

NSW Needle and Syringe Program Review

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Background/Approach: The NSW Ministry of Health (Ministry) conducted a review of the NSW Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) to gain a state-wide understanding of the NSP landscape and identify opportunities to improve service delivery for people who inject drugs. The Review included an update to the NSW NSP Guidelines and created workforce development opportunities for the NSP workforce in partnership with Kirketon Road Centre.

Analysis/Argument: The review utilised existing Ministry data sources and provided a detailed summary of NSP locations, equipment distribution and models of care at each site. The NSP Guidelines provides the framework for the NSW NSP and required an update to reflect the changes in NSP service delivery. The NSP workforce development project created a series of interactive learning modules that focus on improving the NSP workforce capacity, including the NSPs role in hepatitis C prevention and treatment.

Outcome/Results: The review showed there is wide coverage of NSP sites across NSW (32 primaries, 343 secondaries and 594 pharmacy outlets). However, it identified that increased efforts are required to embed routine hepatitis C testing and linkage to care in NSP sites. A steering committee reviewed the NSP Guidelines and made a series of recommendations, including advocating for the Guidelines to adopt a population health approach to better reflect the extensive range of services offered in NSPs. The creation of online learning modules for NSP workers ensures the NSP sector is highly skilled to continue to deliver services for people who inject drugs.

Conclusions/Applications: The NSP is an evidence-based public health program that has proven successful in reducing the transmission of blood borne viruses. Ongoing review and investment into the NSP are crucial to meet the needs of people who inject drugs and the NSW goal of hepatitis C elimination.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: The Ministry received funding from EC Australia to undertake the NSP workforce development project.