Injecting Equipment Provision in Scotland 2016/17

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division (ISD) on the provision of injecting equipment presents the information available on the number of outlets, attendances and the types of injecting equipment distributed to people who inject illicit drugs (including Novel Psychoactive Substances and Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs) in Scotland in 2016/17.

Main Points

- In 2016/17 there were a total of 281 Injecting Equipment Provision outlets in Scotland, of which 219 (78%) were located in pharmacies, and the remaining 62 (22%) were part of other services (e.g. specialist drug treatment providers).
- In 2016/17, there were 309,351 attendances reported by Injecting Equipment Provision outlets. This was 6% lower than in 2015/16 (327,912). Where gender of the client was reported, 79% of those attending were males.
- Over 4.4 million needles and syringes were distributed by participating outlets in 2016/17, 7% lower than in 2015/16 (over 4.7 million).
- Nationally, it was estimated that an average of 72 needles and syringes were distributed per estimated ‘problem drug user’ in 2016/17, a decrease of 6% compared to 2015/16 (77).

Number of needles and syringes distributed per estimated ‘problem drug user’ (ages 15-64) by NHS Board; 2016/17

- In 2016/17, wipes or swabs (approximately 4.3 million) and citric acid or vitamin C (over 3.5 million) were the most commonly distributed items of sterile injecting equipment. The number of these items distributed by Injecting Equipment Provision outlets was lower than in 2015/16.

1. NHS Orkney and NHS Western Isles do not supply injecting equipment provision data.
Background

The purpose of injecting equipment provision is harm reduction. The provision of injecting equipment is effective in reducing injecting risk behaviours in people who inject drugs. This intervention helps prevent the transmission of blood borne viruses such as hepatitis C and HIV among people who inject drugs, and reduces associated healthcare costs.

Injecting equipment provision outlets are asked to report on the number of attendances, the number of needles and syringes, and items of other injecting equipment distributed and, if known, what type of drugs their clients are injecting. Between 2011/12 and 2014/15, changes to reporting mechanisms led to problems with the supply of data from some NHS Boards. However, since 2015/16, complete data have been provided by 12 NHS Boards (data were not submitted by NHS Orkney and NHS Western Isles). While these figures are thought to be accurate, caution should be taken when interpreting the figures and analyses in this publication. ISD are aware of some issues with data quality due to inconsistencies in reporting across NHS Boards. In some years, individual IEP outlets provided estimated figures or did not provide responses to all questions. Statistics for years 2007/08 to 2016/17 and relevant notes on data quality are available in the associated data tables.

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Further Information

Find out more in the full report. The data from this publication are available to download from our web page.

For more information on drug and alcohol misuse see the drug and alcohol section of our website. For related topics, please see the ScotPHO drug misuse section pages.

The next release of this publication will be in summer 2019.