

# ***Unlinked Anonymous Prevalence Monitoring Programme***



## ***Survey of Injecting Drug Users***

### **Summary of the findings for 2003/04 from the five collaborating centres in Northern Ireland:**

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

#### **THE SAMPLE**

1. During 2003/04 there were 153 eligible samples returned from the agencies in Northern Ireland.
2. Of these participating injectors 25 (17%) were aged under 25, 78 (52%) aged 25 to 34, and 48 (32%) aged 35 and over. The median age in Northern Ireland was 31 years, it was also 31 years in Wales, and it was 32 years in England.
3. The majority were male, with only 36 (24%) of the participants being female.
4. Of those providing information on their injecting careers, 19% had been injecting for 15 or more years, 13% had been injecting 10-14 years, 41% 5-9 years and 28% 0-4 years.
5. Among the 129 who had injected during the 12 months preceding participation 127 (98%) had used opiates and 59 (46%) stimulants.
6. Among the 85 who had injected during the four weeks prior to participation 78 (92%) reported heroin as the main drug they had injected.
7. The majority (85%, 121 of 142) were currently receiving either a detox or maintenance drug regime.

#### **HEPATITIS C**

8. Of the injecting drug users participating 25% (38 of 153) had antibodies to hepatitis C.
9. The majority, 77% (112 of 145), reported having ever had a voluntary confidential test for hepatitis C.
10. One fifth (7 of 34) of the participating injecting drug users who had antibodies to hepatitis C were NOT aware of their infection.

#### **HEPATITIS B**

11. Of the injecting drug users who took part in the survey 7% (11 of 153) had

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

12. Almost half of the participants (49%, 74 of 151) reported having received one or more doses of the vaccine against hepatitis B. This is a higher proportion than in Wales, but not higher than the proportion in several regions of England.

#### **HIV**

13. HIV infection was found to be 2% (3 of 153) in the injecting drug users who took part in the survey.
14. Most of the participants (68%, 99 of 146) 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 36% (30 of 84) reported the direct sharing of needles and syringes during those four weeks. This was higher than the proportions found in all regions of England, and in Wales.
16. Just over half (52%, 44 of 84) reported the sharing of injecting equipment other than needles and syringes, such as spoons, filters, and water, during the previous four weeks.
17. Nine in ten clients (139 of 150) had ever used a needle exchange. Of those who had started to inject in the last three years 86% (18 of 21) had ever used a needle exchange.
18. Just over half (78 of 147) had ever been to prison, 24% (19 of 78) reported injecting in prison.

**Table: Summary Comparison of the Results from the Collaborating Centres within Northern Ireland: 2003/04**

	<b>Hollywell in-patient unit</b>	<b>Other Centres</b>
<b><i>Number of samples returned</i></b>	60	93
Proportion male	75%	77%
Proportion under 25	27%	10%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis B core antigen	2%	11%
Proportion with antibodies to hepatitis C	12%	33%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for HIV	51%	79%
Proportion ever having had a voluntary-confidential test for hepatitis C	73%	80%
Ever used a needle exchange	92%	90%
Accepted offer of dose of the hepatitis B vaccine	67%	37%
<b><i>Number who had injecting in previous 4 weeks</i></b>	29	55
Proportion sharing needles and syringes in previous 4 weeks	14%	47%
Proportion sharing other injecting equipment in previous 4 weeks	52%	53%