Injecting Equipment Provision in Scotland

2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20

An Official Statistics release for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Public Health Scotland presents information on the provision of injecting equipment. This includes 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 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Main Points

- In 2019/20, there were a total of 281 Injecting Equipment Provision outlets in Scotland, of which 214 (76%) were located in pharmacies and the remaining 67 (24%) were part of other services (for example, specialist drug treatment providers).

- In 2019/20, there were 215,957 attendances reported by Injecting Equipment Provision outlets, 17% fewer than in 2018/19 (259,746). Over three-quarters (78%) of those attending were male.

- Approximately 3.1 million needles and syringes were distributed by participating outlets in 2019/20, this was 14% lower than in 2018/19 (approximately 3.6 million).

- Nationally, an average of 54 needles and syringes were distributed per estimated ‘problem drug user’ in 2019/20, a decrease of 14% compared to 2018/19 (64).

Number of needles and syringes distributed per estimated ‘problem drug user’ (ages 15-64) by NHS Board; 2019/20¹

1. NHS Western Isles did not supply injecting equipment provision data for 2019/20.
• In 2019/20, wipes or swabs (approximately 2.9 million), and citric acid or vitamin C (nearly 2.5 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 2018/19.

• In 2019/20, approximately 2.4 million sheets of foil were distributed. This was a substantial increase from approximately 1.1 million sheets of foil in 2017/18, when the provision of foil data was first recorded.

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 has been provided by all mainland NHS Boards. NHS Shetland provided complete IEP data in 2015/16 and 2016/17 and partial IEP data from 2017/18 to 2019/20. NHS Orkney began supplying IEP data in 2017/18 and NHS Western Isles submitted IEP data in 2017/18 only. While these figures are thought to be accurate, caution should be taken when interpreting the figures and analyses in this publication. Public Health Scotland 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 2019/20 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.

For related topics, please see the Drugs Misuse pages.

The Scottish Public Health Observatory (ScotPHO) provides information on various aspects of drug misuse in Scotland: ScotPHO drug misuse section.

The next release of this publication will be in summer 2021.

PHS and Official Statistics

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