

## Enhanced surveillance of blood borne virus in drug users in Wales

### Annual report: January 2011 to December 2011

#### Key points

- Nine hundred and eighty-eight surveillance forms were received by Public Health Wales for 972 people seen by substance misuse services in Wales between January 2011 and December 2011
- Substance misuse service clients seen in this period were most frequently men, had a median age of 35 years (range: 16-65), and had a history of injecting drugs for more than 10 years
- Twenty-three percent reported being homeless in the previous year and 55% reported having previously spent time in prison
- Where reported, 54% had injected heroin in the previous year, 19% crack cocaine, 24% amphetamine, and 7% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs
- Over one quarter (26%) of the sample reported never having had injected drugs
- Where reported, 74% were currently undertaking opiate substitution treatment
- From the 988 reports received, results were available for 959 HIV tests, 963 hepatitis B tests, and 974 hepatitis C tests
- No samples tested positive for HIV antibodies
- Four percent of clients tested positive for hepatitis B core antibodies; this figure increased to 6% amongst those with a history of injecting drug use
- Twenty-three percent tested positive for hepatitis C antibodies, and 31% amongst injecting drug users
- Trends in younger clients, and those with a shorter injecting history, may reflect trends in recently acquired infection (incidence)
- During this period, 8% of clients aged 25 years or less tested positive for hepatitis C
- Nine percent of clients reporting a history of injecting drugs for 2 years or less tested positive for hepatitis C
- Eighteen of the clients who reported injecting steroids in the previous year (30% of those reporting injecting steroids) tested positive for hepatitis C and 2 of these individuals also (3%) tested positive for hepatitis B. All 18 clients also reported injecting heroin.

#### Results

**Table 1. Proportion of clients testing positive: January 2011 to December 2011**

LHB of service	Reports received <sup>1</sup>	HIV antibody positive	Hepatitis B core antibody positive	Hepatitis C antibody positive	% clients aged ≤ 25 yrs testing positive for hepatitis C <sup>2</sup>	% of clients with ≤ 2 yrs history of IDU testing positive for hepatitis C <sup>3</sup>
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	22	0%	0%	41%	33%	0%
Aneurin Bevan	358	0%	3%	13%	6%	6%
Betsi Cadwaladr	447	0%	7%	34%	8%	14%
Cardiff & Vale	57	0%	2%	11%	0%	14%
Cwm Taf	2	0%	0%	0%	-	-
Hywel Dda	88	0%	0%	7%	14%	0%
Powys	14	0%	0%	8%	0%	-
<b>Wales</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Test result not provided for a small proportion of clients)

<sup>2</sup> Interpret with caution: Only 11% of clients tested were aged under 25 years (n=106)

<sup>3</sup> Interpret with caution: Only 11% of clients tested reporting a history of injecting less than 3 years (n=108)

**Table 2. Characteristics of clients: January 2011 to December 2011 (includes only those for whom a surveillance form was received)**

LHB of service	Reports received	Male <sup>1</sup>	Median age (range) <sup>2</sup>	% born in UK	% homeless in previous year	% previously been in prison	Most frequent number of years injecting
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	22	59%	31 (22-45)	95%	27%	59%	>10 yrs
Aneurin Bevan	358	71%	32 (16-60)	95%	21%	54%	>10 yrs
Betsi Cadwaladr	447	73%	38 (18-65)	98%	29%	58%	>10 yrs
Cardiff & Vale	57	72%	34 (20-55)	91%	9%	60%	>10 yrs
Cwm Taf	2	100%	28 (28-28)	100%	0%	100%	3-4 yrs/>10 yrs
Hywel Dda	88	73%	34 (22-54)	98%	14%	40%	>10 yrs
Powys	14	50%	40 (24-47)	93%	21%	29%	5-10 yrs/>10 yrs
<b>Wales</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>35 (16-65)</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>&gt;10 yrs</b>

<sup>1</sup> Sex not provided for 4 clients

<sup>2</sup> Age not provided for 14% (141) of clients

**Table 3. Reported injecting drug use in past 12 months and proportion on opiate substitute treatment (where reported), October 2010 to September 2011**

LHB of service	Heroin	Crack cocaine	Crack and heroin together	Steroids	Amphetamine	Opiate substitute
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	64%	10%	5%	0%	38%	95%
Aneurin Bevan	52%	11%	9%	8%	21%	72%
Betsi Cadwaladr	60%	30%	27%	9%	30%	70%
Cardiff & Vale	53%	8%	6%	4%	13%	95%
Cwm Taf	100%	0%	0%	50%	50%	100%
Hywel Dda	31%	5%	4%	1%	12%	83%
Powys	29%	0%	0%	0%	7%	71%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>74%</b>

### Notes on methods

To assist Public Health Wales assess trends in the rates of blood borne viral hepatitis and HIV in Wales, substance misuse services in Wales offering dried blood spot testing are collecting information from clients seen; an anonymous unlinked surveillance form containing information about the client is completed by the drug service worker and sent to Public Health Wales. Dried blood spot samples are sent to the Public Health Wales laboratory in Cardiff and are tested for markers of exposure to hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. A proportion of people who are antibody positive will be currently infected, and are at risk of transmitting virus to other people. The hepatitis B core antibody test used is likely to underestimate the prevalence of exposure to hepatitis B. Hepatitis B core antibody positivity indicates current or past infection, but does not differentiate infection from previous vaccination. It is important to note that results of venepuncture based testing are not systematically collected under this surveillance scheme.

Data presented in this report are for clients seen by substance misuse services between January 2011 and December 2012. Data are included only for those clients for whom a surveillance form was completed and sent to Public Health Wales.

**Report prepared by Public Health Wales Health Protection Service**

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Data based on forms received as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012