

# **Unlinked Anonymous Prevalence Monitoring Programme**



## *Survey of Injecting Drug Users*

### **Summary of the findings for 2002 from the five collaborating centres in Northern Ireland:**

***For use by DHSSPS, CDSC Northern Ireland, & the five Collaborating Agencies.***

The Unlinked Anonymous Prevalence Monitoring Programmes (UAPMP) survey of injecting drug users monitors HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C infection levels in those injectors in contact with specialist services, such as needle exchanges, or on treatment programmes, such as methadone maintenance. It is a voluntary survey where those injectors who agree to participate provide an anonymous saliva sample and complete a brief behavioural questionnaire.

This ongoing survey was expanded to Northern Ireland in 2002.

#### **THE SAMPLE**

1. During 2002 there were 77 eligible samples returned from the five centres in Northern Ireland.
2. Of these participating injectors 18 (23%) were aged under 25, 47 (61%) aged 25 to 34, and 12 (16%) aged 35 and over (the median age was 29 years, it was 32 years in England and Wales).
3. The majority were male, with only 18 (23%) of the participants being female.
4. Of the 70 who provided information on when they first injected, 9 had first done so 10 or more years ago. Whilst 29 (28%) had first injected less than five years ago, and 32 (42%) between 5 and 9 years ago.
5. Among the 68 who had injected during the 12 months preceding participation 67 (99%) had used opiates and 24 (36%) stimulants.
6. Among the 46 who had injected during the four weeks prior to participation 43 (94%) reported heroin as the main drug they had injected.
7. The majority (83%, 63 of 76) were currently receiving either a detox or maintenance drug regime.

#### **HEPATITIS C**

8. Of the injecting drug users participating 16% (12 of 77) had antibodies to hepatitis C.
9. The majority, 84% (63 of 75), reported having ever had a voluntary confidential test for hepatitis C.
10. Just over half (5 of 9) of the participating injecting drug users who had antibodies to hepatitis C were aware of their infection.

#### **HEPATITIS B**

11. Of the injecting drug users who took part in the survey 3% (2 of 77) had

antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen. This is much lower than the prevalence found in any region of England, or in Wales.

12. Just over half of the participants (55%, 41 of 75) reported having received one or more doses of the vaccine against hepatitis B. This is higher proportion than in England & Wales.

## HIV

13. No HIV infections were found among 77 of injecting drug users who took part in the survey.
14. Most of the participants (66%, 51 of 76) reported that they had ever had a voluntary confidential test for HIV.

## INJECTING BEHAVIOUR AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

15. Of those who had injected during the four weeks prior to participating in the survey 42% (19 of 45) reported the direct sharing of needles and syringes during those four weeks. This was higher than the proportions found in all of the regions of England, and in Wales.
16. Almost two thirds (28 of 45) reported the sharing of injecting equipment other than needles and syringes, such as spoons, filters, and water, during the previous four weeks.
17. Almost nine tenths had ever used a needle exchange (67 of 76), and around two fifths (26 of 61) of these had done so within three years of starting to inject.
18. Just under half (37 of 76) had ever been to prison, and just over half (20 of 36) of these had been to prison prior to starting to inject. Almost one in five (7 of 37) reported injecting in prison.

**Table: Summary Comparison of the Results from the Collaborating Centres within Northern Ireland: 2002**

	Hollywell in-patient unit	Other Centres
<b><i>Number of samples returned</i></b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>
Proportion male	84%	70%
Proportion under 25	32%	15%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen	3%	3%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis C	3%	28%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for HIV	50%	84%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for hepatitis C	87%	81%
Ever used a needle exchange	97%	80%
Accepted offer of dose of the hepatitis B vaccine	74%	35%
<b><i>Number who had injecting in previous 4 weeks</i></b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>
Proportion sharing needles and syringes in previous 4 weeks	44%	40%
Proportion sharing other injecting other equipment in previous 4 weeks	60%	65%