

Appendix 2

City of London Needle Exchange: Demand, Provision & Usage

August 2018

Introduction

Injecting as a method of administration is a high-risk practice associated with drug use. It significantly increases the risk of overdose, as well as the risk of Blood Borne Virus (including Hepatitis B, C and HIV) transmission.

It is most commonly associated with Heroin and Crack Cocaine use, although is also the route of administration for other drugs including Amphetamines, Methamphetamine ('Crystal Meth') and Steroids. Below provides a summary of local data around the prevalence of injecting, and the current provision usage of needle exchange services within the City of London

Demand: Known Injectors

WDP records data from all assessments completed with service users as part of its provision of drug and alcohol interventions within the City of London. This is primarily within the settings of:

- Police Custody (predominantly non-resident)
- Treatment (residents)
- Verified rough sleepers

Injecting prevalence within Residents and Rough Sleepers

Of those residents and rough sleepers who have been assessed by the service, there are two individuals recorded who, at the time of their contact with the service, disclosed a 'current' injecting status. Both were from the Rough Sleeping Community. It is noteworthy that one of these 'current' injectors is known to have since moved out of London, and thus only one is currently in the City of London.

Similarly, of those assessed by the service, there are a further 17 individuals who, at time of contact with the service, disclosed a 'previous' injecting status.

The total number of unique residents and rough sleepers assessed by the service is 115 (since October 2015), and thus, currently injecting service users known to the service and currently living (or rough sleeping) in the City of London make up less than 1%.

This data is caveated somewhat due to being based upon individuals who have willingly completed an assessment with the service. For example, there is one known injector known to rough sleep within the City who injects but is not captured above due to his continued reluctance to engage in treatment or with wider support services.

Injecting prevalence within Criminal Justice settings

Of those who have been assessed by the service within Bishopsgate Police Station (or wider Criminal Justice pathways), there were 37 individuals who disclosed a 'current' injecting status. However, as this referral pathway is made up of less than 1% of residents, these 37 individuals are unlikely to be local, or access local services.

Similarly, there were 40 unique individuals who disclosed a 'previous' injecting status.

The total number of individuals assessed within Police Custody or wider Criminal Justice setting is 444 (since October 2015), and thus, currently injecting service users known to the Substance Misuse service is 8.3%.

	Injecting Status (at time of assessment)			Total	Current as a proportion of total
	Current	Previous	Never		
Community (Residents & Rough Sleepers)	2	17	96	115	1.7%
CJIT Caseload (predominantly non- residents)	37	40	367	444	8.3%

Considering the above prevalence of injecting within these two drug using populations within the City of London, below considers the availability of Needle Exchange facilities within the City of London.

Provision: Needle Exchange Provision within the City

Provision of Needle exchanges across the sector take place predominantly within a pharmacy setting. WDP pay pharmacies to provide a free needle exchange service, and in turn pharmacies claim back remuneration for every exchange that they record.

Pharmacies are under no responsibility to provide Needle Exchange services and will provide this according to their strategy and service provision. Their decision to provide may be based factors including:

- Their perceived demand for the service
- Prospective income and economy of scale for the service
- The impact it may have on their other business areas
- Impact on resources (time/staff) within their business

Currently, and since October 2015 when the WDP service commenced, there has only been one pharmacy providing Needle Exchange services. This is of the total 15 pharmacies (14 Boots and 1 independent pharmacy) within the Square Mile.

Provision: Needle Exchange in neighbouring areas

On the peripheries of the City of London, there are various Needle Exchange providers within all neighbouring boroughs. Although too numerous to overview them all, two are worthy of note.

Given its wider service as a day centre for rough sleepers, the **Dellow Centre** in Tower Hamlets is a convenient venue that provides Needle Exchange services to rough sleepers in the City of London. Their service provides a range of services to Rough Sleepers, as well as being very close to Health E1, where rough sleepers can register for Primary Care.

In Hackney there is also a pharmacy in Hoxton – which is the most southerly pharmacy that provides Needle Exchange services. They claim remuneration for their Needle Exchange service from the WDP Hackney Recovery Service, allowing us to measure the record of Needle Exchange usage, overviewed below.

Needle Exchange Usage:

Based on Pharmacies claims since 1st April 2016, our records show that across Hackney, including City of London, there have been over 25,000 separate needle exchanges within pharmacy settings. The City of London pharmacy makes up on only 31 separate claims during this period.

There are some identified flaws in this data. The instances of these City of London Needle Exchange claims all occurred between November 2017 and February 2018, suggesting that although these may be a small proportion of claims, there is likely under-reporting in this data.

We have opened dialogue with the pharmacy in relation to the recording of this data, who attribute this under-reporting of Needle Exchange data to high staff turnover, staff shortages within the service, and other staff lacking familiarity with the recording process. WDP will continue to support Boots in its provision of Needle exchange services by ensuring all new staff are trained on documentation and appropriate advice for service users.

As WDP do not oversee the provision of Needle Exchange within Tower Hamlets, we are unable to provide usage data for the Dellow Centre. However, by way of comparison, the Hackney Pharmacy in Hoxton have recorded 5988 Needle Exchange occurrences between 1st April 2016 and 15th June 2018.

Of course, this data does represent usage of Needle Exchange services based on the densely populated area of Hoxton, which is a significantly different to the sparsely populated City of London population. However, notwithstanding the under-reporting, the difference in usage of Needle Exchange between the two pharmacies (City of London: 31, Murrays: 5998) is still significant, and indicative of a low demand of Needle Exchange services within the City. This likely reflects the local demographics differences in the local populations of each pharmacy.

Conclusion

This report provides a summary of current injecting service users known to the service, and highlights these to be a small proportion of both the rough sleeping community, and the City of London treatment population as a whole.

Similarly, for those arrested in the City, although higher in proportion than local residents and rough sleepers, are from across Greater London and therefore unlikely to access City of London's local services such as Needle Exchange.

In terms of provision and usage, there is more work to be done with pharmacies locally to ensure thorough recording of data and promotion of Needle Exchanges services, and WDP will continue to support Pharmacies in this over the coming months.