

Statistics from the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme: 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010

This bulletin summarises information on people visiting the Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme and relates to the twelve-month period ending 31 March 2010. It is the ninth bulletin reporting on information collected on the operation of the Northern Ireland Needle and Syringe Exchange Scheme (NSES), which was introduced in April 2001.

Summary

In Northern Ireland during 2009/10:

- There were 15,828 visits to participating services by users of the scheme. This is an increase of 18% (2,439 visits) on the 2008/09 figure (13,389 visits).
- A cin bin is a sealed container which is used to safely dispose of used needles and syringes: 51% of cin bins issued to users of the scheme were returned in 2009/10 compared to 53% returned in 2008/09.
- 153,625 syringes were issued in 2009/10, compared to 135,700 in 2008/09. This is an increase of 13%.
- Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients.
- Over half (53%) of all visits were made by individuals aged 31 years and over, just over a quarter (26%) by 26-30 year olds and approximately a fifth (21%) by individuals aged 25 years and under.
- 125 visits were made by an outreach worker on behalf of a client; this is an increase of 16% (17 visits) since 2008/09 (108 visits). In total 3,200 syringes were issued by outreach workers in 2009/10 compared to 2,070 in 2008/09.

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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 2009/10 there were twelve pharmacies and one Community Addiction Services clinic offering needle and syringe exchange. These 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 services. Administrative input from 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 2008/09 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

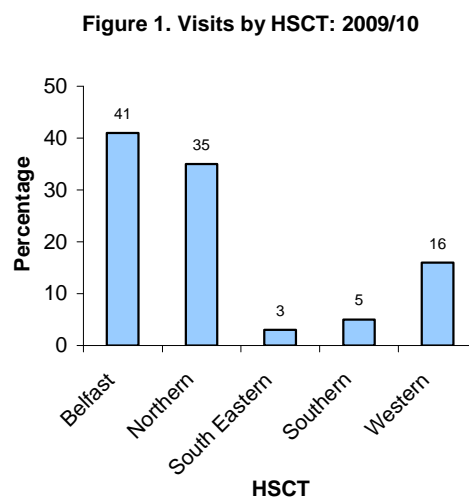
packs have needles attached. Needles are also issued to accompany the 2ml and 5ml packs but the number of needles issued is not recorded.

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

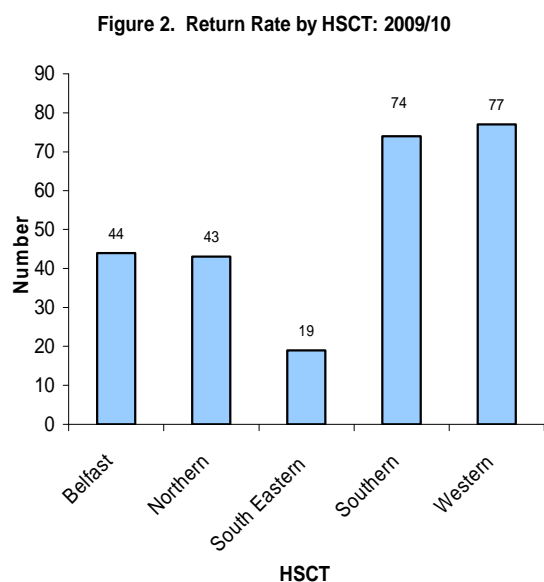
3.1 There were 15,828 visits to NSES in 2009/10, and these visits were evenly spread across the four quarters within the year (Table 1).

3.2 The majority of visits (76%) took place at services based within the Belfast (41%) and Northern (35%) Health and Social Services Trusts (HSCT). The Western HSCT accounted for 16% of the visits. The lowest number of visits took place in the Southern (5%) and South Eastern (3%) HSCTs (Figure 1; Table 2).



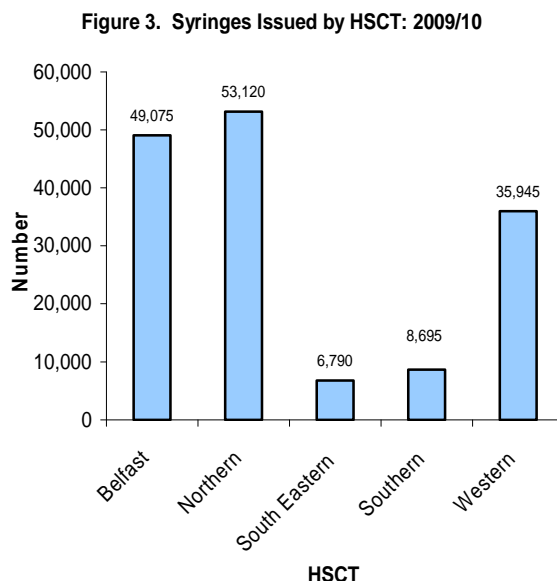
4. Return Rates

4.1 Since 1st April 2007 when changes were made to the NSES Daily Log, the return rate is now calculated as the number of cin bins returned as a percentage of the number issued at every visit. In 2009/10, approximately half (51%) of cin bins were returned. This return rate varied across the HSCTs, from 19% in the South Eastern HSCT, 43% in the Northern HSCT, 44% in the Belfast HSCT to 74% in the Southern HSCT and 77% in the Western HSCT (Figure 2; Table 3).



5. Syringes Issued

5.1 There were 153,625 syringes issued in 2009/10 (Table 4). The Northern HSCT issued the greatest number of syringes (53,120; 35%), followed by the Belfast HSCT (49,075; 32%), the Western HSCT (35,945; 23%) and the Southern HSCT (8,695; 6%). The South Eastern Trust issued the lowest number of syringes (6,790; 4%) (Figure 3; Table 4).

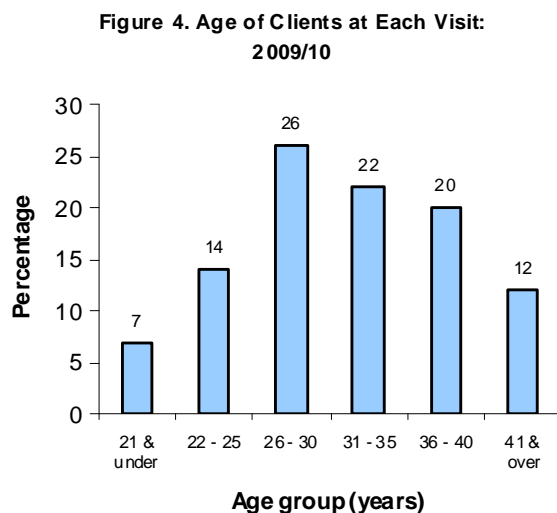


6. Profile of Service Users

Age and Gender

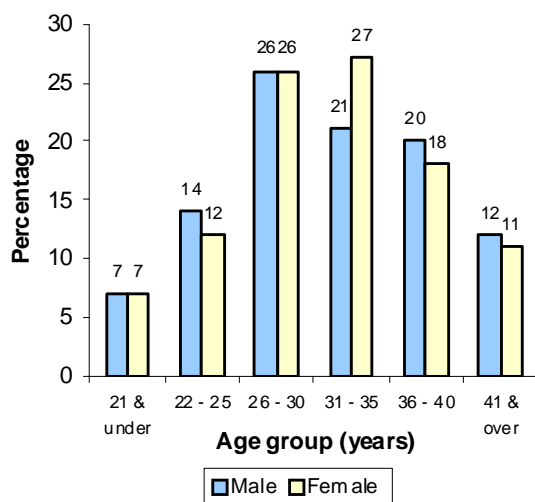
6.1 Over four fifths of visits (86%) were made by male clients (Table 5).

6.2 The mean age of clients using the NSES was 32 years. Over half (53%) of all visits were made by clients aged 31 years and over, just over a quarter (26%) by 26-30 year olds and approximately one fifth (21%) by clients aged 25 years and under (Figure 4; Table 6).



6.3 There was a little variation in the age profile for visits by males and females. Among males, the largest proportion of visits (26%) was made by 26-30 year olds, whereas among females, the largest proportion of visits (27%) was made by those in the 31-35 year age group. The proportions of visits made by males and females aged 25 years and under were fairly similar, 21% and 18% respectively. A larger proportion of visits were made by males aged 36 years and over (32%) than females in this age group (29%), while a larger proportion of visits were made by females aged 31-35 years (27%) than males in this age group (21%) (Figure 5; Table 7).

Figure 5. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2009/10



7. Outreach Visits

7.1 In 2009/10, 125 of the 15,828 visits (less than 1%) to the participating services were made by outreach workers on behalf of a client (Table 8). In this report these visits are referred to as outreach visits.

Return Rates & Syringes Issued

7.2 A total of 338 cin bins were issued by outreach workers in 2009/10 and 50% (168) were returned. A total of 3,200 syringes were issued by outreach workers during 2009/10 (Table 8).

Age & Gender

7.3 Approximately seven tenths of outreach visits (71%) were for male clients and 29% were for female clients (Table 9). Just under a third (32%) of outreach visits were for clients aged 22-25 years, while just over a quarter (26%) were for clients aged 31-35 years (Table 10). 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. NI Comparisons: 2008/09 and 2009/10

Number of Visits

8.1 In Northern Ireland in 2009/10 there was an 18% (2,439) increase in the number of visits since 2008/09 (15,828 compared to 13,389) (Table 11).

Return Rate

8.2 The overall return rate (number of cin bins returned as a percentage of the number issued) has remained fairly similar; 51% in 2009/10 compared to 53% in 2008/09 (Table 12).

Syringes Issued

8.3 In 2009/10, 153,625 syringes were issued, this is a 13% increase from 135,700 syringes issued in 2008/09 (Table 13).

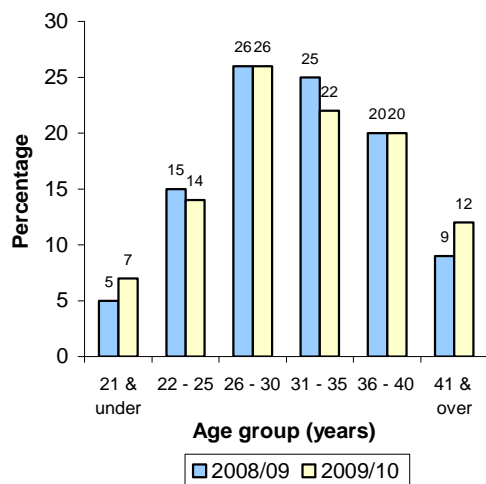
Age and Gender

8.4 The proportion of visits by both male and female clients was the same in 2008/09 and 2009/10: 86% of visits were by males and 14% by females (Table 14).

8.5 The age profile of clients at each visit in 2009/10 was generally similar to that in 2008/09. In 2009/10, 21% of visits were by clients aged 25 years and under compared to 20% in 2008/09. The proportion of clients aged 26-35 years was 47% in 2009/10 compared to 51% in 2008/09, while the proportion of clients

aged 36 years and over in 2009/10 was 32% compared to 29% in 2008/09 (Figure 6; Table 15).

**Figure 6. Age of Client at Each Visit:
2008/09 and 2009/10**



Outreach Visits

8.6 In 2009/10 there were 125 outreach visits; this is an increase of 16% on the 108 visits in 2008/09. A total of 3,200 syringes were issued by outreach workers in 2009/10, compared to 2,070 syringes issued in 2008/09 – an increase of 55% (Table 16).

8.7 There were 338 bins issued by outreach workers in 2009/10 compared to 220 issued the previous year. The return rate was 50% in 2009/10 compared to 51% in 2008/09 (Table 16).

9. Acknowledgements

9.1 PHIRB would like to thank the community pharmacists and their staff, the Community Addiction Team and their staff, the Pharmaceutical Directors within the five HSCTs 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 9052 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-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

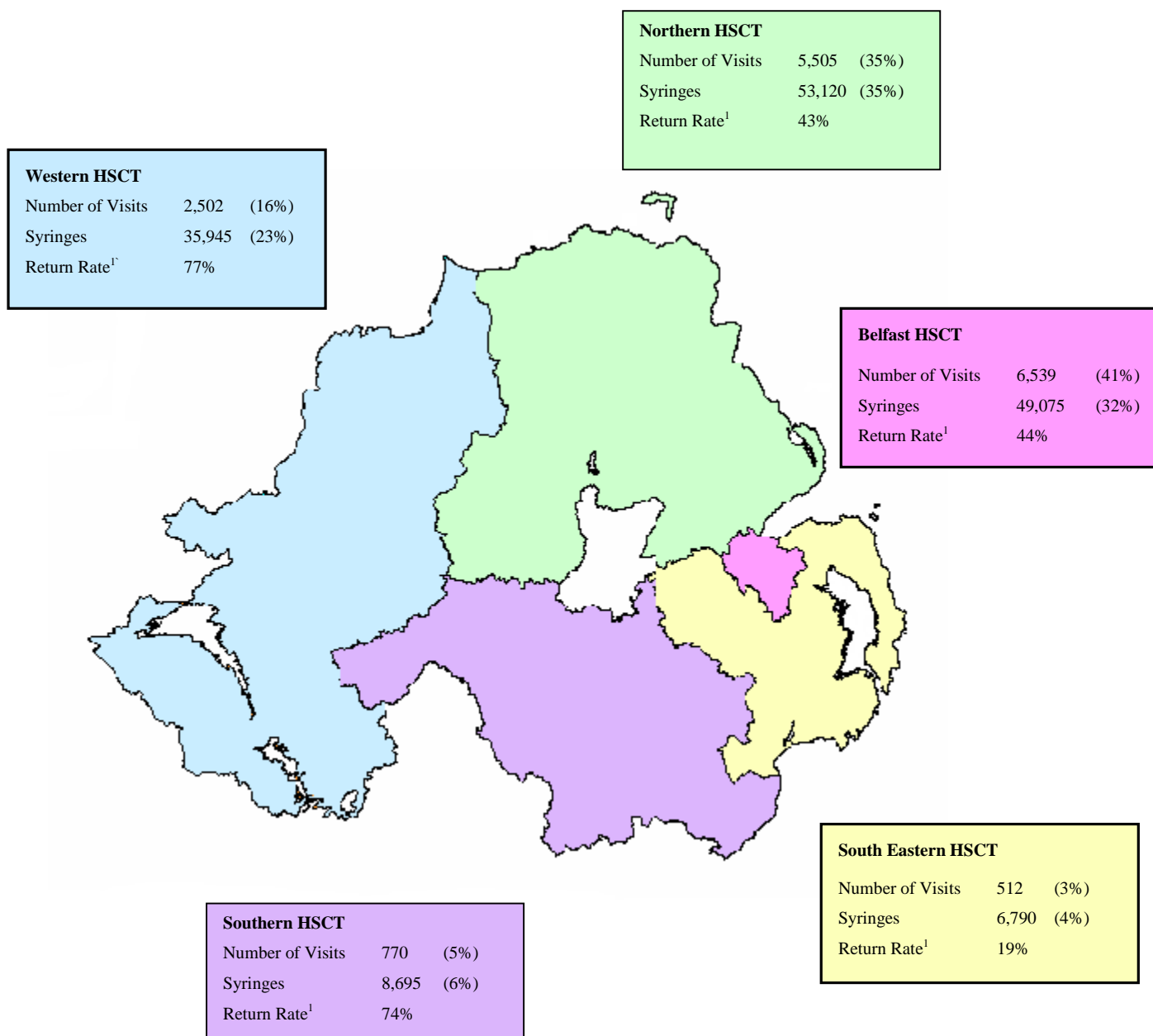
information is available from the NISRA website at www.nisra.gov.uk or via e-mail at info.nisra@dfpni.gov.uk.

10.8 Future publications

Responsibility for the provision of statistical information on the NSES has now passed to the Information Team within the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB).

Annex A - Map 1

Total Number of Needles and Syringes Issued and Return Rates by Health & Social Care Trust: 2009/10



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¹ Return Rate – percentage of cin bins returned.

Annex B – Tables: 2009/10

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Table 1. Number of Visits by Quarter: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
April - June 2009	4,008	25
July - September 2009	3,945	25
October - December 2009	3,844	24
January - March 2010	4,031	25
Total	15,828	100

Table 2. Number of Visits by HSCT: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Number of Visits	Percent
Belfast	6,539	41
Northern	5,505	35
South Eastern	512	3
Southern	770	5
Western	2,502	16
Total	15,828	100

Table 3. Number of Cin Bins Returned and Issued by HSCT: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Bins Returned	Bins issued	Percent
Belfast	3,142	7,068	44
Northern	3,065	7,209	43
South Eastern	138	727	19
Southern	771	1,036	74
Western	3,158	4,086	77
Total	10,274	20,126	51

Table 4. Number of Syringes Issued by HSCT: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Syringes Issued	Percent
Belfast	49,075	32
Northern	53,120	35
South Eastern	6,790	4
Southern	8,695	6
Western	35,945	23
Total	153,625	100

Table 5. Gender of Clients at Each Visit by HSCT: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Belfast	5,491	961	6,452
Northern	4,572	921	5,493
South Eastern	462	26	488
Southern	748	16	764
Western	2,228	268	2,496
Total	13,501	2,192	15,693 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
Belfast	85	15	100
Northern	83	17	100
South Eastern	95	5	100
Southern	98	2	100
Western	89	11	100
Total	86	14	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 135 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 6. Age of Clients at Each Visit by HSCT: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Belfast	359	1,011	1,450	1,339	1,509	778	6,446
Northern	372	545	1,735	1,278	1,070	482	5,482
South Eastern	46	49	77	122	99	119	512
Southern	42	41	198	217	163	108	769
Western	278	521	600	431	292	380	2,502
Total	1,097	2,167	4,060	3,387	3,133	1,867	15,711 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	21 & Under	22-25 Years	26-30 Years	31-35 Years	36-40 Years	41 & Over	All Ages
Belfast	6	16	22	21	23	12	100
Northern	7	10	32	23	20	9	100
South Eastern	9	10	15	24	19	23	100
Southern	5	5	26	28	21	14	100
Western	11	21	24	17	12	15	100
Total	7	14	26	22	20	12	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 117 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Table 7. Age and Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	949	143	1,092
22-25 Years	1,908	254	2,162
26-30 Years	3,488	564	4,052
31-35 Years	2,794	583	3,377
36-40 Years	2,726	397	3,123
41 & Over	1,621	237	1,858
All Ages	13,486	2,178	15,664 ⁽¹⁾

Percentages

	Male	Female	Total
21 & Under	7	7	7
22-25 Years	14	12	14
26-30 Years	26	26	26
31-35 Years	21	27	22
36-40 Years	20	18	20
41 & Over	12	11	12
All Ages	100	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 164 visits where the client's year of birth or/and gender was not recorded.

Table 8. Outreach Visits: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

Number of Outreach Visits	125
Number of Syringes Issued	3,200
Number of Bins Issued	338
Number of Bins Returned	168
Return Rate (percent)	50

Table 9. Gender of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	Number of visits	Percent ⁽¹⁾
Male	27	71
Female	11	29
Total	38	100

⁽¹⁾The percentages exclude visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 10. Age of Clients at Each Outreach Visit: 2009/10
 numbers and percentages

	Number of visits ⁽¹⁾	Percent ⁽²⁾
21 & Under	-	-
22-25 Years	6	32
26-30 Years	-	-
31-35 Years	5	26
36-40 Years	-	-
41 & Over	-	-
All Ages	19	100

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

⁽²⁾ The percentages excludes visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Annex C – NI Comparative Tables 2008/09 and 2009/10

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Table 16	Outreach Visits: 2008/09 and 2009/10	21

Table 11. Number of Visits: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
Total	13,389	15,828
Percentage	100	100

Table 12. Cin Bins Issued: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09		2009/10	
	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate	Cin Bins Issued	Return Rate
Total	17,668	53	20,126	51
Percentage	100		100	

Table 13. Syringes Issued: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
Total	135,700	153,625
Percentage	100	100

Table 14. Gender of Clients at Each Visit: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
Male	11,438	13,501
Female	1,812	2,192
Total	13,250 ⁽¹⁾	15,693 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
Male	86	86
Female	14	14
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 139 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 135 visits where the client's gender was not recorded.

Table 15. Age of Clients at Each Visit: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
21 & Under	664	1,097
22-25 Years	1,975	2,167
26-30 Years	3,395	4,060
31-35 Years	3,347	3,387
36-40 Years	2,638	3,133
41 & Over	1,254	1,867
Total	13,273 ⁽¹⁾	15,711 ⁽²⁾

Percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
21 & Under	5	7
22-25 Years	15	14
26-30 Years	26	26
31-35 Years	25	22
36-40 Years	20	20
41 & Over	9	12
Total	100	100

⁽¹⁾ This figure excludes 116 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

⁽²⁾ This figure excludes 117 visits where the client's year of birth was not recorded.

Table 16. Outreach Visits: 2008/09 and 2009/10

numbers and percentages

	2008/09	2009/10
Number of Outreach Visits	108	125
Number of Syringes Issued	2,070	3,200
Number of Bins Issued	220	338
Number of Bins Returned	113	168
Return Rate (percent)	51	50

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

Statistical Bulletins

Number	Title	Publication Date
1/2010	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Addicts Index 2009	March 2010
3/2010	Census of Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services in Northern Ireland: 1 st March 2010	June 2010
4/2010	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Substitute Prescribing Database: 31 st March 2010	September 2010
5/2010	Statistics on Smoking Cessation Services in Northern Ireland: 2009/10	September 2010
6/2010	Statistics from the Northern Ireland Drug Misuse Database: 1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010	October 2010

Research Reports

Title	Publication Date
<i>A Study of Cocaine Use in Northern Ireland 2009</i>	<i>March 2010</i>
<i>Research into the Social costs of Alcohol Misuse in Northern Ireland 2009</i>	<i>June 2010 (provisional)</i>

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