

## **REDUCTION IN HEPATITIS B VACCINE UPTAKE IN YOUNG PEOPLE WHO INJECT DRUGS AND RECENT INITIATES IN ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND, 2017-2018.**

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### **Background**

People who inject drugs (PWID) are at risk of hepatitis B infection (HBV). The proportion of people who inject drugs (PWID) ever infected with HBV in UK (excluding Scotland) has declined from 18% in 2008 to 9% in 2018 – this is attributed to high HBV vaccine uptake (72% in 2018). However, high uptake may not be universal and it is important to monitor uptake, missed vaccination opportunities and risk behaviours among young PWID and recent initiates, who are at greater risk of HBV infection

### **Methods**

Data were extracted from the 2017 and 2018 annual unlinked anonymous survey of PWID, where PWID recruited from drug services provided a biological sample and self-completed a questionnaire. We included young PWID (<25 years) and recent initiates to injecting (<3 years) who had injected drugs in the last 12 months and excluded participants in 2018 who also took part in 2017. We investigated vaccine uptake ( $\geq 1$  dose), injecting and sexual risk behaviour and healthcare contact among those unvaccinated.

### **Results**

Vaccine uptake among young PWID (58%, 61/105) and recent initiates (54%, 181/336) was lower than the overall (72%). Among young PWID and/or recent initiates (N=405); 34% reported sharing injecting equipment in the last month, 58% had injected crack in the last year, and 32% reported  $\geq 2$  sexual partners in the last year, with only 15% reporting always using a condom. Among those unvaccinated (n=180), 90% had used a needle and syringe programme, 57% were prescribed a maintenance drug, 56% had visited a GP in the last year and 35% had ever been imprisoned.

### **Conclusion**

Vaccine uptake is lower among young PWID and recent initiates to injecting. Initiatives to promote vaccine uptake are essential in protecting this group from HBV acquisition. Missed opportunities indicate that more can be done to engage those in contact with services.

No conflict of interest