

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

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

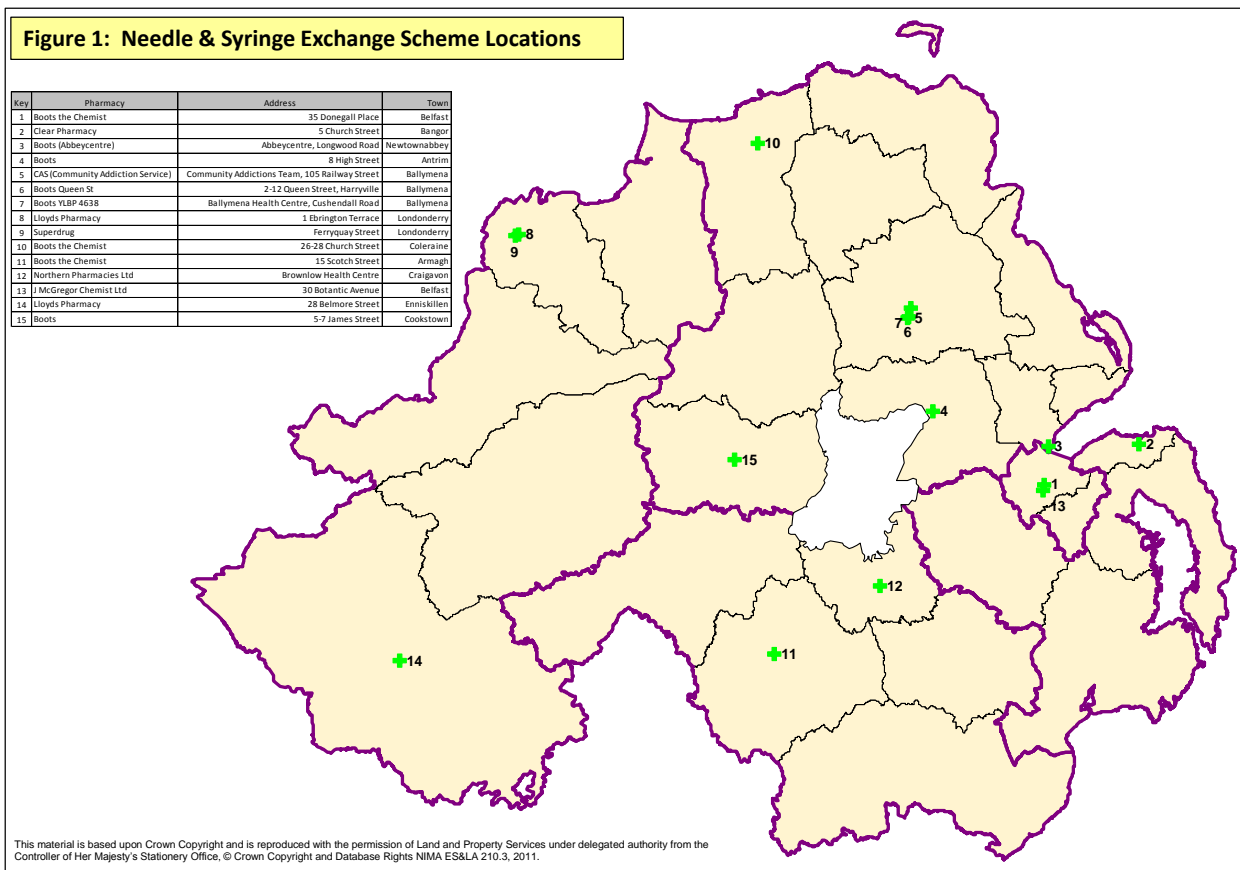
## Introduction

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 2014 and 31st March 2015. The anonymised data is collected by the 14 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 is broken down by areas of Health and Social Care Trust. These areas are coterminous with Local Commissioning Group areas. For ease of reading, the areas are referred to throughout this report as Health and Social Care Trust areas, or simply “areas”.

## Participating Pharmacies

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 each Health & Social Care Trust area in N. Ireland participated in the Scheme through 14 pharmacies and 1 Community Addiction Team Service based in Railway St, Ballymena. A further 6 pharmacies are due to start participating in the scheme in 2016. The current services can be seen in the map (Figure 1).



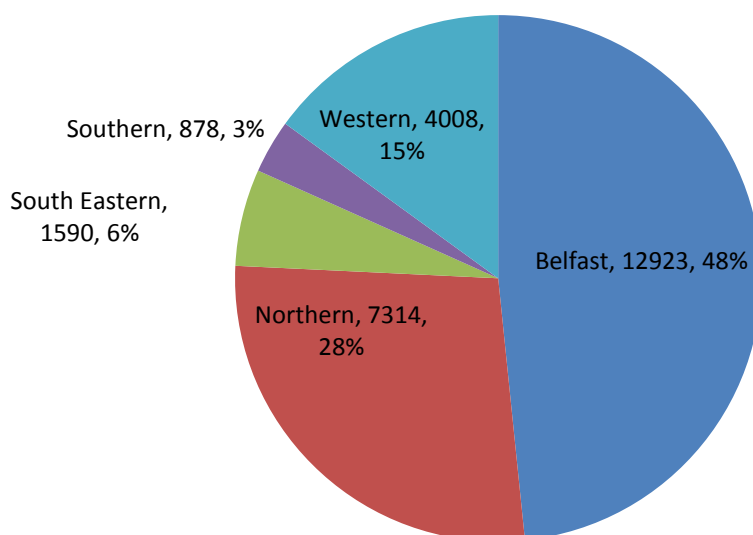
## Number of Visits to the Pharmacies

A total of 26,713 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 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. This is an increase in demand of 3,971 (17%) visits on the 2013/14 figure (22,742). Table 1 and Figure 2 below show the number of visits to pharmacies within each Health and Social Care Trust area. The Belfast area had the highest number of visits (48%) and the Southern area the lowest number of visits (3%).

**Table 1: Number of Visits within Trust / LCG area of Pharmacy including percentage change from 2013/14**

Area of Pharmacy	No of Visits 2014/15	% of Visits by area of Pharmacy 2014/15	Percentage Change from 2013/14
Belfast	12923	48%	26%
Northern	7314	28%	11%
South Eastern	1590	6%	6%
Southern	878	3%	14%
Western	4008	15%	11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26713</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>17%</b>

**Figure 2: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme 2014/15 - Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust**

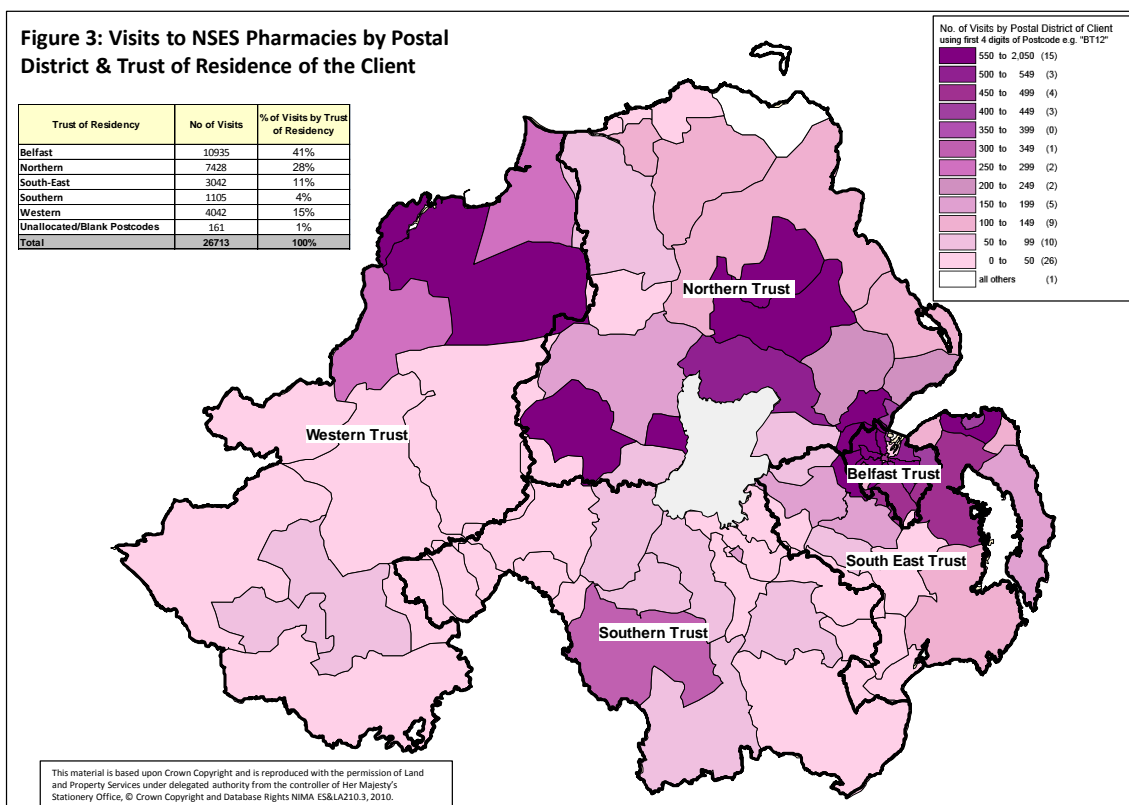


## Number of Visits made by Health & Social Care Trust of Residents

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 area of Residence of each client. Table 2 and Figure 3 shows the highest percentage of visits made was from residents of Belfast area (41%) and the lowest was from the Southern area (4%). A small number of postcodes (1%) were not submitted to the database and 5 visits were made by non-residents of Northern Ireland.

**Table 2: Number of Visits by Health & Social Care Trust area of Residence**

Area of Residency	No of Visits 2014/15	% of Visits by Area of Residency 2014/15
Belfast	10935	41%
Northern	7428	28%
South-East	3042	11%
Southern	1105	4%
Western	4042	15%
Unallocated/Blank Postcodes	161	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>26713</b>	<b>100%</b>



The number of visits made per 100,000 HSCT population can be seen in Table 3 ranging from the highest, Belfast area (3110 visits per 100,000 population) to the lowest, Southern area (299 visits per 100,000 population). The percentage change from 2013/14 to 2014/15 is most significant in the

Belfast area with a 26% rise in visits by Belfast area residents to Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme pharmacists.

**Table 3: Visits per 100,000 Health & Social Care Trust area Population**

Trust of Residency	Number of Visits	Trust Population	Clients per 100,000 population 2014/15	Clients per 100,000 population 2013/14	% Change from 2013/14
Belfast	10935	351,554	3110	2477	26%
Northern	7428	469,051	1584	1412	12%
South-Eastern	3042	352,301	863	778	11%
Southern	1105	369,391	299	269	11%
Western	4042	298,201	1355	1225	11%
Unallocated/Blank Postcode	161	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>26713</b>	<b>1,840,498</b>	<b>1,451</b>		

Population Source: NISRA Mid-Year Estimates published June 2014

## Cross Boundary Flow

Table 9 illustrates the cross-boundary flow of clients accessing the Scheme. In comparing the Health & Social Care Trust of Residence of the client and the Trust of the Pharmacy that they visit it is noteworthy that 50.2% of clients from the South-Eastern Trust visit a pharmacy in the Belfast Trust. Of the clients who are residents of the Southern Trust 16.3% visit Belfast Trust pharmacies and 9% visit Northern Trust pharmacies. In the Western Trust 97% of clients visit a Western Trust Pharmacy. Table 10 shows the percentage change in visits by Trust residents to pharmacies during 2014/15.

**Table 9: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust of the Clients and the Trust of Pharmacies Visited**

Trust of Residency of Clients using NSES	Trust of Pharmacies					
	Belfast Pharmacies	Northern Pharmacies	South Eastern Pharmacies	Southern Pharmacies	Western Pharmacies	Total
Belfast	10259	551	113	3	9	10935
% of Residents	93.8%	5.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.1%	100.0%
Northern	779	6564	15	6	64	7428
% of Residents	10%	88.4%	0%	0%	1%	100%
South-Eastern	1528	31	1445	25	13	3042
% of Residents	50.2%	1.0%	47.5%	0.8%	0.4%	100.0%
Southern	180	66	11	830	18	1105
% of Residents	16.3%	6.0%	1.0%	75.1%	1.6%	100.0%
Western	61	73	2	11	3895	4042
% of Residents	1.5%	1.8%	0.0%	0.3%	96.4%	100.0%
Not Recorded & Outside Belfast	116	29	4	3	9	161
%	72.0%	18.0%	2.5%	1.9%	5.6%	100.0%

**Table 10: A cross-reference of Health & Social Care Trust of Visits and the Trust of Pharmacies Visited - percentage change in visits between 2013/14 and 2014/15**

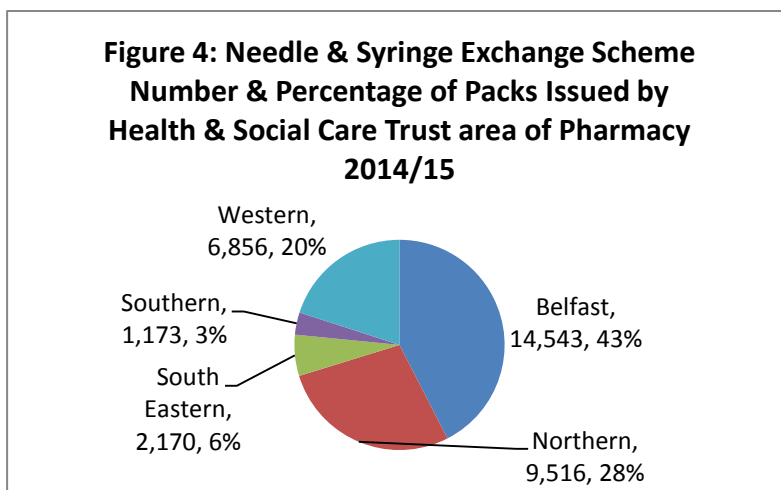
Trust of Residency of Clients using NSES	Trust of Pharmacies					
	Belfast Pharmacies	Northern Pharmacies	South Eastern Pharmacies	Southern Pharmacies	Western Pharmacies	Total
Belfast	2070	148	59	-2	1	2276
% of Residents	25.3%	36.7%	109.3%	-40.0%	12.5%	26.3%
Northern	231	610	-20	-4	21	838
% of Residents	42%	10%	-57%	-40%	49%	13%
South-Eastern	263	-15	57	2	6	313
% of Residents	20.8%	-32.6%	4.1%	8.7%	85.7%	11.5%
Southern	40	-23	-3	108	-2	120
% of Residents	28.6%	-25.8%	-21.4%	15.0%	-10.0%	12.2%
Western	33	-5	2	9	365	404
% of Residents	117.9%	-6.4%	0.0%	450.0%	10.3%	11.1%
Not Recorded & Outside Belfast	28	5	2	-5	-10	20
%	31.8%	20.8%	100.0%	-62.5%	-52.6%	14.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2665</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>3971</b>

## Number of Packs Issued by Health & Social Care Trust area

Table 4 and Figure 4 show the number and percentage of packs issued by each Trust area through their participating pharmacies. The Belfast area issued the highest number of packs (43%) and the lowest number was issued by the Southern area (3%).

**Table 4: Number and Percentage of Packs issued by HSCT area of Pharmacy**

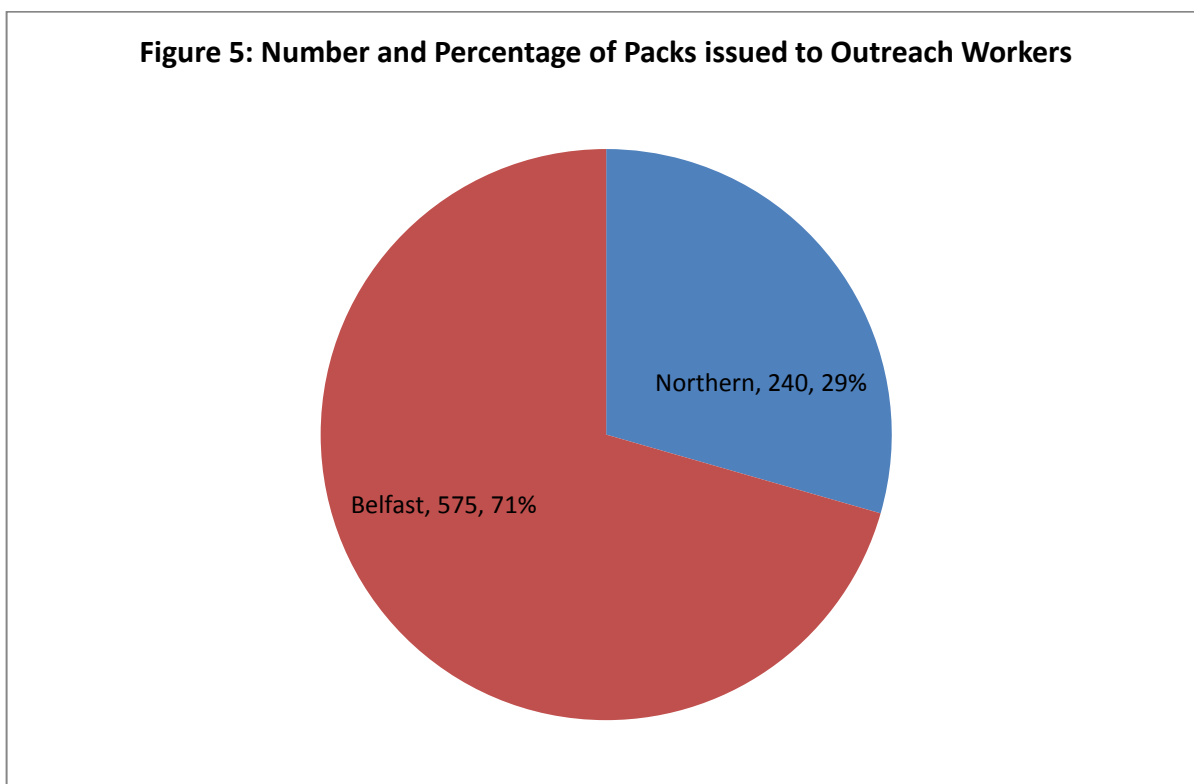
Trust of Pharmacy	Total Packs	% of Total
Belfast	14,543	43%
Northern	9,516	28%
South Eastern	2,170	6%
Southern	1,173	3%
Western	6,856	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,258</b>	<b>100%</b>



## Number and Percentage of Packs Issued to Outreach Workers

During 2014-15, Needle Exchange Outreach services were provided within 2 areas in N Ireland: the Belfast area and the Northern area. In the Belfast area, outreach was provided by the Belfast Trust through the Belfast Drug Outreach Team and the Homeless Health Care Project. In the Northern area, it was provided by a voluntary organisation, Threshold. The outreach workers visit pharmacies to obtain packs on behalf of clients. Figure 5 shows the number and percentage of packs issued to outreach workers in the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. Of the total packs issued to outreach workers, the highest number, 575 (71%) was issued to Belfast area staff while 240 (29%), was issued to Northern area staff.

Since July 2015, the Public Health Agency has funded Needle Exchange Outreach services across all 5 Trust areas, and future reports will reflect this.





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

The highest percentage of visits from clients using the Scheme was in the 31 and over age band (52%) which is a 1% decrease in last year's percentage. The 26-30 year old category remained the same as in 2013/14 (23%). In the 18-25 age band, visits increased by 3% from last year to 25% while there was no change in the Under 18s. Table 5, 5a and Figure 6 show the numbers and percentages by age band. Please note the figures are shown by Trust area of Residence of the client.

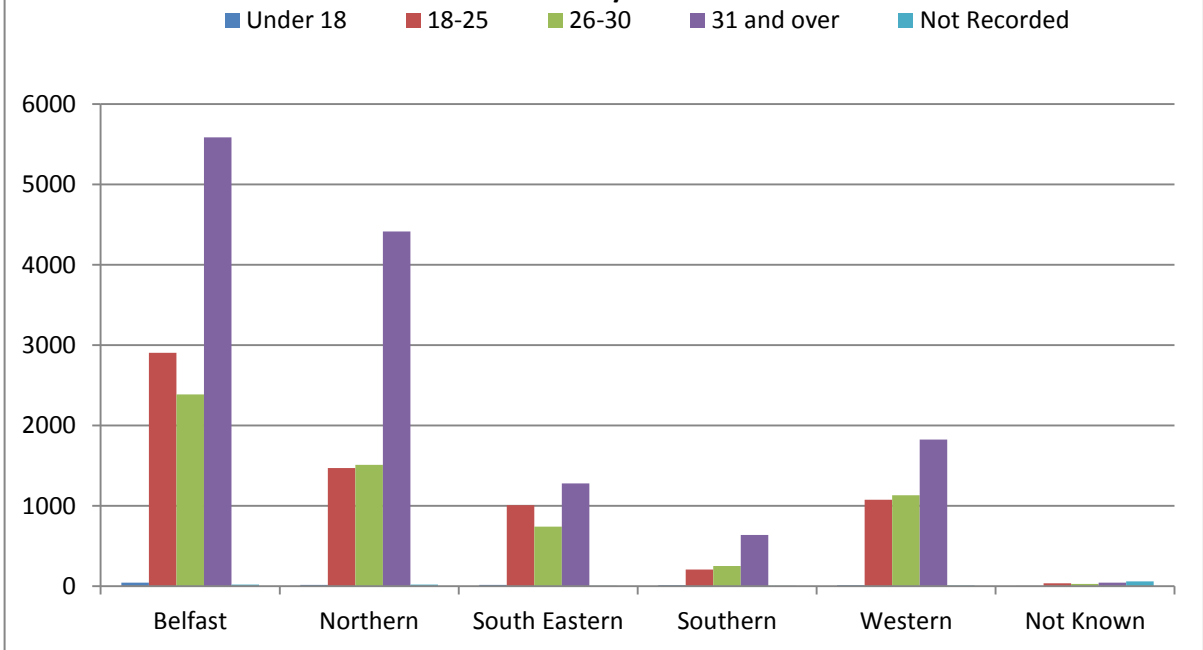
**Table 5: Number of Visits by Age-Band by Health & Social Care Trust of Residence**

Age-Band	Health & Social Care Trust area of Residency of Client						Total
	Belfast	Northern	South-Eastern	Southern	Western	Not Known	
Under 18	42	16	14	10	9	1	92
18-25	2904	1469	1007	207	1076	33	6696
26-30	2385	1509	739	250	1129	25	6037
31 and Over	5586	4417	1279	636	1823	43	13784
Not Recorded & Outside N.I.	18	17	3	2	5	59	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>10935</b>	<b>7428</b>	<b>3042</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>4042</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>26713</b>

**Table 5a: Percentage of Visits by Age-Band by Health & Social Care Trust 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%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
18-25	27%	20%	33%	19%	27%	20%	25%
26-30	22%	20%	24%	23%	28%	16%	23%
31 and Over	51%	60%	43%	58%	45%	27%	52%
Not Recorded & Outside N.I.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	37%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 6: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme  
No. of Clients by Age-Band by Health & Social Care Trust of Residence  
2014/15**

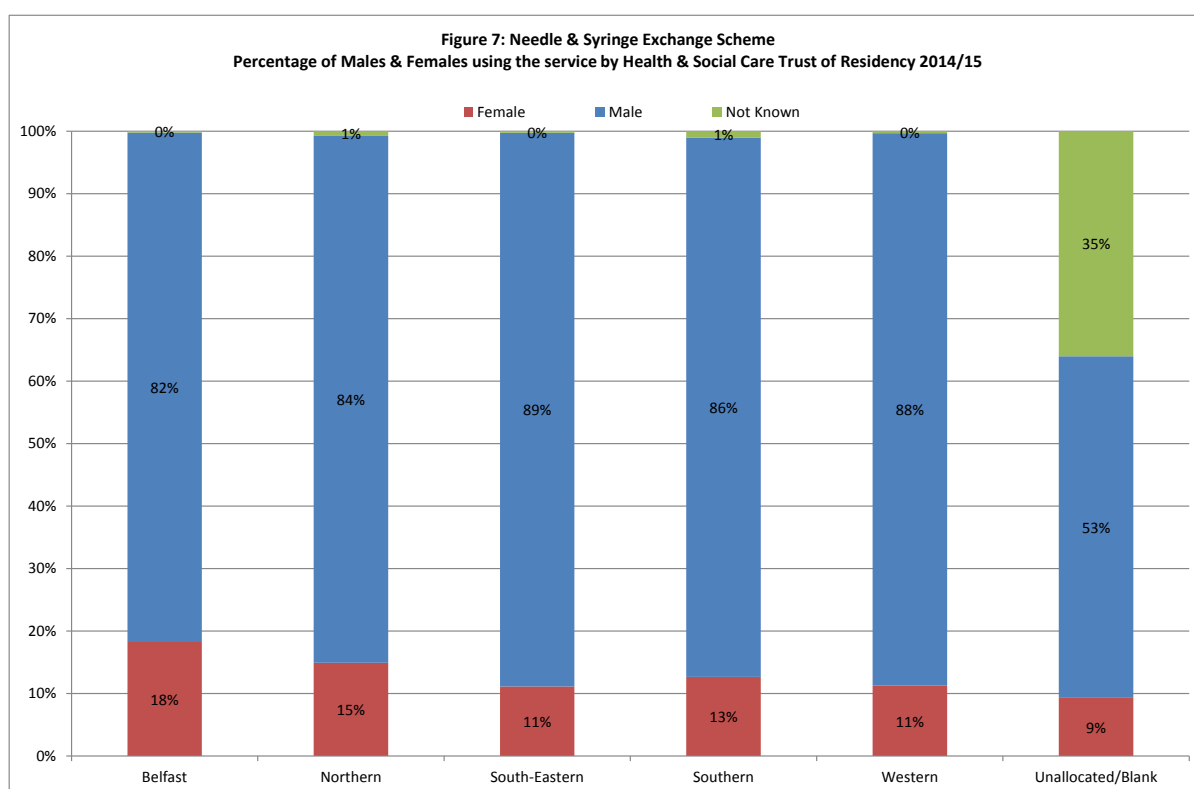


## Gender of Clients using the Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme

Table 6 and Figure 7 illustrate the number and percentage of visits from males and females using NSES by their Health & Social Care Trust of Residency. The service is used mainly by male clients (84%). The highest percentage of visits from females using the service (18%) is in the Belfast Trust.

**Table 6: Number and Percentage of Visits from Males & Females using NSES by Trust of Residence**

Trust	Female	% of Trust Total	Male	% of Trust Total	Not Recorded	% of Trust Total	Total
Belfast	1994	18%	8916	82%	25	0%	10935
Northern	1109	15%	6263	84%	56	1%	7428
South-East	339	11%	2695	89%	8	0%	3042
Southern	140	13%	954	86%	11	1%	1105
Western	455	11%	3574	88%	13	1%	4042
Unallocated/Blank	15	9%	88	55%	58	36%	161
<b>Total</b>	<b>4052</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>22490</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>26713</b>



## Number of Visits from Clients injecting Opioids, Steroids, Stimulants and Other Drugs

Under the Scheme data defining the “user type” is collected on those injecting Amphetamines, Opiates, Steroids, Opiate & Steroid, Steroid & Tanning, Tanning and User Type Not Known. Participating pharmacies collected 68% of data on injecting detail which is a significant increase on last year’s figure of 50%. Of the total visits to the Scheme it was recorded that 37% of visits were from users injecting steroids, rising to 38% when Steroid & Tanning are included in this figure. Those injecting opiates rose to 28%. Table 7 and 7a illustrate the various types of drug users who used the Scheme. Figure 8 charts the trend since 2012/13.

**Table 7: Number of Visits by User Type and Trust of Pharmacy**

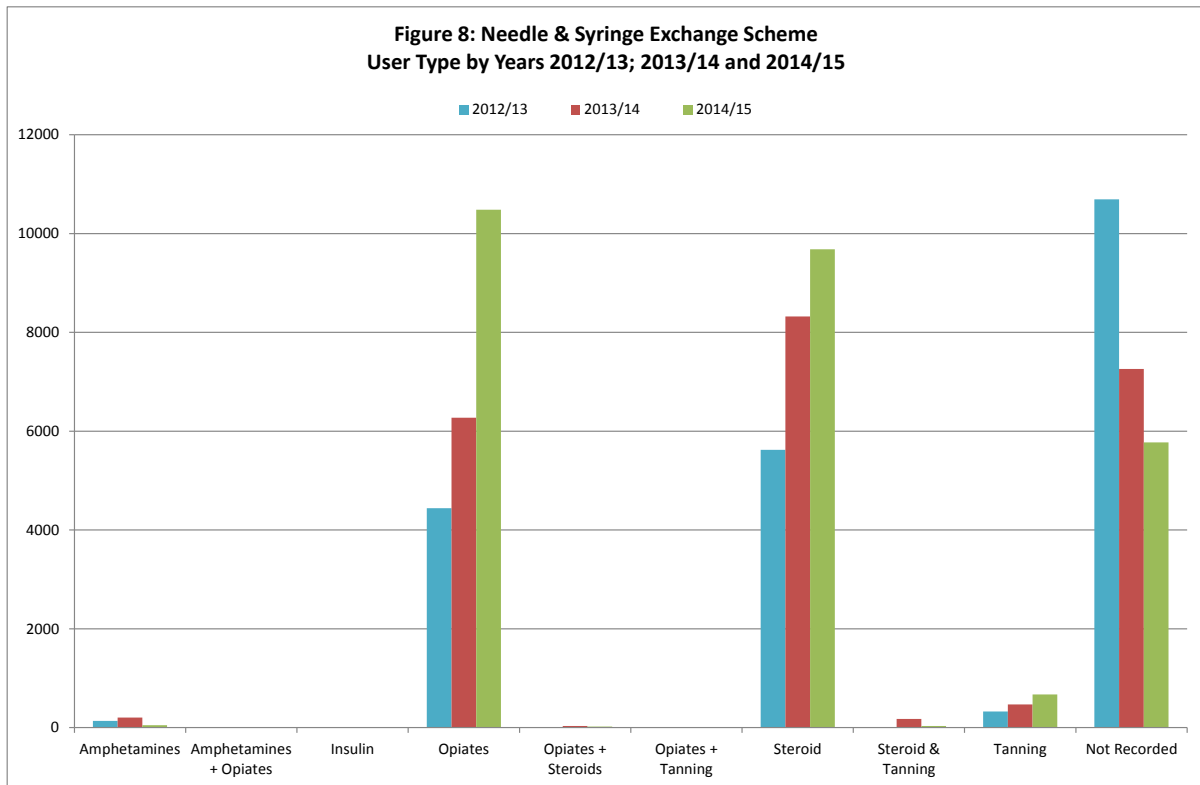
Trust of Pharmacy	Amphetamines	Amphetamines + Opiates	Insulin	Opiates	Opiates + Steroids	Opiates + Tanning	Steroid	Steroid & Tanning	Tanning	Not Recorded	Total Visits
Belfast	6	0	0	4505	16	0	3095	9	251	5041	12923
Northern	43	0	0	4408	2	0	2321	9	224	307	7314
South Eastern	1	0	0	162	0	0	1379	4	32	12	1590
Southern	0	0	0	276	3	0	175	7	50	367	878
Western	0	0	0	1131		0	2711	4	115	47	4008
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10482</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9681</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>5774</b>	<b>26713</b>

**Table 7a: Percentage of Visits by User Type and Trust of Pharmacy**

Trust of Pharmacy	Amphetamines	Amphetamines + Opiates	Insulin	Opiates	Opiates + Steroids	Opiates + Tanning	Steroid	Steroid & Tanning	Tanning	Not Recorded	Total Visits
Belfast	0%	0%	0%	35%	0%	0%	24%	0%	2%	39%	100%
Northern	1%	0%	0%	60%	0%	0%	32%	0%	3%	4%	100%
South Eastern	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	87%	0%	2%	1%	100%
Southern	0%	0%	0%	31%	0%	0%	20%	1%	6%	42%	100%
Western	0%	0%	0%	28%	0%	0%	68%	0%	3%	1%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 8 highlights that the increase from last year reflects an increase in reporting of User Type. The recording of User Type has increased substantially from 2012/13 (50%) to 2014/15 (88%).

**Figure 8: Needle & Syringe Exchange Scheme User Type by Years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15**



## Number and Percentage of Return of Bins

A cin 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. Clients may request extra bins and these are accounted for in the figures. During 2014/15 data shows that 45% of bins issued to users were returned, showing that the return rate has decreased by 4% since 2013/14. The Western area continues to have the highest number of bins returned (70%) and the lowest return rate of 31% was by the Belfast area, a decrease of 10% since 2013/14. Table 8 and Figure 9 shows the number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies. 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 have 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.

**Table 8: Number and percentage of bins returned to pharmacies by Health & Social Care Trust of Pharmacy**

Trust of Pharmacy	No. of Packs Issued	No. of Bins Returned	% of Bins Returned
Belfast	14,526	4,448	31%
Northern	9,516	4,047	43%
South Eastern	2,170	1,399	64%
Southern	1,173	586	50%
Western	6,856	4,818	70%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>34,241</b>	<b>15,298</b>	<b>45%</b>

