



Subject:	Sharps/Drug Paraphernalia
Date:	13 June 2017
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	Members may be aware that Belfast PCSP has been leading on the partnership response aimed at dealing with the inappropriate disposal of needles and drug paraphernalia. The PCSP currently leads a Sharps Management Group made up of experts who deliver drug support services across the City, along with the relevant statutory organisations.
1.2	The Sharps Management Group (SMG) was established with the aim of reducing the public safety issues associated with discarded sharps.

<p>1.3</p> <p>1.4</p>	<p>The group is a network of statutory agencies and low threshold drug and alcohol service providers who have a responsibility for addressing these issues across Belfast including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Belfast City Council (various departments) ▪ Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) ▪ Public Health Agency (PHA) ▪ Extern ▪ PSNI ▪ Regional User Service Network ▪ Council for the Homeless NI ▪ Belfast Trust (Drug Outreach Team) ▪ BDACT Connections service <p>This group has agreed a range of short and medium term actions aimed at raising awareness around the issues associated with needle use and inappropriate disposal and have been working in a co-ordinated manner to deliver these actions.</p>
<p>2.0</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>2.1</p>	<p>The Committee is asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ note the contents of the report; and ▪ further support the current and planned work of the multi-agency Sharps Management Group.
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main report</p>
<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><u>Current Context</u></p> <p>Members may be aware of increasing concern about sharps and drug paraphernalia associated with intravenous drug use in the city. This concern is exacerbated when sharps and drug paraphernalia are found in public spaces, particularly public conveniences and parks/open spaces.</p> <p>No central data set exists to robustly quantify the issues, however, there have been increasing reports from businesses in the city centre, front-line Council staff, PSNI and drug and alcohol and homeless low threshold services which would indicate that this is growing problem. There is also significant community concern and media interest in the issue.</p> <p>As indicated below, Council is working with partners to improve the collection of data to more robustly evidence need and resource allocation.</p>

3.4	It is however important to note that not all sharps and drug paraphernalia found are associated with illegal drug use.
3.5	In addition, the Health and Social Care Board commissions two pharmacies in Belfast to deliver 'needle and syringe exchange schemes.' Needle and syringe exchange schemes (NSES) directly reduce the harm caused to people who inject drugs, but the consequent reduction in the prevalence and spread of blood-borne viruses benefits wider society. NSES is a completely confidential service that provides free sterile injecting equipment to injecting drug users (of any type i.e. illegal opioids or stimulants, steroids or tanning solutions), alongside health promotion information or advice – the pharmacies can then safely dispose of any used injecting equipment on the clients' return visit.
3.6	Participation in the 'needle and syringe exchange schemes' is entirely voluntary.
	<u>Actions Being Taken</u>
3.7	Through the Sharps Management Group with financial assistance from Belfast PCSP, the following actions have been undertaken/are in progress:
3.8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training and Awareness for Business – Focussed support is being provided to local traders to outline what practical assistance is available to them if and when they discover needles and/or drug paraphernalia on their premises. In March the SMG hosted a training day in City Hall for retail outlets in Belfast city centre who were experiencing difficult issues with drugs use and discarded needles on their premises. This training was delivered by the BHSCCT Drug Outreach Team and supported by the PHA, Belfast City Centre Management and the Council. 38 Employees from a range of retail outlets participated on the day as well as Officers from the PSNI.
3.9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Sharps Removal Contract – A dedicated telephone number is in place for members of the public to report the discovery of drug related sharps supported by a specialist sharps removal contract (for non-statutory owned land). This includes an out of hour's telephone line that allows for a quick response and removal of any sharps/drug paraphernalia to minimise public safety issues.
3.10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Sharps Disposal Units – Specifically designed sharps disposal units have been placed in the Automatic Public Conveniences (APCs) in the following areas - Dublin Road, Lombard Street, Antrim Road, Custom House Square and the Gas works. The Council has also installed a sharps disposal unit at the Council owned Winetavern

	<p>Street toilets and is exploring opportunities to expand this scheme to other standard toilets. These units are designed to facilitate the safe disposal of sharps and drug paraphernalia to minimise risk to public safety at these locations.</p>
3.11	<p>4. Guidance for Council Employees – Recognising the health and safety issues associated with sharps and drug paraphernalia finds, Council’s Health and Safety Unit have formalised guidance to Services and departments on the actions to be taken in the event of a needle stick injury as well as a review of the procedure that staff should follow should they encounter person/s who they suspect are under the influence of drugs.</p>
3.12	<p>5. Accurate recording of data – As detailed above, there were no formal arrangements in place for the recording of sharps/drug paraphernalia finds. Council has provided a central reporting system for relevant Council staff (and partners) so as to better understand the level of the issue. Reports are shared with the PHA, PSNI and the relevant drug and alcohol services involved on the SMG to ensure co-ordination of action. There remain some queries with the accuracy of the data particularly around duplicate entries and timeliness of reports, which are currently being worked through by Officers.</p>
3.13	<p>6. Enabling Council Staff - Given the increase in sharps/drug paraphernalia finds in public spaces, all Safer Neighbourhood Officers and Park Wardens carry sharp bins in their vehicles and have all the appropriate equipment for the safe disposal of any material found.</p>
	<p>Future Work includes;</p>
3.14	<p>1. Awareness Raising – (1) The development and delivery of an advertising campaign targeting those who do inject/use needles for whatever purposes to encourage them to safely dispose of their injecting equipment. (2) Given the increasing requests from a wide range of organisations and sectors – SMG are proposing to develop a video resource which could be used in addition to, or instead of face to face awareness sessions.</p>
3.15	<p>2. Accurate recording, and timely sharing, of data – Ongoing improvements to the accuracy and timeliness of the sharing of reports and information across the agencies involved to enable resources and services (particularly follow up</p>

<p>3.16</p> <p>3.17</p> <p>3.18</p>	<p>support) to be targeted more quickly and appropriately.</p> <p>3. Targeted work with Hostels – Specific interventions to be developed with or by hostels in Belfast enabling them to better support vulnerable people in their care around drug use and safe disposal of injecting equipment.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All of the above activity is supporting from within existing revenue budgets for Belfast PCSP and partner agencies. This work is also highlighted as a priority action within the Belfast Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team’s plan for 2017/18.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific Equality or Good Relations implications have been identified, however, this is being monitored on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>