

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

### Six monthly report: October 2010 to March 2011

#### Key points

- Two hundred and seventy surveillance forms were received by Public Health Wales for 266 people seen by substance misuse services in Wales between October 2010 and March 2011
- Substance misuse service clients seen in this period were most frequently men, had a median age of 35 years (range: 21-77), and had a history of injecting drugs for more than 10 years
- Twenty-seven percent reported being homeless in the previous year and 61% reported having previously spent time in prison
- Where reported, 50% had injected heroin in the previous year, 16% crack, 20% amphetamine, and 5% had injected steroids or image enhancing drugs
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of the sample reported never having had injected drugs
- Where reported, 79% were currently undertaking opiate substitution treatment
- From the 270 reports received, results were available for 261 HIV tests, 257 hepatitis B tests, and 261 hepatitis C tests
- No samples tested positive for HIV antibodies
- Four percent of clients tested positive for hepatitis B core antibodies
- Thirty percent tested positive for hepatitis C antibodies
- Trends in younger clients, and those with a shorter injecting history, may reflect trends in recently acquired infection (incidence)
- During this period, 15% of clients aged 25 years or less, and 19% of those reporting a history of injecting drugs for 2 years or less tested positive for hepatitis C

#### Results

**Table 1. Proportion of clients testing positive: October 2010 to March 2011**

LHB of service	Reports received <sup>1</sup>	HIV antibody positive	Hepatitis B 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	16	0%	0%	47%	50%	0%
Aneurin Bevan	105	0%	4%	20%	20%	14%
Betsi Cadwaladr	118	0%	6%	41%	0%	29%
Cardiff & Vale	12	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Cwm Taf	0	-	-	-	-	-
Hywel Dda	<10	0%	0%	33%	-	-
Powys	16	0%	0%	20%	0%	-
<b>Wales</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Interpret with caution: Only small numbers of clients under 26 years tested (n=22)

<sup>3</sup> Interpret with caution: Only small numbers of clients reporting a history of injecting less than 3 years tested (n=32)

**Table 2. Characteristics of clients: October 2010 to March 2011 (includes only those for whom a surveillance form was received)**

LHB of service	Reports received	Male	Median age (range) <sup>1</sup>	% born in UK	% homeless in previous year	% previously been in prison	Most frequent number of years injecting
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	16	50%	31 (22-43)	94%	31%	63%	>10 yrs
Aneurin Bevan	105	73%	31 (22-77)	95%	21%	63%	>10 yrs
Betsi Cadwaladr	118	74%	37 (21-61)	98%	34%	66%	>10 yrs
Cardiff & Vale	12	75%	32 (21-38)	100%	27%	58%	Never
Cwm Taf	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hywel Dda	<10	100%	38 (31-44)	100%	67%	33%	>10 yrs
Powys	16	69%	41 (24-47)	100%	6%	25%	Never/5-10 yrs
<b>Wales</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>35 (21-77)</b>	<b>97%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>&gt;10 yrs</b>

<sup>1</sup>Age not provided for 54 clients

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

LHB of service	Heroin	Crack cocaine	Crack and heroin together	Steroids	Amphetamine	Opiate substitute
Abertawe Bro Morgannwg	63%	14%	7%	0%	43%	94%
Aneurin Bevan	46%	4%	9%	3%	12%	82%
Betsi Cadwaladr	57%	27%	23%	8%	29%	75%
Cardiff & Vale	27%	0%	0%	0%	0%	73%
Cwm Taf	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hywel Dda	67%	33%	33%	0%	0%	100%
Powys	19%	6%	0%	0%	0%	81%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>79%</b>

## Notes on methods

To assess trends in the rates of blood borne viral hepatitis and HIV in Wales, substance misuse services in Wales are collecting information from clients who are tested for these infections. 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.

This is the first report of this project. Data presented in this report are for clients seen by substance misuse services between October 2010 and March 2011. 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

For further information contact: [noel.craine@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:noel.craine@wales.nhs.uk) or [daniel.thomas@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:daniel.thomas@wales.nhs.uk)