

The logo for NNEF, consisting of the letters 'NNEF' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a solid black rectangular background.

**NNEF**

**THE PROVISION OF FOIL IN  
NEEDLE AND SYRINGE  
PROGRAMMES IN THE UK**

**RESULTS FROM THE  
2008 NNEF MEMBERS CONSULTATION ON FOIL**

# WHY FOIL?

- 'Route Transition' intervention
- Encourage injectors to smoke
- Reduce injecting-related harms
- Control or address drug use
- Improve levels of client engagement
- Engage with non-injectors / new injectors
- Reduce risks from drug litter
  
- **BUT NOT INCLUDED IN SECTION 9A**

# EVIDENCE: SOMERSET

- Uptake of NSP increased
- New clients accessed
- Non-injectors accessed
- Half of the service users took foil
- 'Smoking' up from 46% to 85%
- Improved engagements re: safer injecting
- Some of the sample stopped injecting
- Smokers changed behaviours of others

**Pizzey R & Hunt N (2008)**

Distributing foil from needle and syringe programmes (NSPs) to promote transitions from heroin injecting to chusing: An evaluation

*Harm Reduction Journal, 5:24*

# EVIDENCE: SHEFFIELD

- 727 foil packs distributed
- Enabled engagement with 'hard to reach' clients
- Reduced injecting injuries
- Reduced drug-related litter
- Reduced 'chaotic' injecting behaviour
- Clients reported accessing treatment
- Clients reported stopping their drug use

**Boid A & Waldock D (2008)**

The introduction of aluminium foil to Sidney Street Needle Exchange and Sharp  
Action mobile Needle Exchange, Sheffield  
*Turning Point Adult Treatment Services Sheffield*

# NNEF SURVEY

- Online questionnaire
- 20 Questions / Statements
- October & November 2008
- Analysis by LJMU
- 445 responses from across UK
- Managers, Commissioners, Workers, Service Users, Advocates...



# **SURVEY: FOIL PROVISION**

- **Only 66 (15%) services provided foil**
  - “Police and DAAT 100% supportive”
  - “we just ignored the illegality”
  - “funding through petty cash kitchen expenses”
- **66.5%: No provision because of the law**
  - (13.7% = funding is the main issue)
- **THE LAW IS HAVING A BIG IMPACT ON COVERAGE**

# **SURVEY: SUPPORT FOR FOIL**

- **Vast majority of sample supportive:**
  - Foil will help reduce harms (91.7%)
  - Service users will use foil (67.4%)
  - Foil will encourage drug users not to inject (80.9%)
  - Foil will improve attendance and engagement (61.1%)
  - Foil will improve early engagement of non IDU (83.3%)
- **‘Law should be changed to allow the supply of foil’:**
  - 80.9% strongly agree!
  - 13.9% agree

# **SURVEY: COMMENTS**

- **‘We have had amazing service user feedback’**
- **‘Foil is real harm reduction’**
- **‘The response has been overwhelmingly positive’**
- **‘Client moved to injecting because she couldn’t get foil’**
- **‘Foil would increase the numbers of individuals / women’**
- **‘That foil is classed as illegal paraphernalia and needles aren't is insane’**
- **‘An excellent way to engage smokers’**
- **‘It is a no-brainer!’**

# CONCLUSIONS

- **Foil has the potential to reduce harm**
  - Blood-borne viruses (HCV, HIV)
  - Overdose
  - Localised infections (£47m per year)
- **Foil has the potential to engage new clients**
  - Smokers
- **Widespread support from the field and beyond**
  - Little (if any) evidence against foil
- **Law is a major barrier to provision and research**
  - Technical threat of prosecution
  - Funding unavailable
  - Postcode lottery

## Home Office Press Release (2003):

***“We know that treatment workers and doctors have been making sensible decisions to provide equipment anyway, but faced the risk of prosecution.***

***We have decided to change the law to help reduce the health risks to drug users”***

## Crown Prosecution Service (2008):

***“[Needle exchange] schemes need police and CPS co-operation because those who run and use them will necessarily commit offences under the Act. It is therefore not normally in the public interest to prosecute:***

- a drug user retaining used needles;***
- a drug user possessing sterile needles;***
- bona fide operators of schemes”.***

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Aluminium foil should be added to the current list of exemptions in Section 9A of the Misuse of Drugs Act**
- **A more detailed assessment and review of Section 9A:**
  - Ask for representations
  - Remove future barriers for harm reduction interventions

**Decisions about the distribution of harm reduction products should be made by the field rather than policy makers.**



**NATIONAL NEEDLE EXCHANGE FORUM**

[www.nnef.org.uk](http://www.nnef.org.uk)

**Jamie Bridge, NNEF Co-Deputy Chair**

[jamie.bridge@ihra.net](mailto:jamie.bridge@ihra.net)

**Helen Wilks – NNEF Co-Chair**

[helen.wilks@nhs.net](mailto:helen.wilks@nhs.net)

