



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

An Oifig Náisiúnta don Chuimsiú
Sóisialta
Rannóg Cúram Príomhúil
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse
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21st June, 2016

Deputy Jonathan O'Brien
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 13543/16

* To ask the Minister for Health the estimated number of under-18s that are injecting drug users.

Dear Deputy O'Brien,

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

In 2014, the most recent year data that is available, 725 cases aged under-18 were treated for problem drug use as recorded in the National Drug Treatment Reporting System (NDTRS). Of these 7 (1.0%) reported ever injecting. This relates to cases under-18 who presented to treatment; the numbers of under-18s who inject and who are not in treatment is not known. Please see attached Appendix on the NDTRS.

Feedback from the Pharmacy Needle Exchange is that since 2011 there have been 2 instances of under - 18's requesting access to the pharmacy needle exchange and both had an immediate referral to the relevant HSE addiction services.

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

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Doyle
National Planning Specialist

Appendix

National Drug Treatment Reporting System

Treatment for problem alcohol and drug use in Ireland is provided by statutory and non-statutory services, including residential centres, community-based addiction services, general practices and prison services.

For the purpose of the NDTRS, treatment is broadly defined as ‘any activity which aims to ameliorate the psychological, medical or social state of individuals who seek help for their substance misuse problems’. Clients who attend needle-exchange services are not included in this reporting system. From 2004 onwards, clients who report alcohol as their main problem drug have been recorded by the system. These data have been presented in an earlier paper in the HRB Trends Series (Fanagan et al. 2008). Drug treatment options include one or more of the following: medication (detoxification, methadone reduction, substitution programmes and psychiatric treatment), brief intervention, counselling, group therapy, family therapy, psychotherapy, complementary therapy, and/or life-skills training.

Compliance with the NDTRS requires that one form be completed for each new client coming for first treatment and for each previously treated client returning to treatment for problem drug use. Service providers at treatment centres throughout Ireland collect data on each individual who attends for first treatment or returns to treatment in a calendar year. The HRB compile anonymous, aggregated data, which are analysed and reported at national and EU levels.

The main elements of the reporting system are defined as follows:

All cases treated – describes individuals who receive treatment for problem drug and/or alcohol use at each treatment centre in a calendar year, and includes:

- *Cases assessed only* - describes individuals who were assessed but who did not progress to treatment
- *Previously treated cases* – describes individuals who were treated previously for problem drug/alcohol use at any treatment centre and have returned to treatment in the reporting year;
- *New cases treated* – describes individuals who have never been treated for problem drug/alcohol use; and
- *Status unknown* – describes individuals whose status with respect to previous treatment for problem drug/alcohol use is not known.

In the case of the data for ‘previously treated cases’, there is a possibility that individuals appear more than once in the database: for example, where a person receives treatment at more than one centre or at the same centre more than once per year.