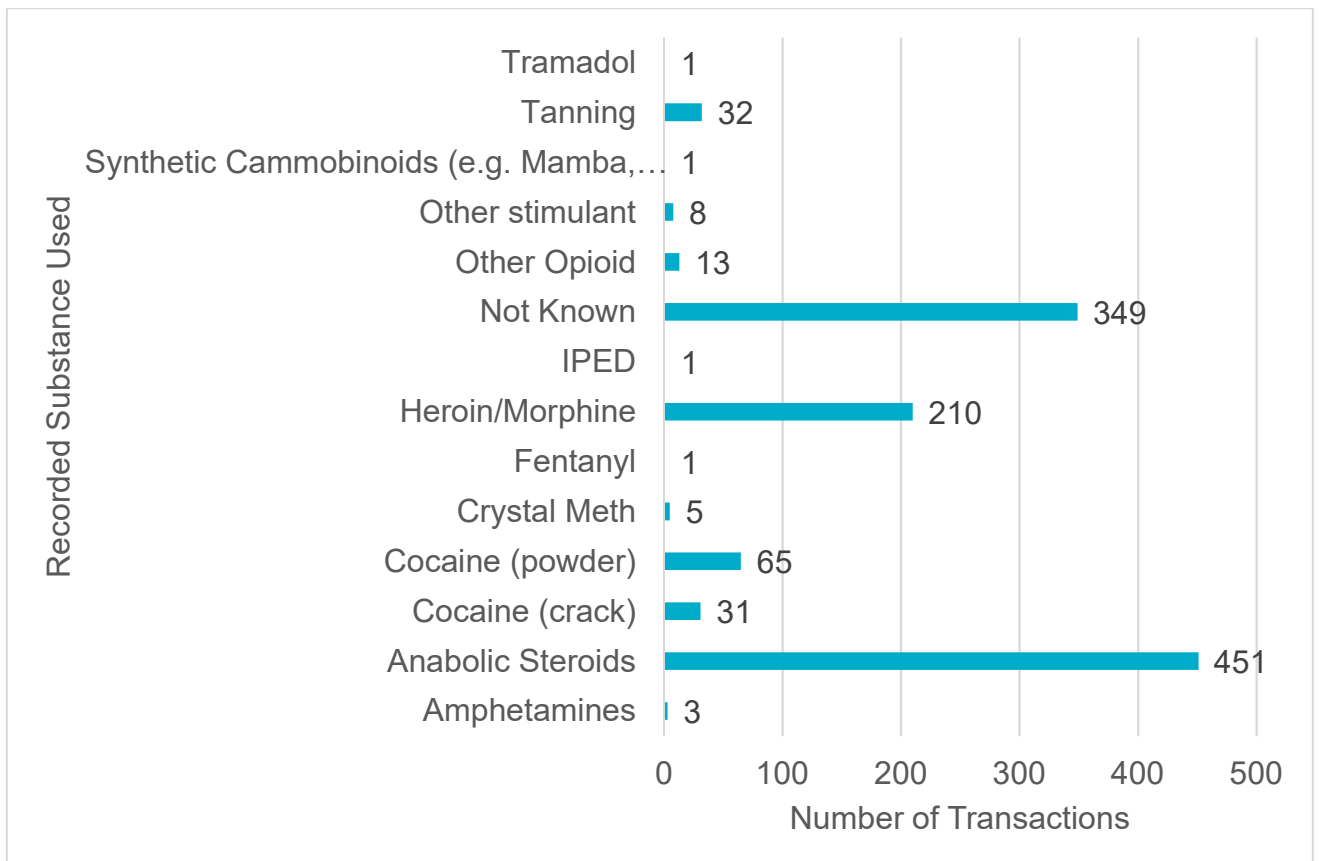


Figure 13 reflects that of the 1032 transactions in this reporting period, 822 reports of substance used were recorded with 11 substances/categories and 349 transactions deciding not to disclose the substance used.

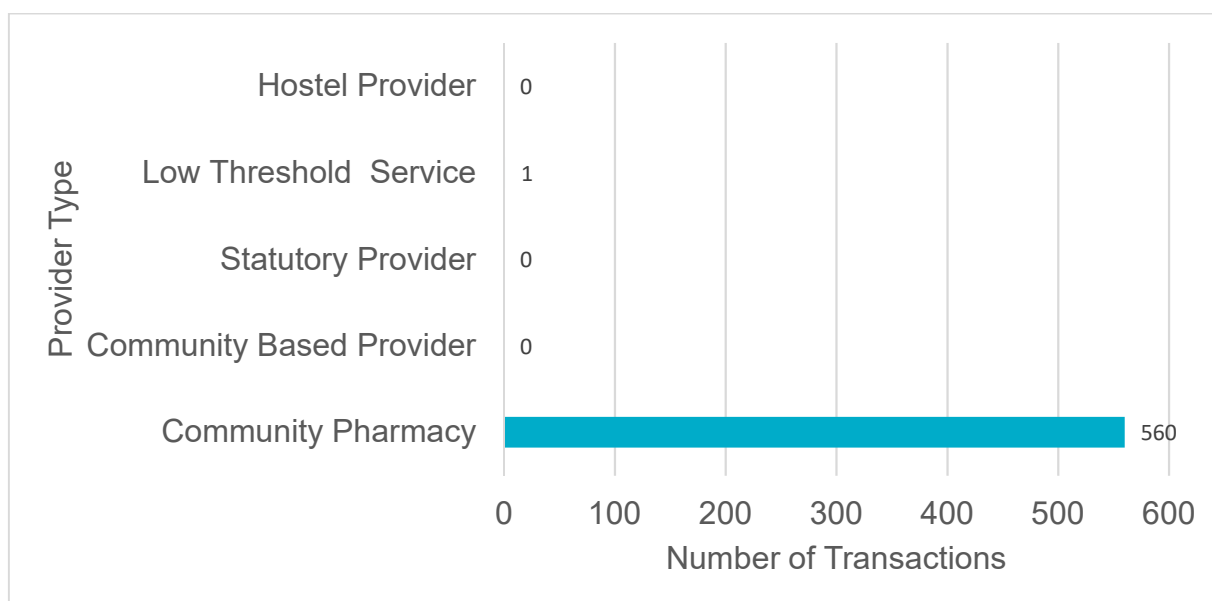
The largest recorded substance used in needle exchange was anabolic steroids (451), followed by heroin/morphine (210), followed by Cocaine powder. This remains the same from previous quarter.

Section 5: South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Area NSES Data

In the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Area (SEHSCT) within the reporting period there were:

- 561 NSES transactions completed;
- 394 unique clients using NSES;
- 240 new clients registered for NSES;
- 7 anonymous transactions completed.

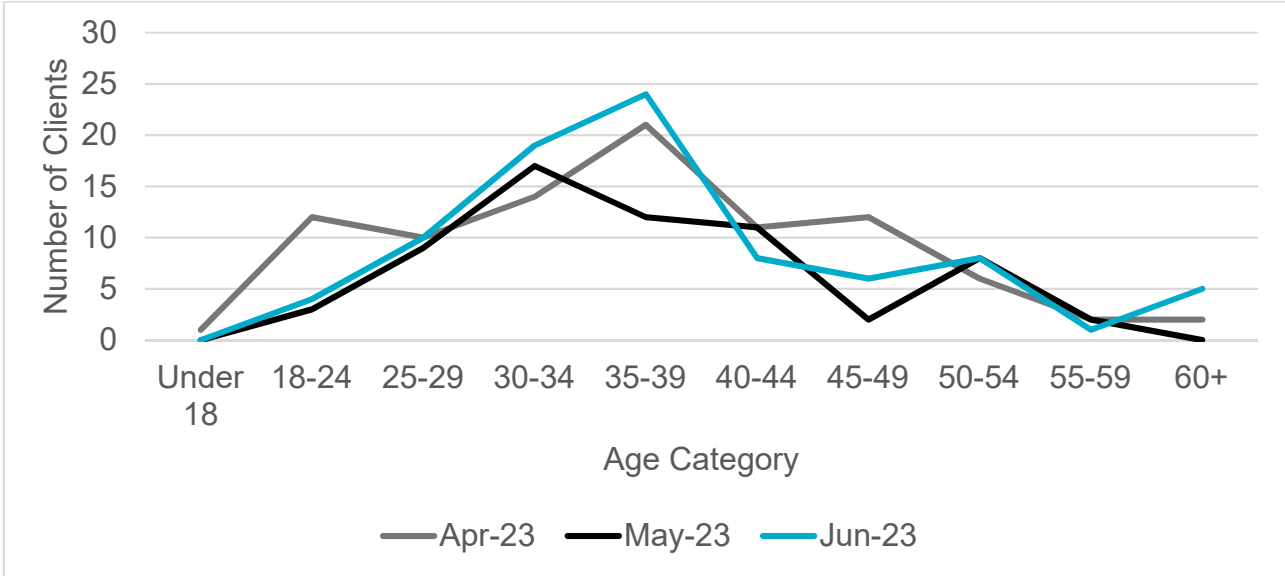
Figure 14: Number of Transactions per provider type for SEHSCT



NSES User Profile

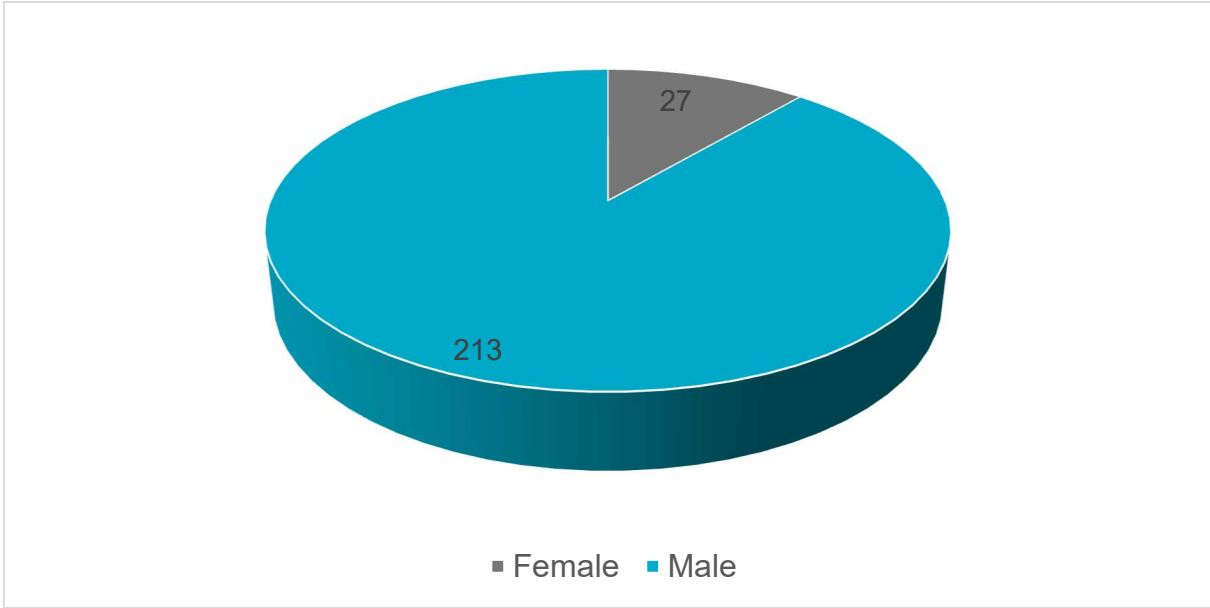
The age and gender profile of the 240 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 15 and 16.

Figure 15: Current Age of Clients in SEHSCT registered in reporting period



The most common overall age group of clients in SEHSCT was age 35-39 years.

Figure 16: Gender of Clients at registration in SEHSCT



The majority of new clients registered were male (89%).

Figure 17: Recorded Substance Used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 in SEHSCT

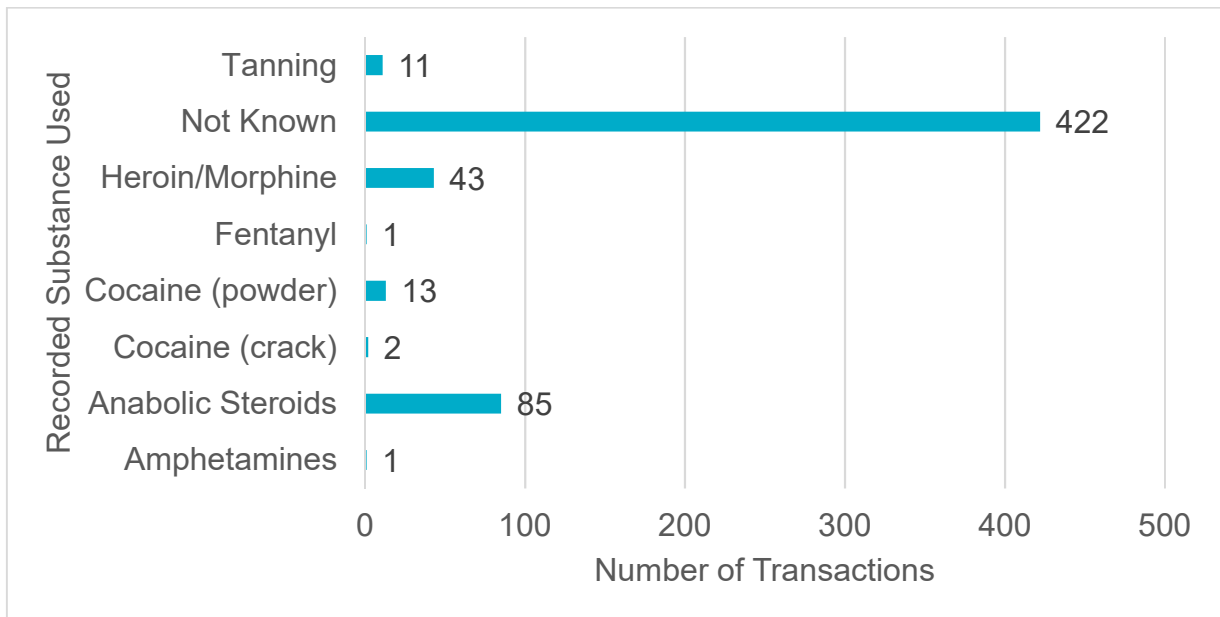


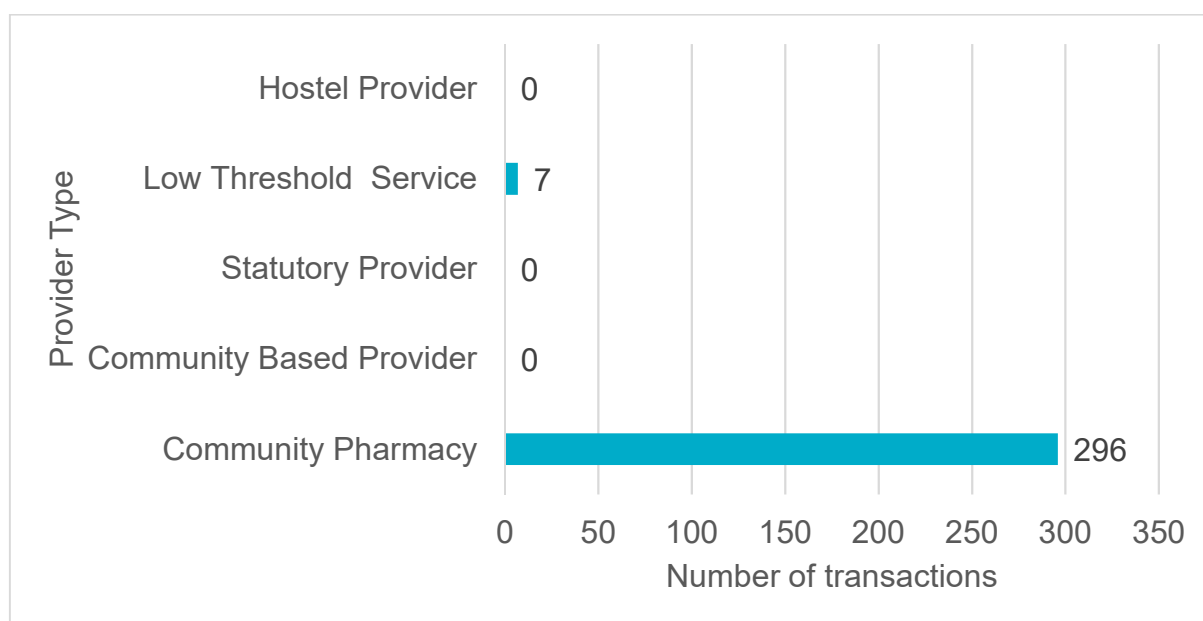
Figure 17 reflects that of the 561 transactions in this reporting period, 156 reports of substance used were recorded across 7 substances/categories with a 422 transactions (72%) deciding not to disclose the substance used. Of those who did report anabolic steroids was the most reported substance followed by morphine/heroin (43), followed by cocaine powder.

Section 6: Southern Health and Social Care Trust Area NSES Data

In the Southern Health and Social Care Trust Area (SHSCT) within the reporting period there were:

- 303 NSES transactions completed;
- 206 unique clients using NSES;
- 122 new clients registered for NSES;
- 15 anonymous transactions completed.

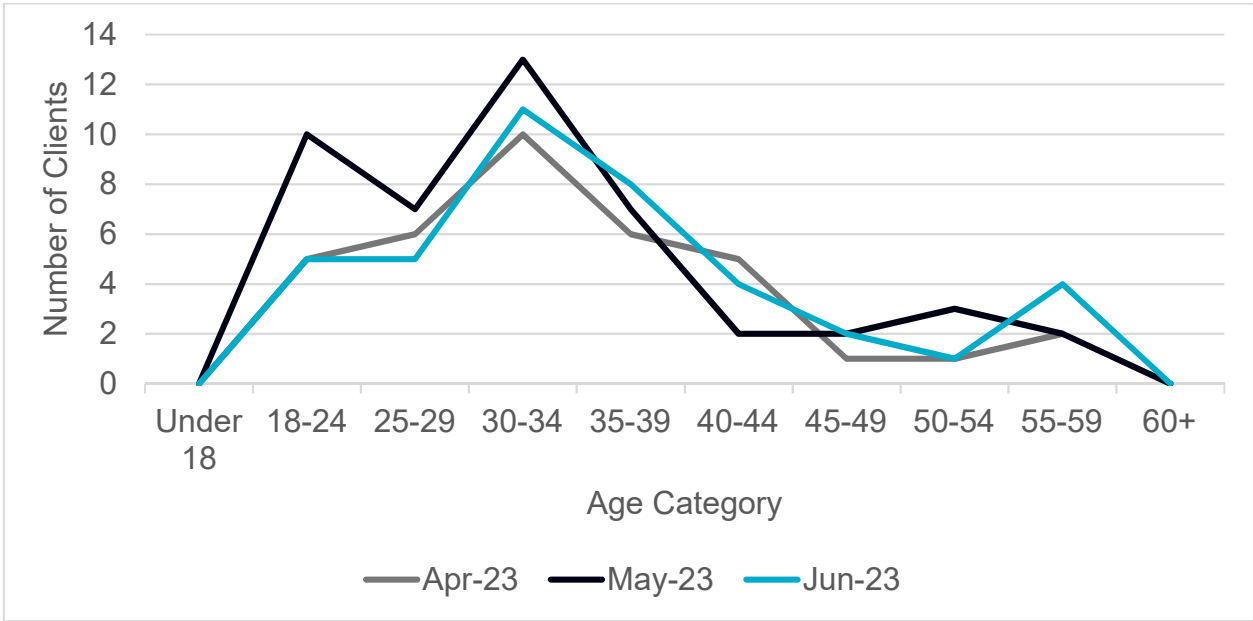
Figure 18: Number of Transactions per Provider type in NSES for SHSCT area



NSES User Profile

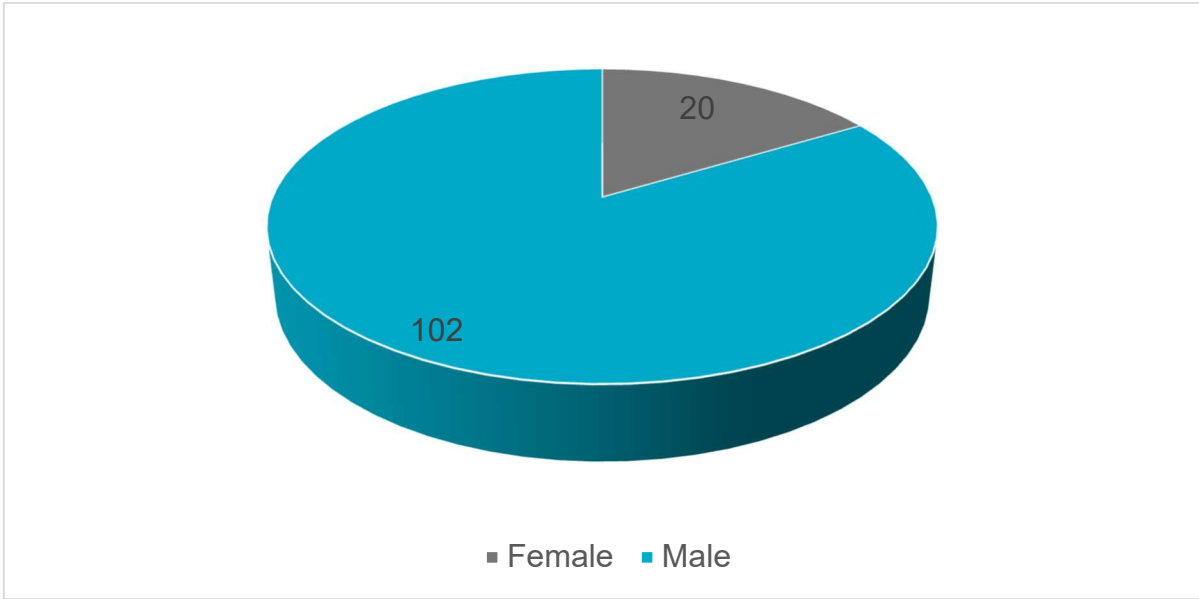
The age and gender profile of the 142 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 19 and 20.

Figure 19: Current Age of Clients in SHSCT registered in reporting period



The most common overall age group of client in SHSCT was age 30-34 years.

Figure 20: Gender of Clients at registration in SHSCT



The majority of new clients registered were male (84%).

Figure 21: Recorded Substance Used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 in SHSCT

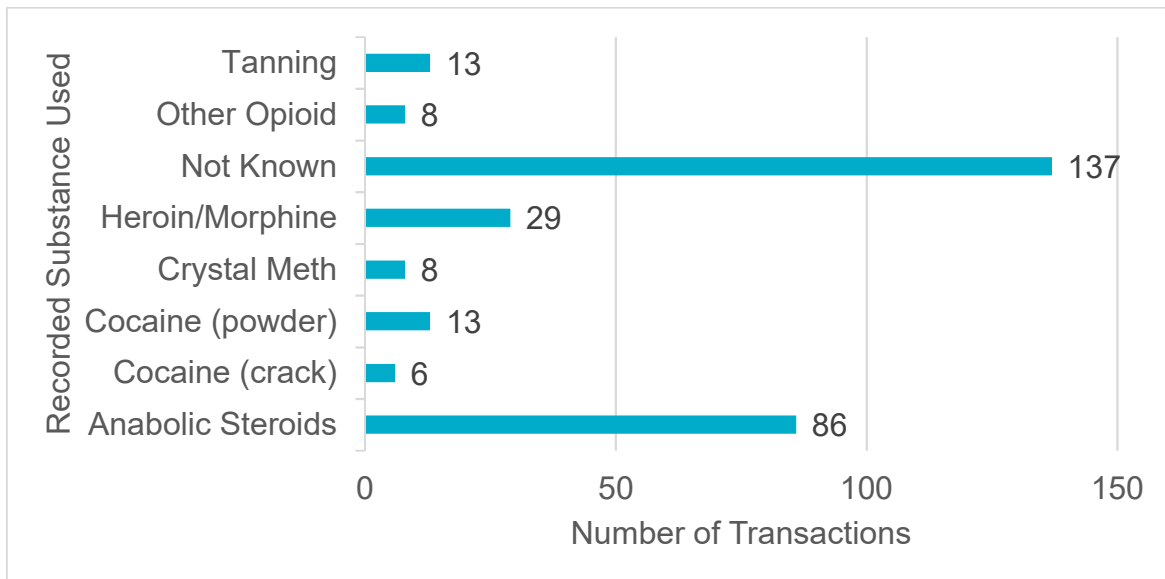


Figure 21 reflects that of the 303 transactions in this reporting period, 163 reports of substance used were recorded with 7 substances/categories. The unknown category was selected 137 times. The largest substance recorded was anabolic steroids (86) followed by morphine/heroin (29) and an equal amount for tanning and cocaine powder (13)

Section 7: Western Health and Social Care Trust Area NSES Data

In the Western Health and Social Care Trust Area (WHSCT) within the reporting period there were:

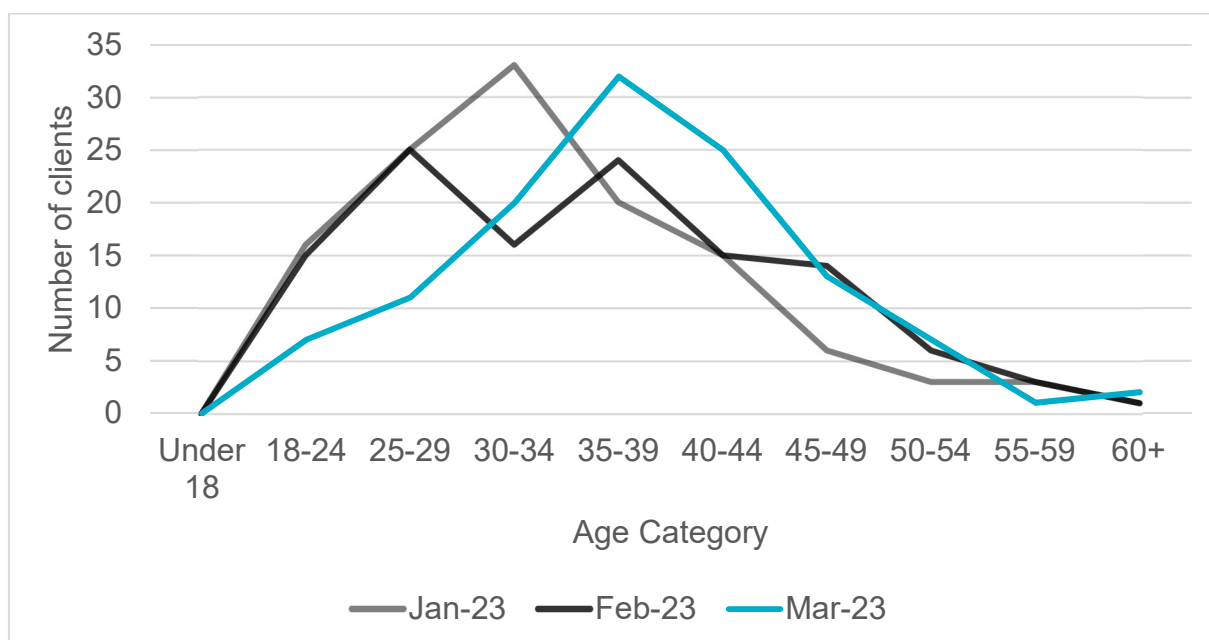
- 620 NSES transactions completed;
- 422 unique clients using NSES;
- 291 new clients registered for NSES;
- 15 anonymous transactions completed.

All of these transactions were completed by Community Pharmacies.

NSES User Profile

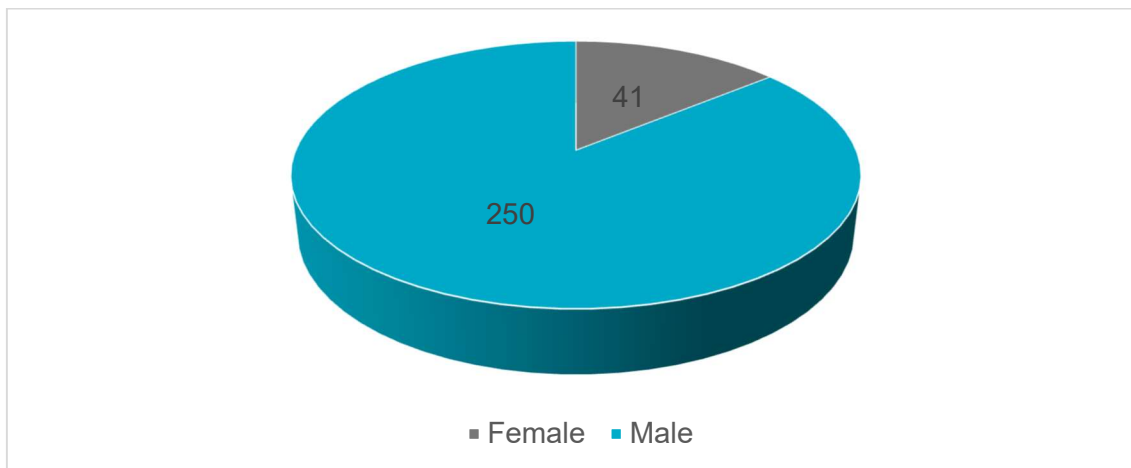
The age and gender profile of the 291 users registered within the reporting period is shown in Figures 23 and 24.

Figure 22: Current Age of Clients in WHSCT registered in reporting period



Overall the most common age category in the WHSCT area was 35-39 years.

Figure 23: Gender of new Clients at registration in WHSCT



The majority of clients were male (85%) within the WHSCT area.

Figure 24: Recorded Substance Used by transaction from 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 in WHSCT area

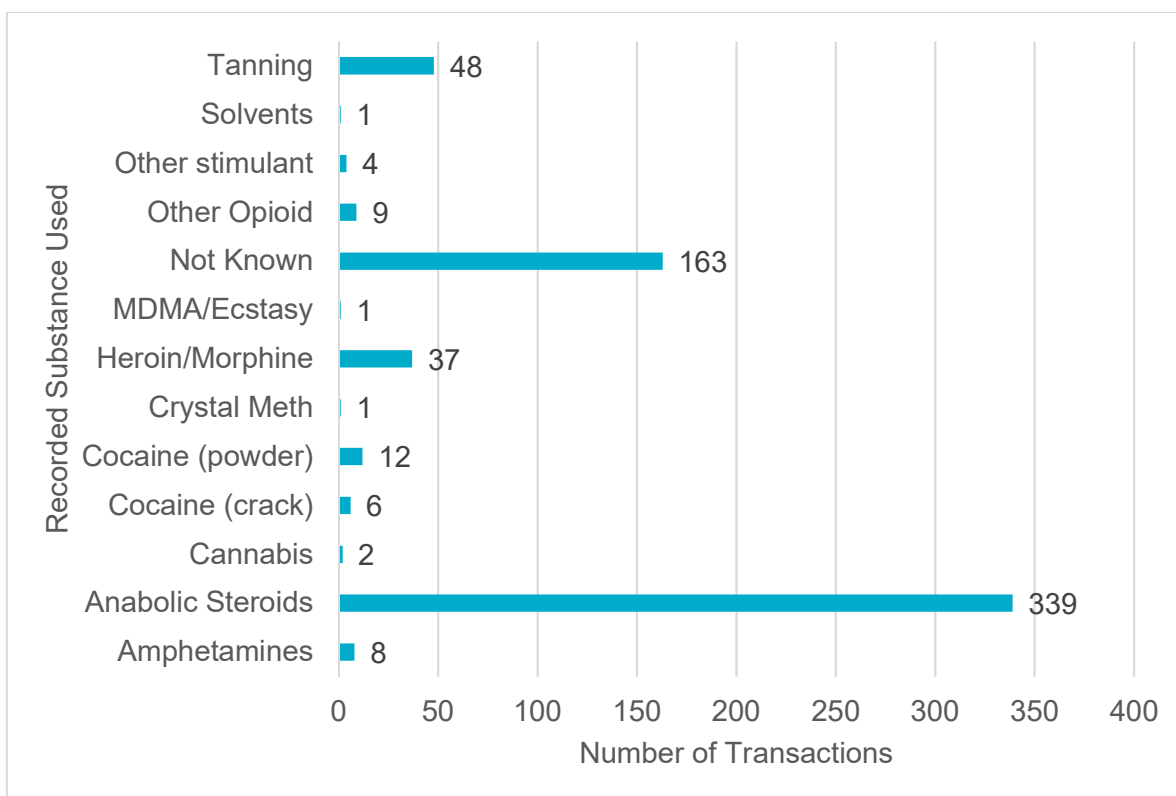


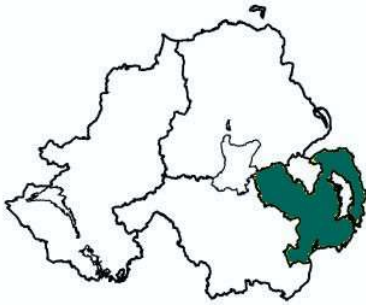


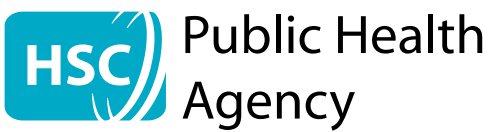


Figure 24 reflects that of the 620 transactions in this reporting period, 468 reports of substance used were recorded with 12 substances/categories. 163 transactions selected the unknown category.

The largest recorded substance usage in needle exchange was anabolic steroids followed by tanning and heroin/morphine. The WHSCT area remains the area reporting largest number of transactions with tanning solution. This has increased from 23 last quarter to 48 this quarter.

Section 8: Summary of NSES activity by Trust Area

<p>Belfast HSC Trust</p>  <p>Number of unique clients: 1579 Percentage male: 85%</p> <p>Most commonly reported Drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heroin/Morphine 2. Cocaine powder 3. Anabolic Steroids <p>Lead Sector: Community Based Providers</p>	<p>Northern HSC Trust</p>  <p>Number of unique clients: 692 Percentage male: 88%</p> <p>Most commonly reported Drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anabolic Steroids 2. Heroin/Morphine 3. Cocaine Powder <p>Lead Sector: Community Pharmacy</p>	<p>South Eastern HSC Trust</p>  <p>Number of unique clients: 394 Percentage male: 89%</p> <p>Most commonly reported Drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anabolic Steroids 2. Heroin/Morphine 3. Cocaine Powder <p>Lead Sector: Community Pharmacy</p>
<p>Southern HSC Trust</p>  <p>Number of unique clients: 206 Percentage male: 84%</p> <p>Most commonly reported Drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anabolic Steroids 2. Heroin/Morphine 3. Cocaine Powder <p>Lead Sector: Community Pharmacy</p>	<p>Western HSC Trust</p>  <p>Number of unique clients: 422 Percentage male: 85%</p> <p>Most commonly reported Drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anabolic Steroids 2. Tanning Solution 3. Heroin/Morphine <p>Lead Sector: Community Pharmacy</p>	



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