

Statistics from the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme: 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007

This bulletin summarises information on people visiting the Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme and relates to the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2007. It is the sixth bulletin reporting on information collected on the operation of the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES), which began operation in April 2001.

Summary

In Northern Ireland during 2006/07:

- There were 9,997 visits to participating pharmacies by users of the scheme. This is an increase of 14% (1,200 visits) on the 2005/06 figure (8,797 visits).
- The proportion of visits involving the return of used equipment fell to 40% in 2006/07 from 44% in 2005/06.
- There were 47,400 needles and 97,684 syringes issued in 2006/07.
- Over four fifths of visits (84%) were made by male clients.
- Just over half (54%) of all visits were made by clients aged 31 and over.
- One in twenty five visits (4%) were by clients reporting themselves to be new users of the NSES.
- Nine (0.1%) visits were by clients reporting that they were currently sharing needles.

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1. Background

1.1 Needle Exchange Schemes are a service for injecting drug users, targeted as a harm reduction measure to help limit the spread of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

1.2 In 2000 funding was made available to develop a free needle and syringe exchange scheme in community pharmacies in Northern Ireland. With input from community pharmacists and other expert advisors, and taking account of models of best practice developed elsewhere, the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES) was introduced in April 2001.

1.3 Initially five pharmacies were involved in the scheme; by the end of 2006/07 there were nine pharmacies offering needle and syringe exchange. Pharmacies were chosen based on their willingness to participate, their location, and the assessed need for needle exchange in the locality.

2. Data Collection

2.1 Information on transactions involving needles and syringes is collected from participating pharmacies. Administrative input from pharmacy staff is kept to a minimum and statistics are collected at the end of each month. The information is collated within the Department of Health, Social Services, and Public Safety by the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit (DAIRU).

2.2 During 2006/07 the guidelines for completing the NSES Daily Log were revised, due to inconsistent recording of information. In 2006/07 the number of needles issued does not include those attached to the 0.5ml and 1ml syringes, where this had been the case in some pharmacies in previous years. It is

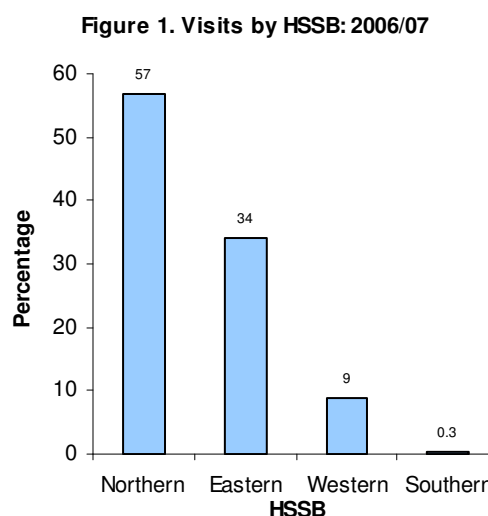
therefore not possible to directly compare the number of needles issued in 2006/07 with the number of needles issued in previous years.

2.3 Information is collected on the number of visits by clients and outreach workers on behalf of clients undertaking a NSES transaction; numbers of needles and syringes issued; returns of used equipment; date of birth and gender of the client. As data are collected in an anonymised form – to help underscore confidentiality and thus underpin confidence in the scheme – it is not possible to report directly on the number of individuals using the NSES during the year.

3. Number of Visits

3.1 There were 9,997 visits to NSES in 2006/07 and the number of visits were evenly spread across the four quarters within the year (Table 1).

3.2 The vast majority of visits (91%) took place at pharmacies based within the Northern (57%) and Eastern (34%) Health and Social Services Boards (HSSB). The Western HSSB accounted for 9% of the visits and the Southern HSSB had the lowest number of visits (26 visits or 0.3%) (Figure 1; Table 2).

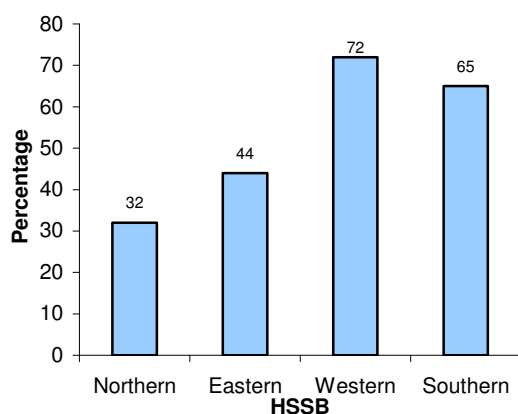


4. Return Rate

4.1 Four in ten (40%) of the 9,997 visits that were made in 2006/07 were exchanges, where a client returned a sealed bin containing used equipment. The return rate was highest in April - June (42%) and lowest in July - September (38%) (Table 1).

4.2 The return rates varied across HSSBs. The Northern HSSB had the lowest return rate (32%) and the Eastern HSSB had the second lowest return rate (44%). The Western HSSB had the highest return rate (72%) and the Southern HSSB had a return rate of 65% (Figure 2; Table 2).

Figure 2. Return Rate by HSSB: 2006/07



5. Number of Needles and Syringes Issued

Needles

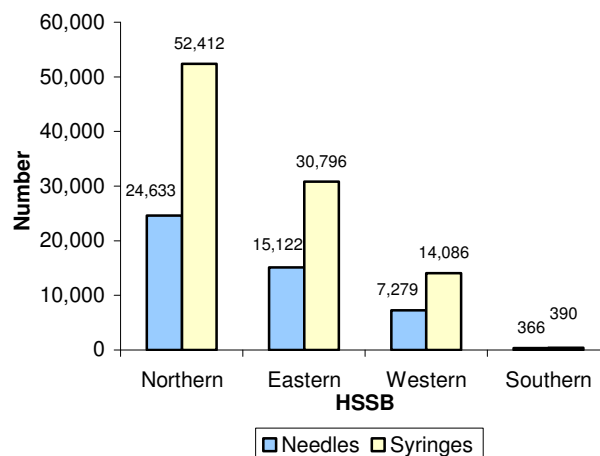
5.1 There were 47,400 needles issued in 2006/07 (Table 3). The Northern HSSB issued the highest number of needles (24,633; 52%), followed by the Eastern HSSB (15,122; 32%), then the Western HSSB (7,279; 15%). The Southern HSSB issued the lowest number of needles (366; 1%) (Figure 3).

Syringes

5.2 There were 97,684 syringes issued in 2006/07 (Table 4). The Northern HSSB issued the highest number of syringes

(52,412; 54%), followed by the Eastern HSSB (30,796; 32%), then the Western HSSB (14,086; 14%) and the Southern HSSB issued the lowest number of syringes (390; 0.4%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Needles and Syringes Issued by HSSB: 2006/07



Needle and Syringes Issued at Return Visits

5.3 Of the 47,400 needles issued in 2006/07, 32,479 (69%) were issued at visits where the client made a return. The proportion of needles issued at return visits varies between HSSBs. In the Northern HSSB 66% of needles were issued at visits where the client made a return, 64% in the Eastern HSSB, 86% in Western HSSB and 78% in the Southern HSSB (Table 3).

5.4 Of the 97,684 syringes issued in 2006/07, 64,108 (66%) were issued at visits where the client made a return. The proportion of syringes issued at return visits varies between HSSBs. In the Northern HSSB 61% of syringes were issued at visits where the client made a return, 63% in the Eastern HSSB, 88% in the Western HSSB, and 81% in the Southern HSSB (Table 4).

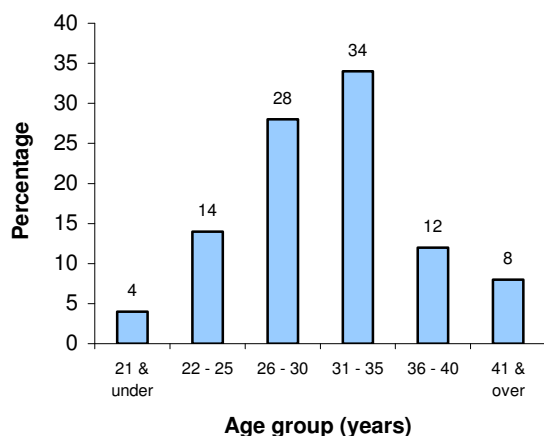
6. Profile of Service Users

Age and Gender

6.1 Over four fifths of visits (84%) were made by male clients (Table 5).

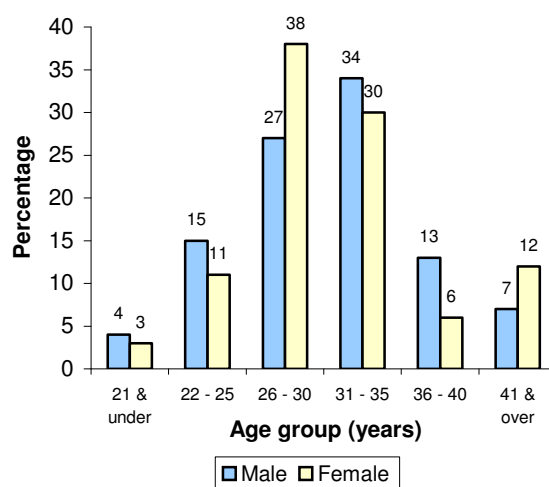
6.2 The mean age of clients using the NSES was 31 years, with over half (54%) of all visits made by clients aged 31 and over. The modal age group was 31 - 35, with over one third (34%) of visits made by this age group (Figure 4; Table 6).

Figure 4. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07



6.3 The age profile for visits by males and females was fairly similar. The largest proportion of visits by male clients (34%) were aged between 31 and 35. While the largest proportion of visits by female clients (38%) were aged between 26 and 30. A slightly larger proportion of visits by male clients than visits by female clients were aged under 25, 19% males compared to 14% females. The proportion of visits by male clients who were aged over 36 was very similar to the proportion of visits by female clients who were aged over 36, 20% and 18% respectively. (Figure 5; Table 7).

Figure 5. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07



New Clients

6.4 One in twenty five visits (400 visits; 4%) were by clients reporting themselves to be new users of the NSES (Table 8).

Reported Sharing Behaviour

6.5 Nine (0.1%) visits were by clients reporting that they currently shared equipment (Table 9). This level of sharing is considerably lower than estimates derived from other sources, for example from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database which reports on drug users presenting for treatment, and is therefore likely to be an underestimate.

7. Comparisons: 2005/06 and 2006/07

Number of Visits

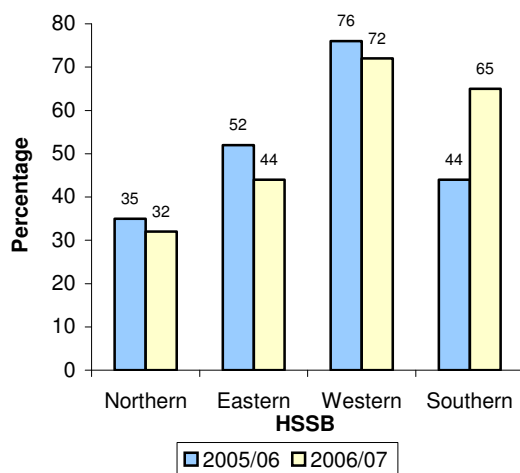
7.1 There were 14% (1,200) more visits in 2006/07 than in 2005/06 (9,997 compared to 8,797). The proportion of visits that took place in each HSSB is fairly similar in 2005/06 and 2006/07 (Table 10).

Return Rate

7.2 The overall return rate has fallen from 44% in 2005/06 to 40% in 2006/07. The Northern HSSB return rate fell from

35% in 2005/06 to 32% in 2006/07, the Eastern HSSB return rate fell from 52% in 2005/06 to 44% in 2006/07, and the Western HSSB fell from 76% in 2005/06 to 72% in 2006/07. The Southern HSSB was the only HSSB to have an increase in their return rate from 44% in 2005/06 to 65% in 2006/07 (Figure 6; Table 11).

Figure 6. Return Rate: 2005/06 and 2006/07



Needles

7.3 In 2006/07 there were 47,400 needles issued, and in 2005/06 there were 65,111 needles issued. Note that the 2006/07 total does not include needles attached to the 0.5ml and 1ml syringes, where this had been the case in some pharmacies in previous years. It is therefore not possible to directly compare the number of needles issued in 2006/07 with the number of needles issued in previous years (Table 12).

Syringes

7.4 There were 97,684 syringes issued in 2006/07, this is a 14% increase from 85,801 syringes issued in 2005/06 (Table 12).

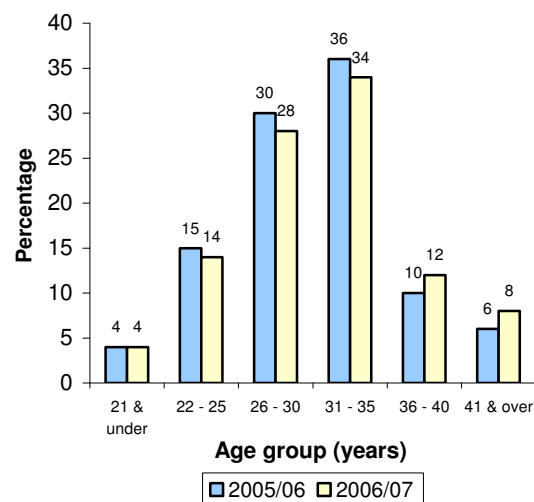
Age and Gender

7.5 The proportion of visits by both male and female clients in 2006/07 was similar to that in 2005/06. In 2006/07, 84% of the visits were by males and 16%

by females compared to 87% and 13% respectively in 2005/06 (Table 13).

7.6 The age profile of clients at each visit in 2006/07 was very similar to that in 2005/06. In 2006/07 18% of visits were by clients aged 25 and under compared to 19% in 2005/06. The proportion of clients aged between 26 and 35 was 62% in 2006/07 compared to 66% in 2005/06. There was a slightly larger proportion of clients in 2006/07 aged 36 and over in 2006/07 (20%) than in 2005/06 (16%) (Figure 7; Table 14).

Figure 7. Age of Client at Each Visit: 2005/06 and 2006/07



New Clients

7.7 There were 400 (4%) visits by clients reporting themselves as new clients in 2006/07, the same proportion as in 2005/06. (Table 15).

Reported Sharing Behaviour

7.8 Nine (0.1%) visits in 2006/07 were for clients who reported that they were currently sharing equipment, compared to seventeen (0.2%) in 2005/06 (Table 16).

8. Acknowledgements

8.1 DAIRU would like to thank the community pharmacists and their staff, the Pharmaceutical Directors within the four

HSSBs and the local Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinators for ensuring the provision of the data reported in this bulletin.

9. Editorial Notes

9.1 Percentages may not always add to 100 due to rounding.

9.2 The return rate is the percentage of visits where a return was made.

9.3 Any comments or questions concerning the data contained in this publication, or requests for further information, should be addressed to:

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9.4 This publication is also available online at

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research-drugs_alcohol-2.htm

Many other statistical and research reports from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's Information and Analysis Directorate, in which DAIRU is located, are available from the DHSSPS website.

9.5 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

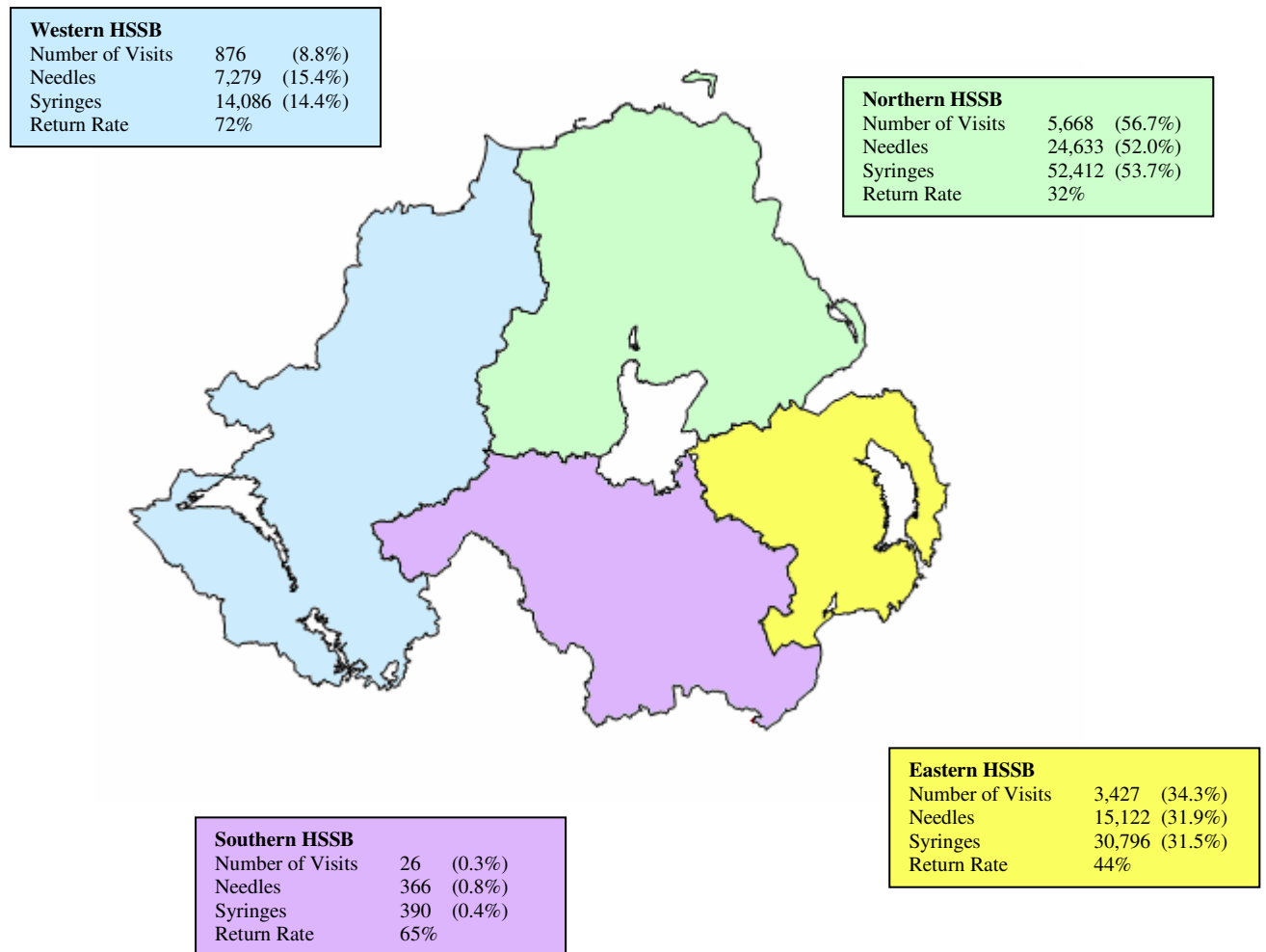
The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is the principal source of official statistical information about Northern Ireland. Further information is available from the NISRA website at www.nisra.gov.uk or via e-mail at info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk.

9.5 Future publications

This NSES publication will be updated on an annual basis. The next NSES annual bulletin will be published in Summer 2008.

Annex A, Map 1

Total Number of Needles and Syringes Issued and Return Rate¹ by Health & Social Services Board: 2006/07



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¹ Return Rate is the percentage of visits involving the return of used equipment.

Annex B – Tables: 2006/07

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Table 1. Number of Visits and Return Rate¹ by Quarter: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Total number of visits	Percent	Number of return visits	Return Rate
April - June 2006	2,594	26	1,090	42
July - September 2006	2,417	24	920	38
October - December 2006	2,581	26	994	39
January - March 2007	2,405	24	948	39
Total	9,997	100	3,952	40

¹ The return rate is the percentage of visits where a return was made.

Table 2. Number of Visits and Return Rate¹ by HSSB: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Total number of visits	Percent	Number of return visits	Return Rate
Northern	5,668	57	1,794	32
Eastern	3,427	34	1,511	44
Western	876	9	630	72
Southern	26	0	17	65
Total	9,997	100	3,952	40

¹ The return rate is the percentage of visits where a return was made.

Table 3. Number of Needles Issued at All Visits and at Return Visits: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	All Visits		Return Visits	
	Needles Issued	Percent	Needles Issued	Percent
Northern	24,633	52	16,256	66
Eastern	15,122	32	9,649	64
Western	7,279	15	6,289	86
Southern	366	1	285	78
Total	47,400	100	32,479	69

Table 4. Number of Syringes Issued at All Visits and at Return Visits: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	All Visits		Return Visits	
	Syringes Issued	Percent	Syringes Issued	Percent
Northern	52,412	54	31,861	61
Eastern	30,796	32	19,510	63
Western	14,086	14	12,422	88
Southern	390	0	315	81
Total	97,684	100	64,108	66

Table 5. Gender of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	4,880	782	5,662
Eastern	2,649	704	3,353
Western	779	92	871
Southern	22	4	26
Total	8,330	1,582	9,912 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	86	14	100
Eastern	79	21	100
Western	89	11	100
Southern	85	15	100
Total	84	16	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 87 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 6. Age of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Northern	154	841	1,628	1,951	727	364	5,665
Eastern	180	397	845	1,248	403	276	3,349
Western	82	145	333	132	44	135	871
Southern	0	3	10	9	4	0	26
Total	416	1,386	2,816	3,340	1,178	775	9,911 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Northern	3	15	29	34	13	6	100
Eastern	5	12	25	37	12	8	100
Western	9	17	38	15	5	15	100
Southern	0	12	38	35	15	0	100
Total	4	14	28	34	12	8	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 86 visits where the client's date of birth was not recorded.

Table 7. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	366	50	416
22-25 Years	1,214	169	1,383
26-30 Years	2,219	593	2,812
31-35 Years	2,862	471	3,333
36-40 Years	1,072	100	1,172
41 & Over	579	194	773
All Ages	8,312	1,577	9,889 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

21 & Under	4	3	4
22-25 Years	15	11	14
26-30 Years	27	38	28
31-35 Years	34	30	34
36-40 Years	13	6	12
41 & Over	7	12	8
All Ages	100	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 108 visits where the client's date of birth or/and gender was not recorded.

Table 8. Number of Visits by New Clients: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Number of visits	Percent
New Client	400	4
Client Used Scheme Before	9,597	96
Total	9,997	100

Table 9. Number of Visits Where Currently Sharing Equipment was Reported: 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	Number of visits	Percent
Reported Sharing Equipment	9	0.1
Reported Not Sharing Equipment	9,988	99.9
Total	9,997	100.0

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Table 10. Number of Visits by HSSB: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
Northern	5,082	5,668
Eastern	2,936	3,427
Western	761	876
Southern	18	26
Total	8,797	9,997

Percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
Northern	58	57
Eastern	33	34
Western	9	9
Southern	0.2	0.3
Total	100	100

Table 11. Number of Visits and Return Visits by HSSB: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06		2006/07	
	Number of visits	Number of return visits	Number of visits	Number of return visits
Northern	5,082	1,760	5,668	1,794
Eastern	2,936	1,529	3,427	1,511
Western	761	575	876	630
Southern	18	8	26	17
Total	8,797	3,872	9,997	3,952

Percentages

Northern	100	35	100	32
Eastern	100	52	100	44
Western	100	76	100	72
Southern	100	44	100	65
Total	100	44	100	40

Table 12. Needles and Syringes Issued: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07	% change
Needles Issued ⁽¹⁾	65,111	47,400	-
Syringes Issued	85,801	97,684	14

⁽¹⁾ In 2006/07 the number of needles issued does not include those attached to 0.5ml and 1ml syringes, where this was the case in some pharmacies in 2005/06.

Table 13. Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
Male	7,646	8,330
Female	1,145	1,582
Total	8,791 ⁽¹⁾	9,912 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

Male	87	84
Female	13	16
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 6 visits at which the client's gender was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 85 visits at which the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 14. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
21 & Under	374	416
22-25 Years	1,276	1,386
26-30 Years	2,622	2,816
31-35 Years	3,170	3,340
36-40 Years	838	1,178
41 & Over	493	775
All Ages	8,773 ⁽¹⁾	9,911 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

21 & Under	4	4
22-25 Years	15	14
26-30 Years	30	28
31-35 Years	36	34
36-40 Years	10	12
41 & Over	6	8
All Ages	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 24 visits at which the client's date of birth was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 86 visits at which the client's date of birth was not recorded.

Table 15. Number of Visits by New Clients: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
Client Used Scheme Before	8,479	9,597
New Client	318	400
Total	8,797	9,997

Percentages

Client Used Scheme Before	96	96
New Client	4	4
Total	100	100

Table 16. Number of Visits Where Currently Sharing Equipment was Reported: 2005/06 and 2006/07

numbers and percentages

	2005/06	2006/07
Reported Not Sharing Equipment	8,780	9,988
Reported Sharing Equipment	17	9
Total	8,797	9,997

Percentages

Reported Not Sharing Equipment	99.8	99.9
Reported Sharing Equipment	0.2	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Recent and Future Publications from the Drug and Alcohol Information and Research Unit

Statistical Bulletins

Number	Title	Publication Date
1/2007	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Addicts Index 2006	March 2007
2/2007	Census of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services in Northern Ireland: 1st March 2007	August 2007
4/2007	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database: 31 st March 2007	September 2007
5/2007	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database: 1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007	October 2007

Results from the 2002/2003 Drug Prevalence Survey Published jointly with the National Advisory Committee on Drugs, Ireland

Number	Title	Publication Date
Bulletin 5	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Polydrug Use Results	March 2007
Bulletin 6	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Sedatives, Tranquillisers or Anti-Depressants Results	March 2007

Research Reports

Title	Publication Date
Knowledge and Use of Alcohol, Cigarettes and Drugs in Primary School Survey 2006	January 2007

Copies of these publications can be obtained on-line at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research-drugs_alcohol-2.htm