

Statistics from the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme: 1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008

This bulletin summarises information on people visiting the Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme and relates to the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2008. It is the seventh 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 2007/08:

- There were 11,387 visits to participating pharmacies by users of the scheme. This is an increase of 14% (1,390 visits) on the 2006/07 figure (9,997 visits).
- The proportion of visits involving the return of used equipment increased to 42% in 2007/08 from 40% in 2006/07.
- A cin bin is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes: 54% of cin bins issued to users of the scheme were returned.
- 116,935 syringes were issued in 2007/08. This is a 20% increase from 2006/07 (97,684 syringes).
- Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients.
- Over half (56%) of all visits were made by individuals aged 31 and over.
- 82 visits were made by an outreach worker on behalf of a client. In total 1,330 syringes were issued by outreach workers.

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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 2007/08 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 syringe transactions only 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 Public Health Information and Research Branch (PHIRB).

2.2 At the start of 2007/08 the NSES Daily Log was revised. Information is now collected on the number and size of packs issued at each exchange. Packs contain either 5 (half pack) or 10 (full pack) syringes, and syringe sizes include 1ml, 2ml or 5ml. The syringes in the 1ml packs have needles attached. Pharmacies

also issue needles to accompany the 2ml and 5ml packs but the number of needles issued is not recorded.

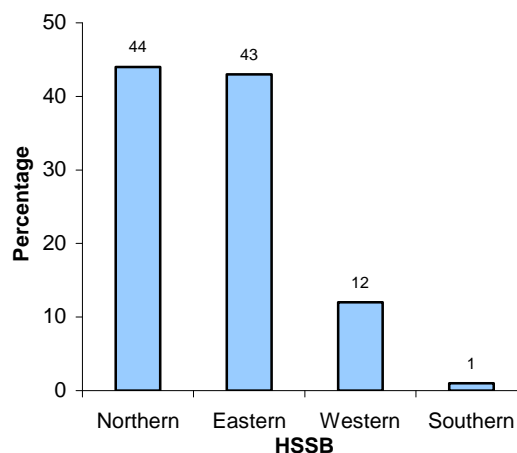
2.3 Information is collected on the number of visits by clients and outreach workers on behalf of clients undertaking a NSES transaction; the number of packs issued; returns of used equipment; year of birth and gender of the client. As data are collected in an anonymised form – to help underscore confidentiality 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 11,387 visits to NSES in 2007/08 and the number of visits were evenly spread across the four quarters within the year (Table 1).

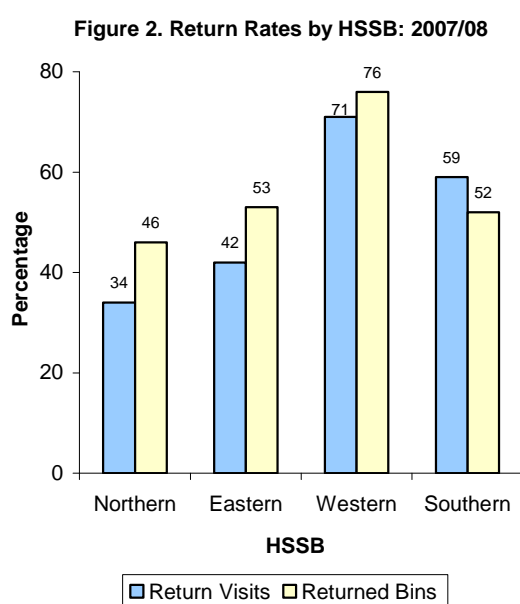
3.2 The vast majority of visits (87%) took place at pharmacies based within the Northern (44%) and Eastern (43%) Health and Social Services Boards (HSSB). The Western HSSB accounted for 12% of the visits and the Southern HSSB had the lowest number of visits (73 visits or 1%) (Figure 1; Table 2).

Figure 1. Visits by HSSB: 2007/08



4. Return Rates

4.1 Over four in ten (42%) of the 11,387 visits that were made in 2007/08 were return visits (where a client returned at least one cin bin) (Table 3; Figure 2). This return rate varied across the four HSSBs. The Northern HSSB had the lowest return rate (34%) and the Eastern HSSB had the second lowest return rate (42%). The Western HSSB had the highest return rate (71%) and the Southern HSSB had a return rate of 59%.



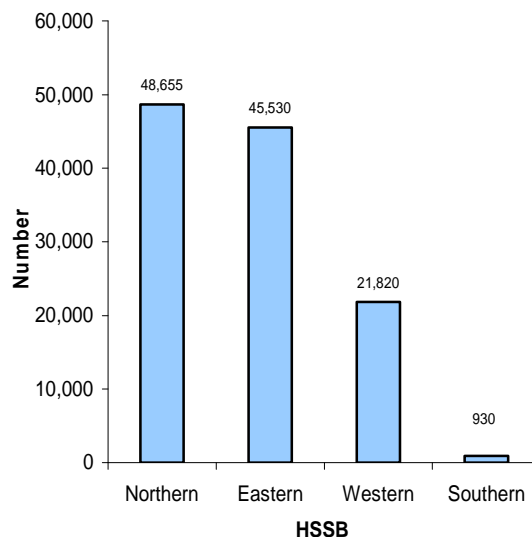
4.2 Due to changes made to the NSES Daily Log at 1st April 2007 it is possible to record the number of cin bins issued and returned at every visit. In 2007/08, over half (54%) of cin bins were returned. This return rate varied across the four HSSBs, 46% in the Northern HSSB, 53% in the Eastern HSSB, 76% in the Western HSSB and 52% in the Southern HSSB (Table 4; Figure 2).

5. Syringes Issued

5.1 There were 116,935 syringes issued in 2007/08 (Table 5). The Northern HSSB issued the highest number of syringes (48,655; 42%), followed by the Eastern HSSB (45,530; 39%), then the

Western HSSB (21,820; 19%) and the Southern HSSB issued the lowest number of syringes (930; 1%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Syringes Issued by HSSB: 2007/08



5.2 Of the 116,935 syringes issued in 2007/08, 80,035 (68%) 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 63% of syringes were issued at visits where the client made a return, 64% in the Eastern HSSB, 89% in the Western HSSB, and 84% in the Southern HSSB (Table 5).

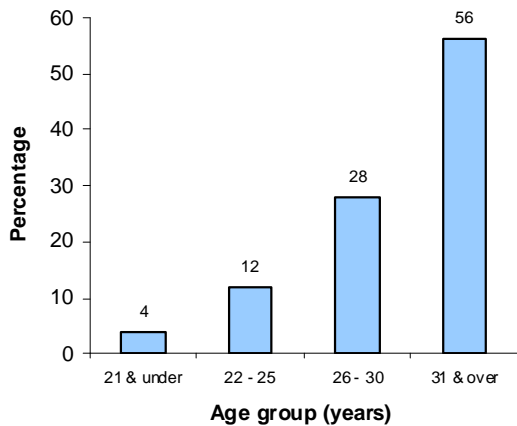
6. Profile of Service Users

Age and Gender

6.1 Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients (Table 6).

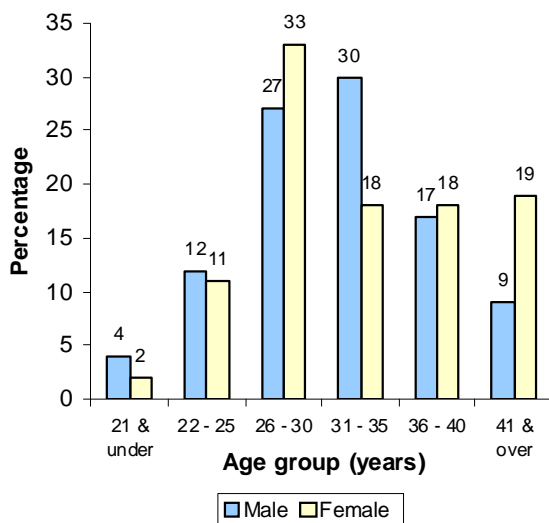
6.2 The mean age of clients using the NSES was 32 years. Over half (56%) of all visits were made by clients aged 31 and over, and over a quarter (28%) of visits were made by clients aged 26-30 (Figure 4; Table 7).

**Figure 4. Age of Clients at Each Visit:
2007/08**



6.3 There was some variation in the age profile for visits by males and females. Among males, the largest proportion of visits (30%) were made by 31-35 year olds, whereas among females, the largest proportion of visits (33%) were made by those in the 26-30 age group. The proportions of visits made by males and females aged 25 and under were fairly similar, 16% and 13% respectively. A larger proportion of visits were made by females aged 36 and over (37%) than males in this age group (26%) (Figure 5; Table 8).

**Figure 5. Age and Gender of Clients at
Each Visit: 2007/08**



7. Outreach Visits

7.1 In 2007/08, 82 of the 11,387 visits (less than 1%) to the participating pharmacies were made by outreach workers on behalf of a client (Table 9). In this report these visits are referred to as outreach visits.

Return Rates & Syringes Issued

7.2 Of the 82 outreach visits 15 (18%) were return visits (where at least one cin bin was returned) (Table 9). A total of 144 cin bins were issued by outreach workers in 2007/08 and just over two fifths (42%) were returned (Table 10). A total of 1,330 syringes were issued by outreach workers, 14% of these were at return visits (Table 11).

Age & Gender

7.3 Almost all outreach visits (94%) were for male clients and 6% were for female clients (Table 12). Four fifths (80%) of the outreach visits were for clients aged 31-35 years, and 13% were for those aged 41 and over (Table 13). It should be noted that for a large proportion of outreach visits the client's gender and/or year of birth was not recorded.

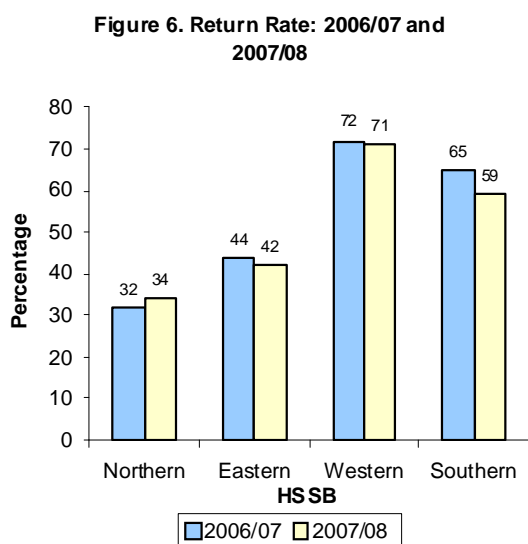
8. Comparisons: 2006/07 and 2007/08

Number of Visits

8.1 In 2007/08 there was a 14% (1,390) increase in the number of visits since 2006/07 (11,387 compared to 9,997). The proportion of visits that took place in the Northern HSSB fell to 44% in 2007/08 from 57% in 2006/07. The proportion of visits that took place in the Eastern HSSB increased to 43% in 2007/08 from 34% in 2006/07. The proportion of visits in the Western and Southern HSSB remained fairly similar across the two years (Table 14).

Return Rate

8.2 The return rate (percentage of visits where at least one cin bin was returned) has increased to 42% in 2007/08 from 40% in 2006/07. The Northern HSSB return rate increased to 34% in 2007/08 from 32% in 2006/07, the Eastern HSSB return rate fell to 42% in 2007/08 from 44% in 2006/07, and the Western HSSB fell to 71% in 2007/08 from 72% in 2006/07. The return rate in the Southern HSSB fell to 59% in 2007/08 from 65% in 2006/07 (Figure 6; Table 15).



8.3 There is no 2006/07 comparison for the return rate based on the number of cin bins issued and returned, as changes were made to the NSES Daily Log sheet to allow for this calculation on 1st April 2007.

Syringes Issued

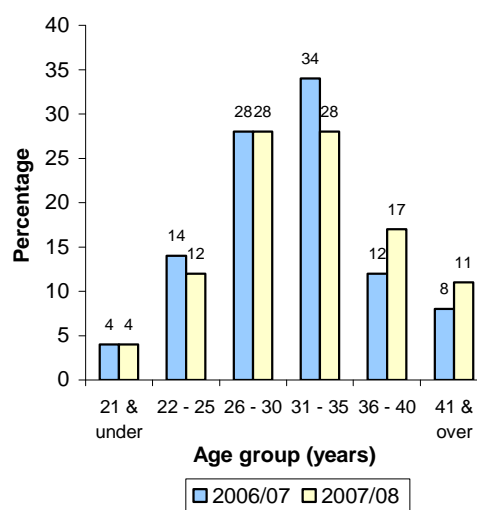
8.4 In 2007/08, 116,935 syringes were issued, this is a 20% increase from 97,684 syringes issued in 2006/07 (Table 16).

Age and Gender

8.5 The proportion of visits by both male and female clients in 2007/08 was similar to that in 2006/07. In 2007/08, 86% of the visits were by males and 14% by females compared to 84% and 16% respectively in 2006/07 (Table 17).

8.6 The age profile of clients at each visit in 2007/08 was generally similar to that in 2006/07. In 2007/08 16% of visits were by clients aged 25 and under compared to 18% in 2006/07. The proportion of clients aged 26-35 was 56% in 2007/08 compared to 62% in 2006/07. There was a slightly larger proportion of clients in 2007/08 aged 36 and over in 2007/08 (28%) than in 2006/07 (20%) (Figure 7; Table 18).

Figure 7. Age of Client at Each Visit: 2006/07 and 2007/08



9. Acknowledgements

9.1 PHIRB 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.

10. Editorial Notes

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

10.2 A cin bin is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes. One is contained in every NSES pack.

10.3 A return visit is a visit where at least one cin bin is returned.

10.4 An outreach visit is a visit made by an outreach worker on behalf of another individual.

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

PHIRB
Annex 2
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast BT4 3SQ
Telephone: 028 9052 2520
Fax: 028 90 52 3288
E-mail: PHIRB@dhsspsni.gov.uk

10.6 This publication is also available online at

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/public_health/statistics_and_research/h-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 PHIRB is located, are available from the DHSSPS website.

10.7 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

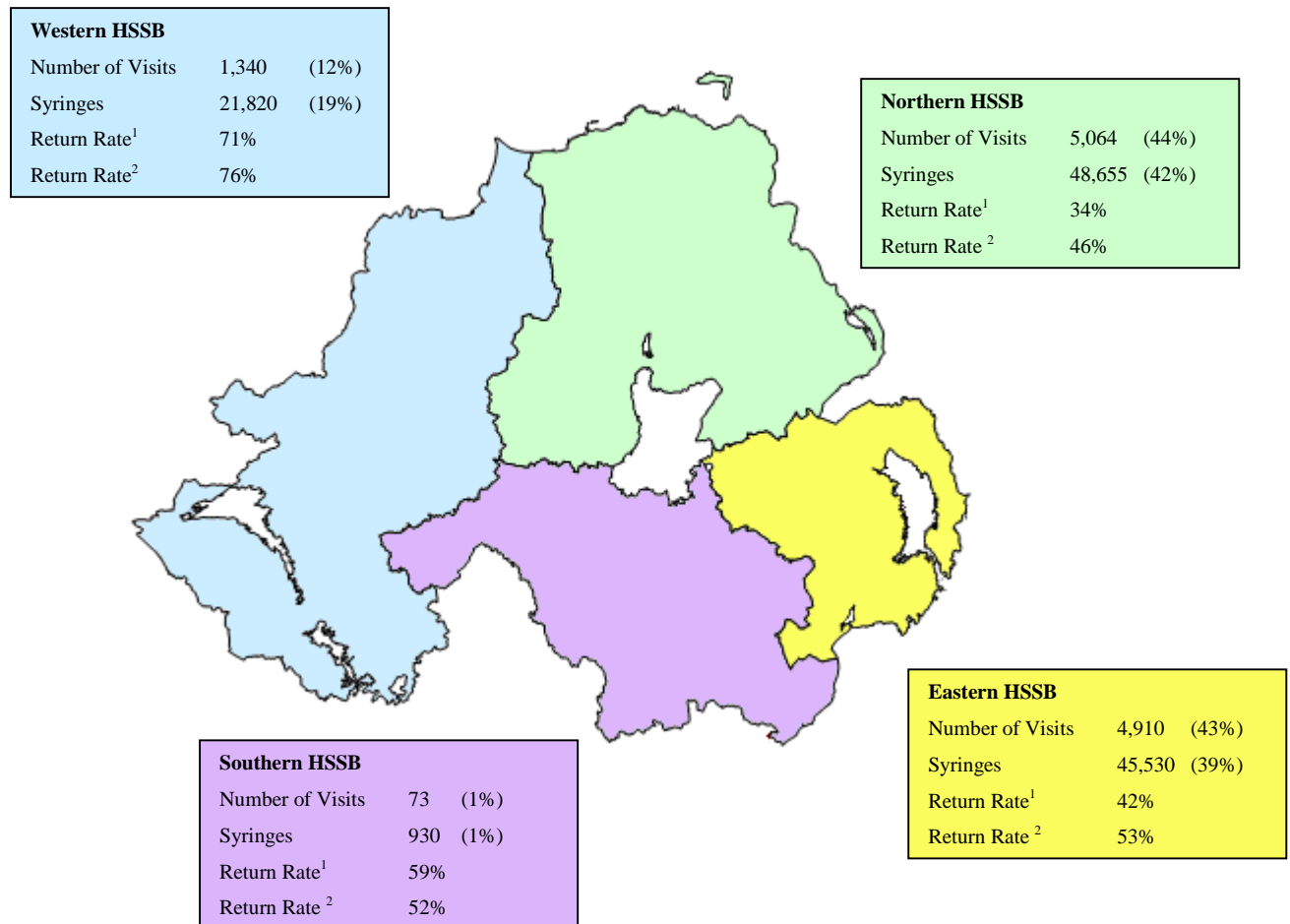
The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) is the principal source of official statistical information about Northern Ireland. Further information is available from the NISRA website at www.nisra.gov.uk or via e-mail at info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk.

10.8 Future publications

This NSES publication will be updated on an annual basis. The next NSES annual bulletin will be published in summer 2009.

Annex A, Map 1

Total Number of Needles and Syringes Issued and Return Rates by Health & Social Services Board: 2007/08



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¹ Return Rate – percentage of visits where at least one cin bin was returned.

² Return Rate – percentage of cin bins returned.

Annex B – Tables: 2007/08

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Table 1. Number of Visits by Quarter: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
April - June 2007	2,655	23
July - September 2007	2,908	26
October - December 2007	2,837	25
January - March 2008	2,987	26
Total	11,387	100

Table 2. Number of Visits by HSSB: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
Northern	5,064	44
Eastern	4,910	43
Western	1,340	12
Southern	73	1
Total	11,387	100

Table 3. Number of Return Visits by HSSB: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Number of all visits	Number of return visits	Percent
Northern	5,064	1,703	34
Eastern	4,910	2,086	42
Western	1,340	956	71
Southern	73	43	59
Total	11,387	4,788	42

Table 4. Number of Cin Bins Returned and Issued by HSSB: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Bins Returned	Bins issued	Percent
Northern	3,050	6,604	46
Eastern	3,198	6,015	53
Western	1,929	2,523	76
Southern	66	126	52
Total	8,243	15,268	54

Table 5. Number of Syringes Issued at All and Return Visits: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	All Visits		Return Visits	
	Syringes Issued	Percent	Syringes Issued	Percent
Northern	48,655	42	30,630	63
Eastern	45,530	39	29,220	64
Western	21,820	19	19,405	89
Southern	930	1	780	84
Total	116,935	100	80,035	68

Table 6. Gender of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	-	-	5,058
Eastern	-	-	4,858
Western	-	-	1,307
Southern	-	-	73
Total ⁽¹⁾	9,716	1,580	11,296 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Northern	-	-	100
Eastern	-	-	100
Western	-	-	100
Southern	-	-	100
Total	86	14	100

⁽¹⁾ The gender breakdown by HSSB is not presented as the table contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 91 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 7. Age of Clients at Each Visit by HSSB: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31 & Over ⁽¹⁾	All Ages
Northern	160	677	1,661	2,559	5,057
Eastern	184	475	1,138	3,039	4,836
Western	102	214	278	741	1,335
Southern	6	9	37	21	73
Total	452	1,375	3,114	6,360	11,301 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31 & Over ⁽¹⁾	All Ages
Northern	3	13	33	51	100
Eastern	4	10	24	63	100
Western	8	16	21	56	100
Southern	8	12	51	29	100
Total	4	12	28	56	100

⁽¹⁾ Age groups 31-35 years, 36-40 years and 41 & over have been combined as they contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 86 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Table 8. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	415	33	448
22-25 Years	1,197	173	1,370
26-30 Years	2,594	513	3,107
31-35 Years	2,931	277	3,208
36-40 Years	1,640	286	1,926
41 & Over	903	295	1,198
All Ages	9,680	1,577	11,257 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	4	2	4
22-25 Years	12	11	12
26-30 Years	27	33	28
31-35 Years	30	18	28
36-40 Years	17	18	17
41 & Over	9	19	11
All Ages	100	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 130 visits where the client's year of birth or/and gender was not recorded.

Table 9. Number of Outreach Return Visits: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Visits	Percent
Return Visits	15	18
All Visits	82	100

Table 10. Number of Cin Bins Returned and Issued at Outreach Visits: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Number of Bins	Percent
Bins Returned	60	42
Bins Issued	144	100

Table 11. Number of Syringes Issued at All and Return Visits by Outreach Workers: 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	Syringes Issued	Percent
Return Visits	190	14
All Visits	1,330	100

Table 12. Gender of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2007/08
 numbers and percentages

	Number of visits ⁽¹⁾	Percent ⁽²⁾
Male	-	94
Female	-	6
Total	-	100

⁽¹⁾ The gender breakdown of outreach visits is not presented as the table contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽²⁾ The percentages exclude visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 13. Age of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2007/08
 numbers and percentages

	Number of visits ⁽³⁾	Percent ⁽⁴⁾
21 & Under	-	0
22-25 Years	-	7
26-30 Years	-	0
31-35 Years	-	80
36-40 Years	-	0
41 & Over	-	13
All Ages	-	100

⁽³⁾ The age group breakdown of outreach visits is not presented as the table contained some cell counts of less than five; this is to ensure individuals cannot be identified.

⁽⁴⁾ The percentages exclude visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Annex C – Comparative Tables 2006/07 and 2007/08

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Table 18	Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07 and 2007/08	23

Table 14. Number of Visits by HSSB: 2006/07 and 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
Northern	5,668	5,064
Eastern	3,427	4,910
Western	876	1,340
Southern	26	73
Total	9,997	11,387

Percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
Northern	57	44
Eastern	34	43
Western	9	12
Southern	0.3	1
Total	100	100

Table 15. Number of Visits and Return Visits by HSSB: 2006/07 and 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	2006/07		2007/08	
	Number of Visits	Return Visits	Number of Visits	Return Visits
Northern	5,668	1,794	5,064	1,703
Eastern	3,427	1,511	4,910	2,086
Western	876	630	1,340	956
Southern	26	17	73	43
Total	9,997	3,952	11,387	4,788

Percentages

	2006/07		2007/08	
	Number of visits	Number of Return Visits	Number of Visits	Number of Return Visits
Northern	100	32	100	34
Eastern	100	44	100	42
Western	100	72	100	71
Southern	100	65	100	59
Total	100	40	100	42

Table 16. Syringes Issued: 2006/07 and 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	2006/07	2007/08	% change
Syringes Issued	97,684	116,935	20

Table 17. Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07 and 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
Male	8,330	9,716
Female	1,582	1,580
Total	9,912 ⁽¹⁾	11,296 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
Male	84	86
Female	16	14
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 85 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 91 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 18. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2006/07 and 2007/08

numbers and percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
21 & Under	416	452
22-25 Years	1,386	1,375
26-30 Years	2,816	3,114
31-35 Years	3,340	3,217
36-40 Years	1,178	1,940
41 & Over	775	1,203
Total	9,911 ⁽¹⁾	11,301 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2006/07	2007/08
21 & Under	4	4
22-25 Years	14	12
26-30 Years	28	28
31-35 Years	34	28
36-40 Years	12	17
41 & Over	8	11
Total	100	100

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

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

Recent and Future Publications from the Public Health Information and Research Branch

Statistical Bulletins

Number	Title	Publication Date
1/2008	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Addicts Index 2007	March 2008
3/2008	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database: 31 st March 2008	September 2008
4/2008	Statistics on Smoking Cessation in Northern Ireland: 2007/08	September 2008
5/2008	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database: 1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008	October 2008

Results from the 2006/2007 Drug Prevalence Survey Published jointly with the National Advisory Committee on Drugs, Ireland

Number	Title	Publication Date
Bulletin 1	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: First Results	January 2008
Bulletin 2	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Health Board (Ireland) & Health and Social Services Board (Northern Ireland) Results	July 2008
Bulletin 4	Drug Use in Ireland and Northern Ireland: Cocaine Results	October 2008

Research Reports

Title	Publication Date
Adult Drinking Patterns in Northern Ireland 2007	To be confirmed
Secondary Analysis of the 2007 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (Smoking, Alcohol, Solvents and Drugs modules)	To be confirmed

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