



**Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte**  
**Health Service Executive**

Social Inclusion  
Integrated Services Directorate  
Health Service Executive,  
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Deputy Catherine Byrne, TD  
Dáil Eireann  
Kildare Street  
Dublin 2

**PQ No: 7422/10**

\* To ask the Minister for Health and Children the number of needle exchange services operating here; the location of each; the cost of running each service; the number of patients each service treated in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

22nd February 2010

Dear Deputy Byrne,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health and Children for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The following is a breakdown of needle exchange services available ;

- The HSE East Coast Area operates both fixed site and outreach services through mobile units and home visits.
- The HSE Dublin South West area has predominantly fixed site exchanges and provides home visits in Kildare and West Wicklow.
- The HSE Dublin Northern area operates fixed sites
- The HSE Midlands operates fixed sites
- The HSE Mid Western area operates both fixed site and outreach services to public areas and through home visits

The Report of the NACD/NDST working group on Needle Exchange provision in Ireland [November 2008] assessed the role of needle exchange in harm reduction and the extent of provision in Ireland. The Report stated that worldwide 'A substantial number of drug injectors have been attracted to these programmes and have been provided with a range of services which cannot be suitably offered by other health services' [p22]. It showed how Needle Exchange provision in Ireland reflected the areas where most injecting took place and estimated 44,663 exchanges in 2007 predominately in Dublin. The Report also pointed out the lack of Needle Exchange services in the North East, the South East, the West, the South and the North West. The C&AG report on Drug Treatment & Rehabilitation (March 2009) also identified the North East and South East as two areas which had no Needle Exchange services. The NACD/NDST Report recommended piloting the provision of needle exchange services through Community based Pharmacists. Following discussions between the HSE and the Irish Pharmacist Union 65 Needle Exchange services will be put in place in rural towns in 24 Counties through a pathway of Rural Pharmacists, coordinated and led by a National Liaison Pharmacist. This programme will be rolled out in 2010 and will adequately respond to the demand for needle exchange services across the country.

Unfortunately due to the present National IR work to rule it is not possible at present to furnish data on the numbers attending and the costs of the existing services for 2009.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Doyle', written over a horizontal line.

Joe Doyle  
National Rehabilitation Co-ordinator  
Health Service Executive