



Needle Exchange Charter

What is a needle exchange charter?



Your local needle exchange is here to help and support you. This charter sets out what you can expect from the service, and the role you can play in making sure everyone who uses or works in a needle exchange has a positive experience. It was written jointly by people who use needle exchanges to get new needles (clients) and by needle exchange staff.

Respect



We will treat each other with respect. We are all together in this service, so let's make it good for everyone!

Treating everyone the same



Staff will treat all clients equally, whether they are getting antibiotics, paracetamol or a needle exchange pack. Nobody will judge you.

Clients will be served in the order in which they arrive. You should not have to wait while people who arrived after you are served, nor will you be served before people who arrived before you.

Sometimes you may have to wait for what can seem like a long time – remember that giving out prescriptions safely takes time, pharmacists need to double check what they give people, and may also have to explain how to take a medication. This means they may need to take time serving people in front of you. Please stay patient.

**Treat others
as you would like
to be treated
yourself.**

The right approach



Most exchanges are respectful, but occasionally staff working in needle exchanges, and other customers, feel uncomfortable and intimidated. The kinds of things which can make people feel intimidated include:

- people arriving in groups;
- horseplay – pushing and shoving, knocking things over (even if it is meant in a jokey way);
- making a lot of noise;
- arriving drunk or benzoed, or unsteady on your feet from taking drink or drugs;
- behaving in a way which people may feel is aggressive, for example shouting or swearing;
- talking about drugs, selling or buying drugs, or swapping prescriptions.

Going to the pharmacy is a bit like going to the doctor – it's a chance to have a private conversation about your wellbeing and what you need. You wouldn't take your mate to the doctor, so treat your visit to the pharmacy in the same way.

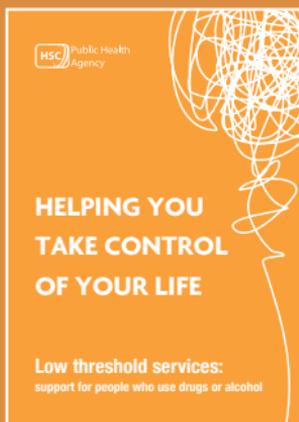
Using the service



Conversations with your pharmacist

Your pharmacist is a healthcare provider who can give you advice on health issues you may be having. If you can time your visit so you are there when you are feeling well and have a bit of time, you can get the most out of your visit.

Your pharmacist can give you advice or leaflets on loads of things, including safer injecting, harm reduction and blood borne viruses. He or she can also give you information on other services, for example Low Threshold Services, which offer practical support to people who use drugs and alcohol.



Number of needles

Staff can be flexible when giving out equipment. If you want more than one pack because you live far away and find it hard to get to the pharmacy, or because you are getting packs for friends, then tell your pharmacist so they can give you extra packs. If you don't plan to use all the equipment in a pack, please tell your pharmacist so they can open it and you can take only what you need. This saves you having to dispose of what you don't use, and also saves money because expensive equipment is not being thrown away.

Confidentiality

Your needle exchange service is confidential. That means that staff members will not pass on any information about you or your visit to anyone. It is a standalone service, and even if you use the same pharmacy to get methadone or other medication, no one will be told about your visits to the needle exchange.

Getting rid of your needles

When you've finished with your needles etc, **please bring them back**. Use your cinbin to put them in, and when it's full, seal it, and then bring it back. **THIS IS REALLY IMPORTANT!**

Most people who use needle exchanges dispose of their needles responsibly, but there are a few people who throw them out in public places or leave them lying around. This puts other people at risk of needle stick injuries, and can also be frightening for people, especially if they have children who they fear could pick up a needle out of curiosity.

When needles are left lying around, people who live or work nearby complain about the needle exchange, and this can mean there is a risk the service will have to be shut down. Make sure this doesn't happen to your service.

It's your service –
don't mess it up for yourself and others!



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