

The impact of Covid on people using IMS reporting services

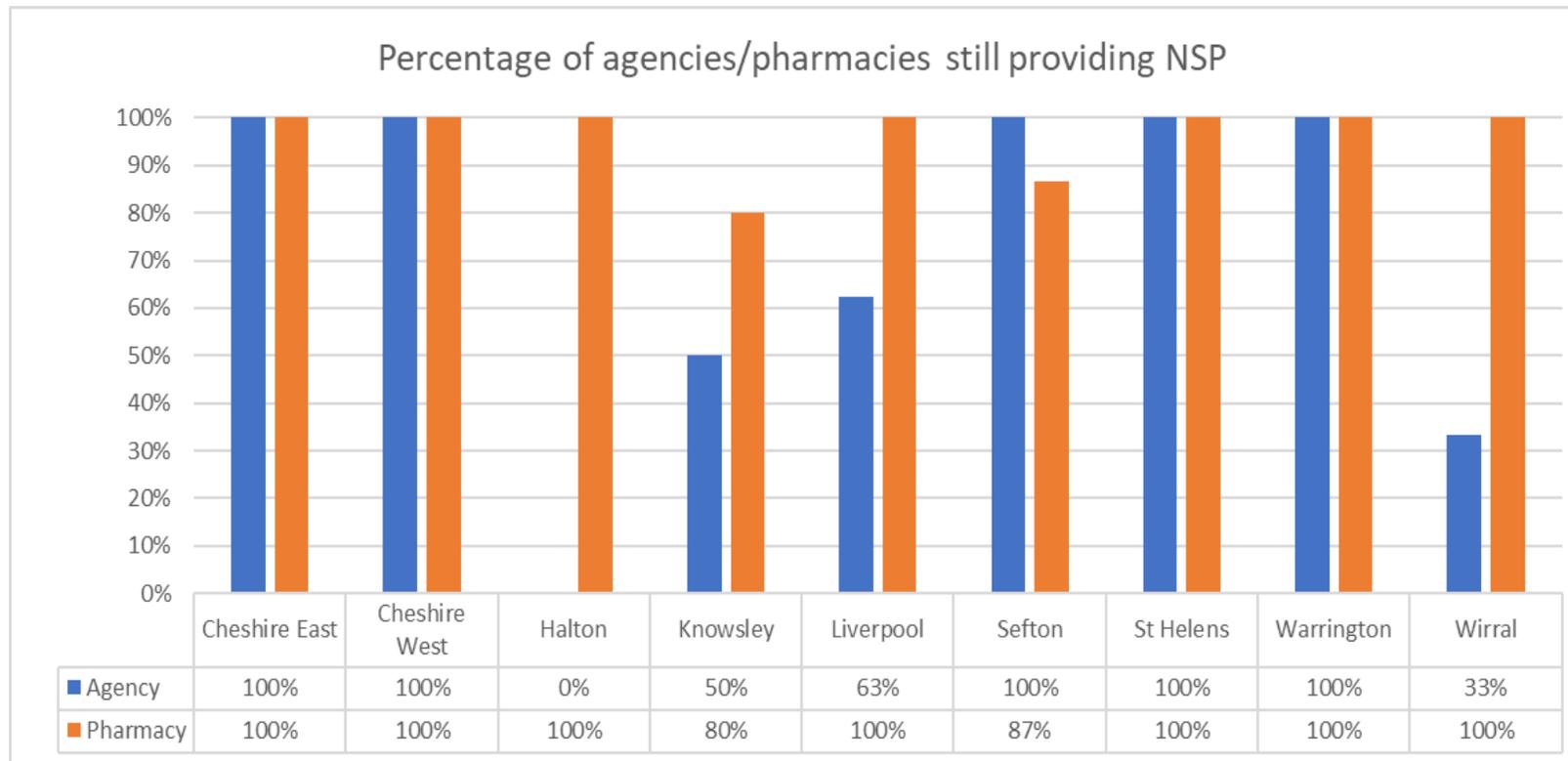
What we did

- During the first Covid-19 lockdown from **March 2020** we completed a telephone survey to understand the impact of social distancing measures on NSP provision across Cheshire and Merseyside.
- **March 2020 – May 2021:** pop up survey for clients using services asking about symptoms and the impact of lockdown/social distancing measures.
- **April 2020 – current:** introduced weekly (until end of third lockdown) NSP reports monitoring the impact on activity.
- **May 2021 – current:** introduced pop up survey on vaccine take-up from client group.

Telephone survey with IMS reporting services

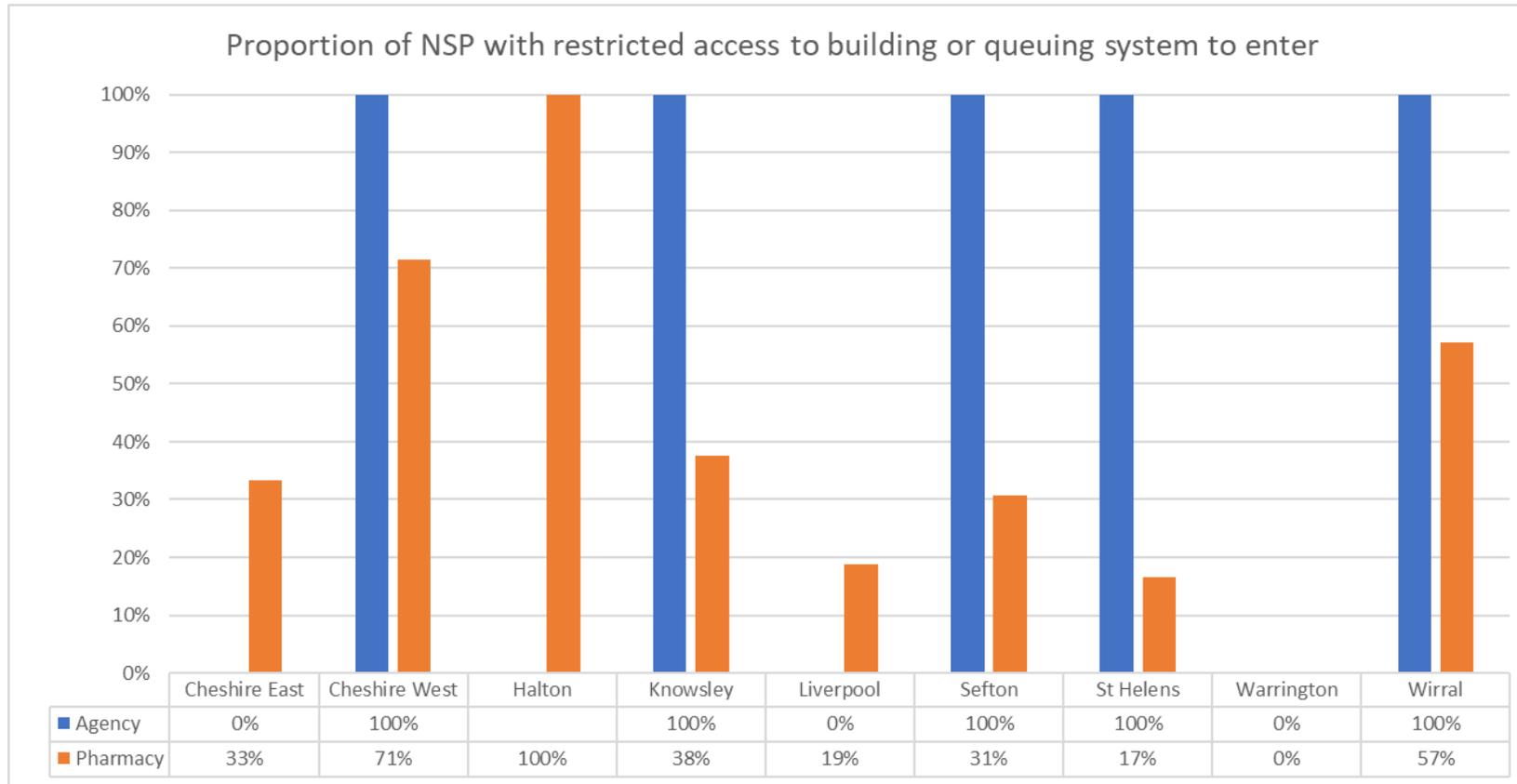
- Wanted to look at how restrictions from March 23rd 2020 affected service delivery
- Contacted mixture of pharmacy and agency services – able to contact 98% of all offering NSP
- Questions asked around restrictions in store/on site, changes to opening hours, changes to availability of equipment

Telephone survey with IMS reporting services

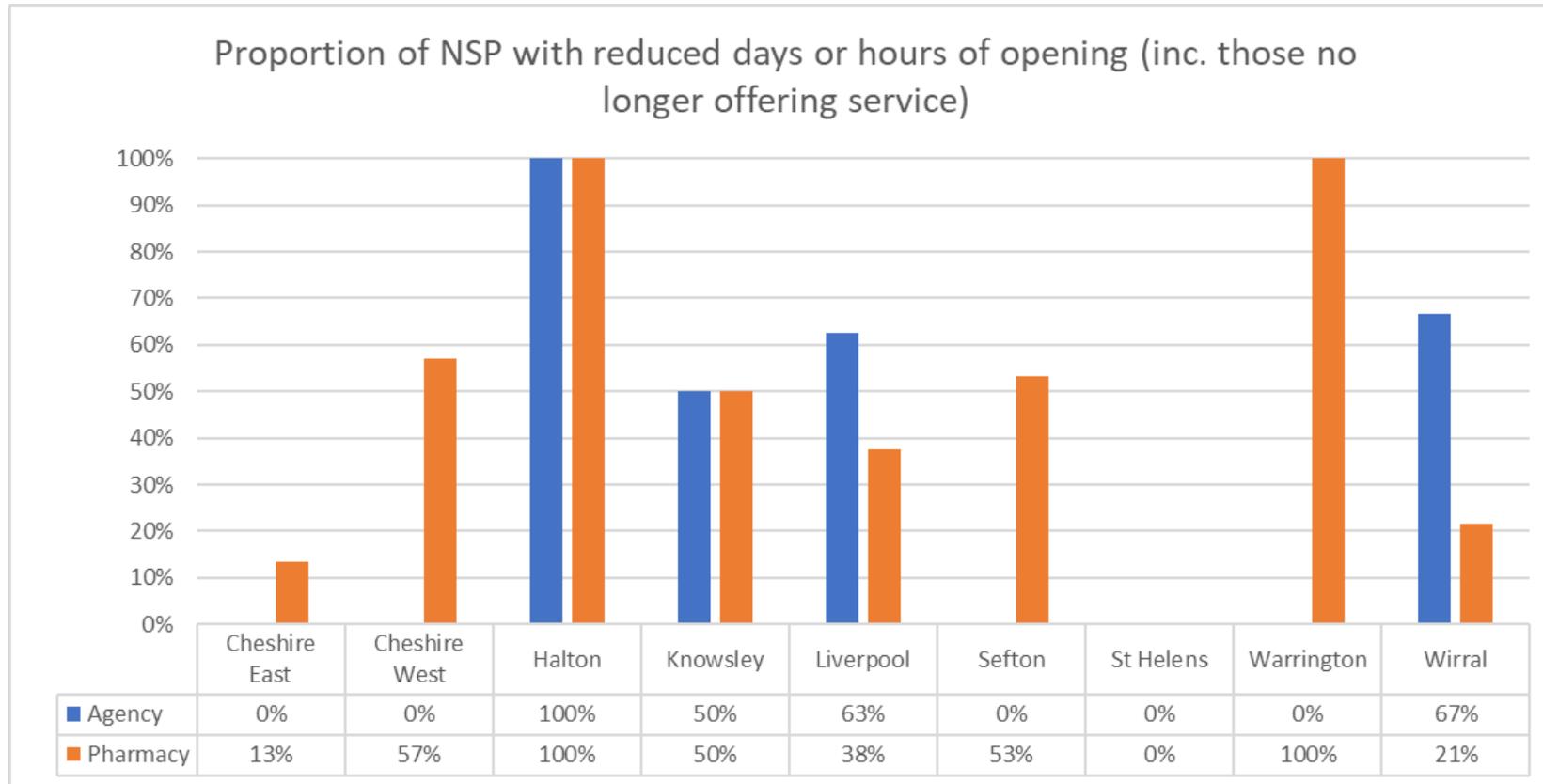


Nb – Halton reported following this survey that provision of agency-based NSP continued throughout the pandemic

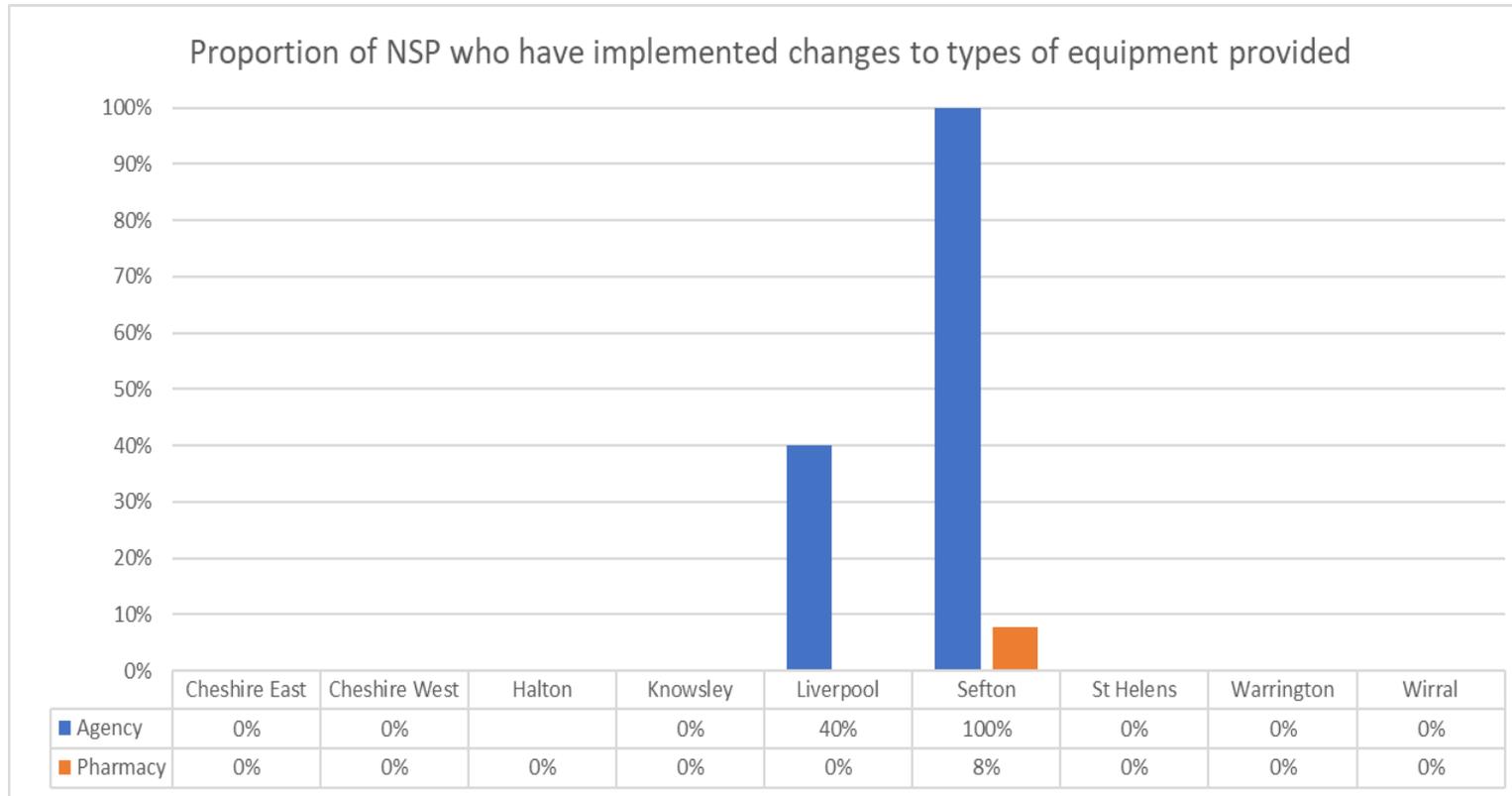
Telephone survey with IMS reporting services



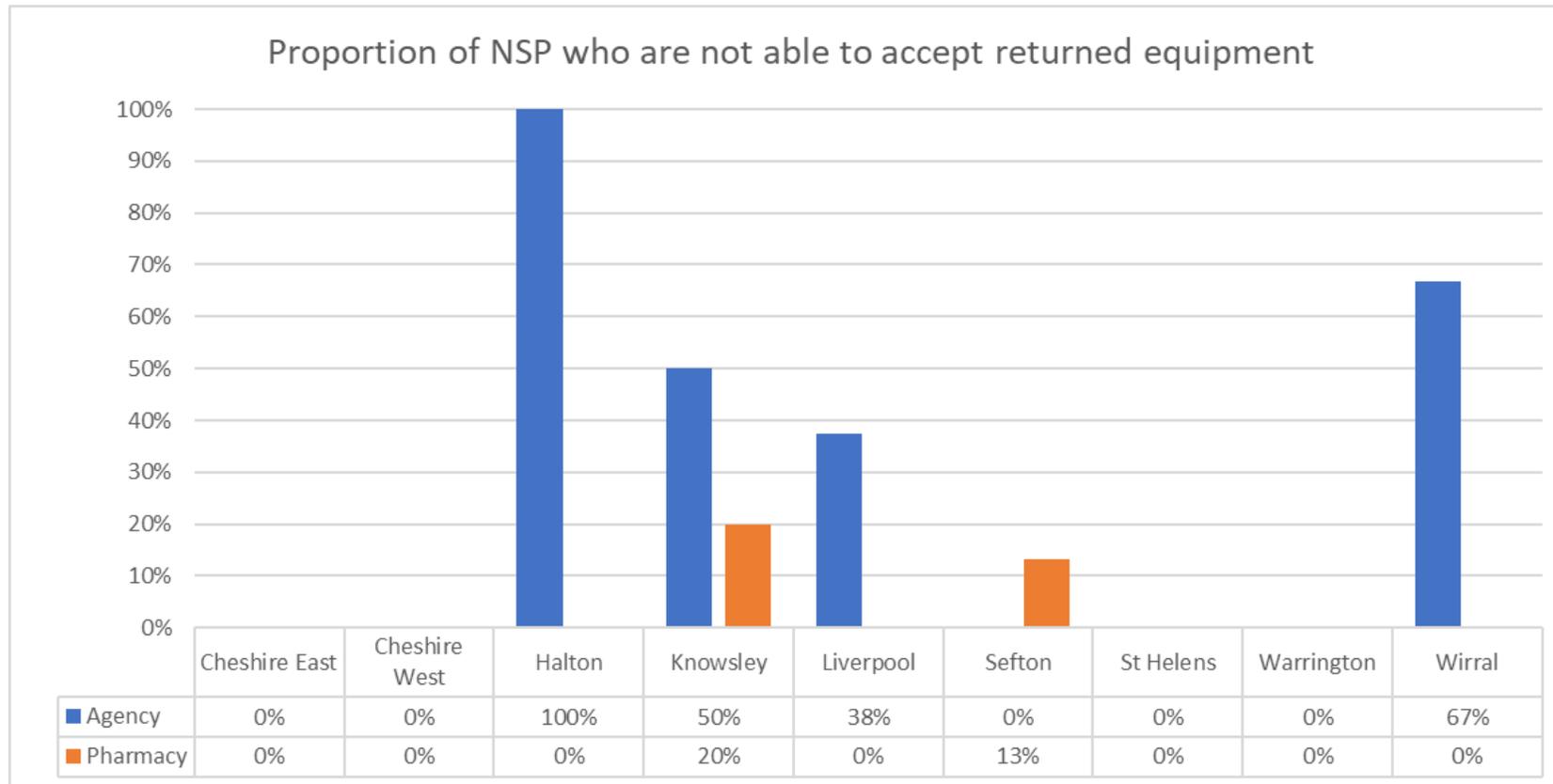
Telephone survey with IMS reporting services



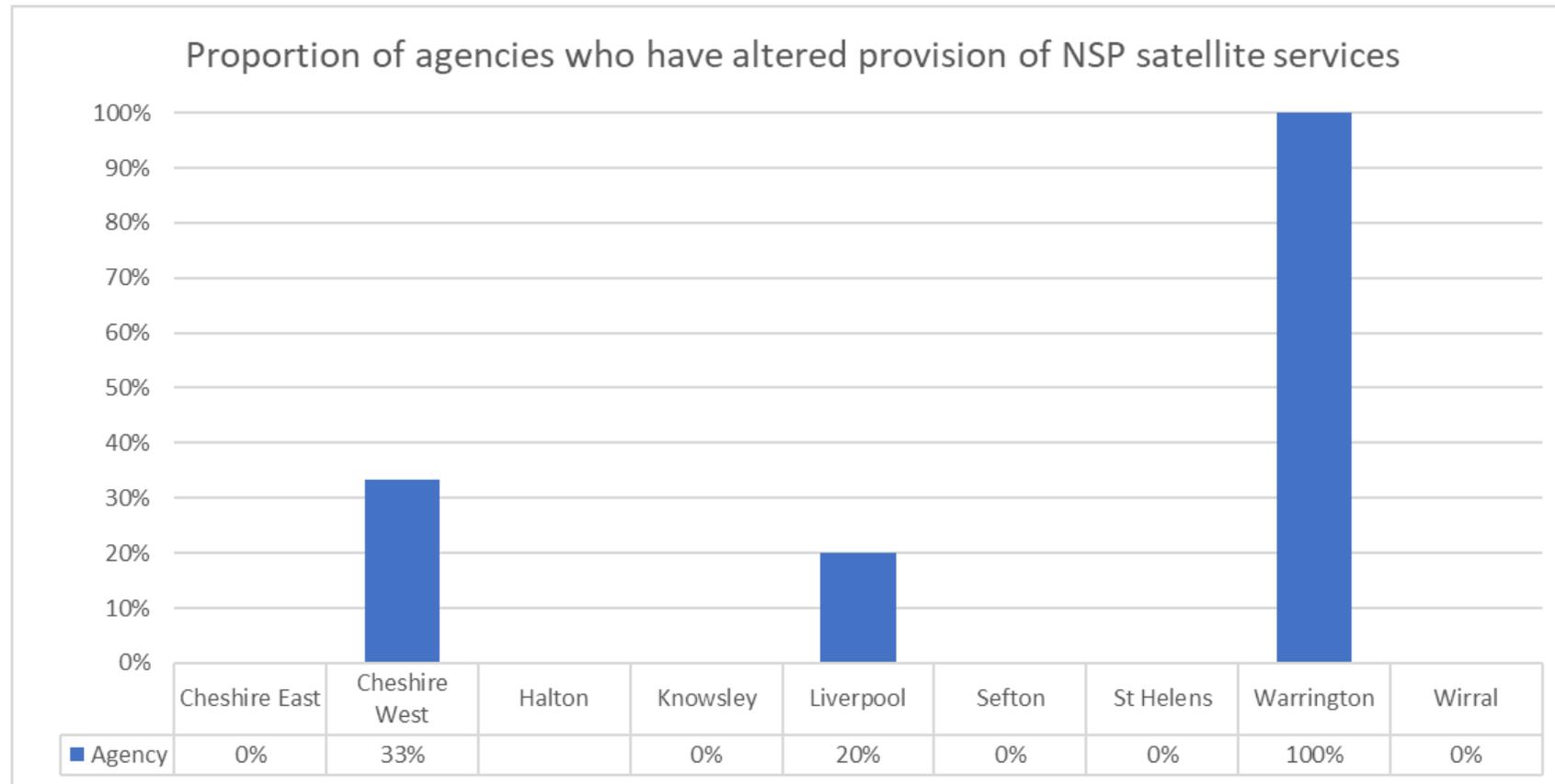
Telephone survey with IMS reporting services



Telephone survey with IMS reporting services



Telephone survey with IMS reporting services



IMS data used in journals

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Short Report

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on needle and syringe programme provision and coverage in England

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ABSTRACT

Background: The restrictions introduced in response to COVID-19 present many challenges, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised populations. These include maintaining access to Needle and Syringe Programmes (NSPs) to reduce the harms associated with injecting drugs. NSPs effectiveness is coverage dependent, but lockdowns and social distancing limit NSP access and availability. The impact on NSP provision in England is explored using enhanced monitoring data.

Method: Data collected through an established comprehensive regional monitoring system from five four-week periods, centred on the implementation of restrictions in the UK in mid-March 2020, are examined. Weekly averages are compared to allow for public holidays and weekly variation in activity.

Results: The restrictions resulted in the number of NSP clients decreasing by 36%, visits by 36%, and needles distributed by 29%. NSP coverage for those injecting psychoactive drugs halved, declining from 14 needles per-week during the 4-weeks to 15th March 2020 to 7 needles per-week by mid-April, and coverage has remained at this level since then.

Conclusions: Though it is currently unclear if there has been a decline in injecting, the decline in NSP coverage is so marked that it almost certainly reflects decreased utilisation among those in need, indicating increased equipment reuse and risk.

Introduction

The current novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic presents many challenges, the impacts of which are particularly experienced by vulnerable and marginalised populations, including those who use drugs (Marsden, et al., 2020). One of these challenges is maintaining safe injection practice through the sufficient provision of sterile needles and syringes to people who inject drugs (Bartholomew, Nakamura, Metsch, & Tookes, 2020).

hygiene, and so reduce the risk of blood-borne viral infections, SSTIs and other harms, such as overdose (Jones, Pickering, Sumnall, McVeigh, & Bellis, 2010; NICE, 2014). To be effective they should be available in settings that are easy for people who use drugs to access, with NSPs provided through specialist services, mobile units, community pharmacies, vending machines and emergency departments. In the UK NSP provision is widespread, with the predominant mode of delivery being community pharmacies, though provision through stand-alone specialist services for people who use drugs is also common

ADDICTION

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scientific importance of guarding treatment fidelity, while an international certification system has been developed and disseminated *c.f.* [14].

Finally, the authors [1] suggest that in countries such as Japan, CRAFT has not been subjected to evaluation and research. These findings are frequently submitted to Japanese journals and therefore easily overlooked by Western researchers. In Japan, CRAFT has been used to serve CSOs of individuals with alcohol problems [15], autism-spectrum disorder [16], and 'hikikomori' (social isolation) [17]. A CRAFT review, including Japanese studies, is currently in preparation.

Declaration of interests

H.G.R. and R.J.M. receive honoraria for providing CRAFT workshops at universities, mental health/addiction/forensic institutes, conferences, and (local) city governments. In addition, both authors receive royalties from publishers for scientific books and chapters. Y.T. reports no conflicts of interest.

Keywords addiction, Community reinforcement and family training, gambling, meta-analysis, treatment integrity, treatment resistance.

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RESPONSE TO MARSDEN ET AL (2020): MITIGATION FOR THE IMPACTS ON NEEDLE AND SYRINGE PROGRAMMES IS NEEDED

In their recent editorial, Marsden et al. [1] highlight many



International Journal of Drug Policy findings

- Restrictions introduced presented many challenges particularly for vulnerable populations including those using NSP services.
- Data collected via regional monitoring system (IMS) over five 4-week periods around March 2020.
- Findings – number of NSP clients decreased by 36%, visits by 36% and needles distributed by 29%. Coverage for those injecting psychoactive drugs halved from 14 needles per week in 4 weeks prior to 15th March, to 7 per week by mid April. Coverage remained at this level until time of publication.
- Conclusions – unclear if reduction in injecting but decline in NSP coverage of concern with risk to reusing equipment.

Covid IMS survey April 2020 – April 2021

- Pop up box for services using IMS to record interventions
- 6 questions about symptoms and social distancing
- 33 agency based sites participated across 8 of 9 local authority areas
- Total of 2613 individuals and 11,459 surveys completed

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

Question Text

The client reported difficulties with 'social distancing' from other people? (current guidance is to stay 2 metres away)

The client reported problems accessing basic needs, such as food and toiletries?

The client reported problems accessing medicines, healthcare or harm reduction supplies (e.g. needles syringes)?

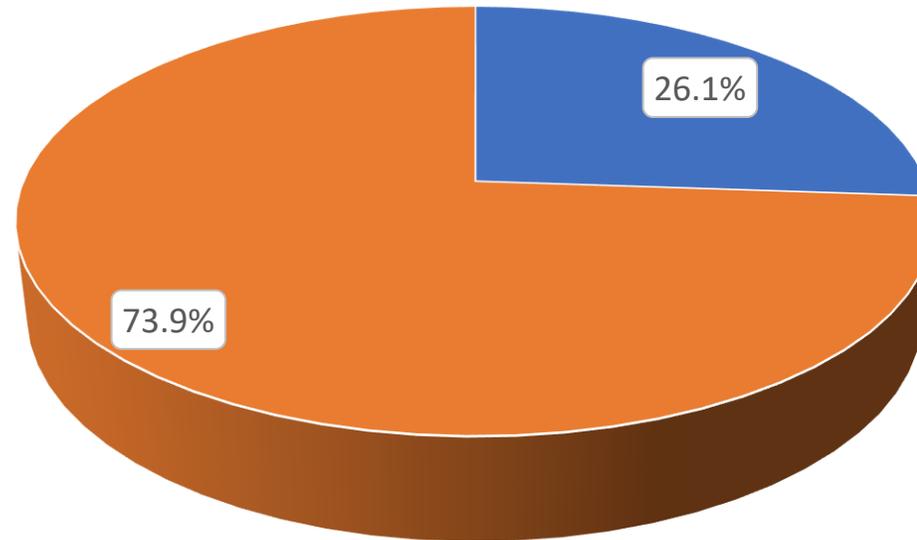
The client reported concerns about having symptoms of Coronavirus such as a persistent cough or high temperature?

The client's mental health had been affected by the current environment?

The client's alcohol/drug/tobacco use has increased, or changed, due the current environment?

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

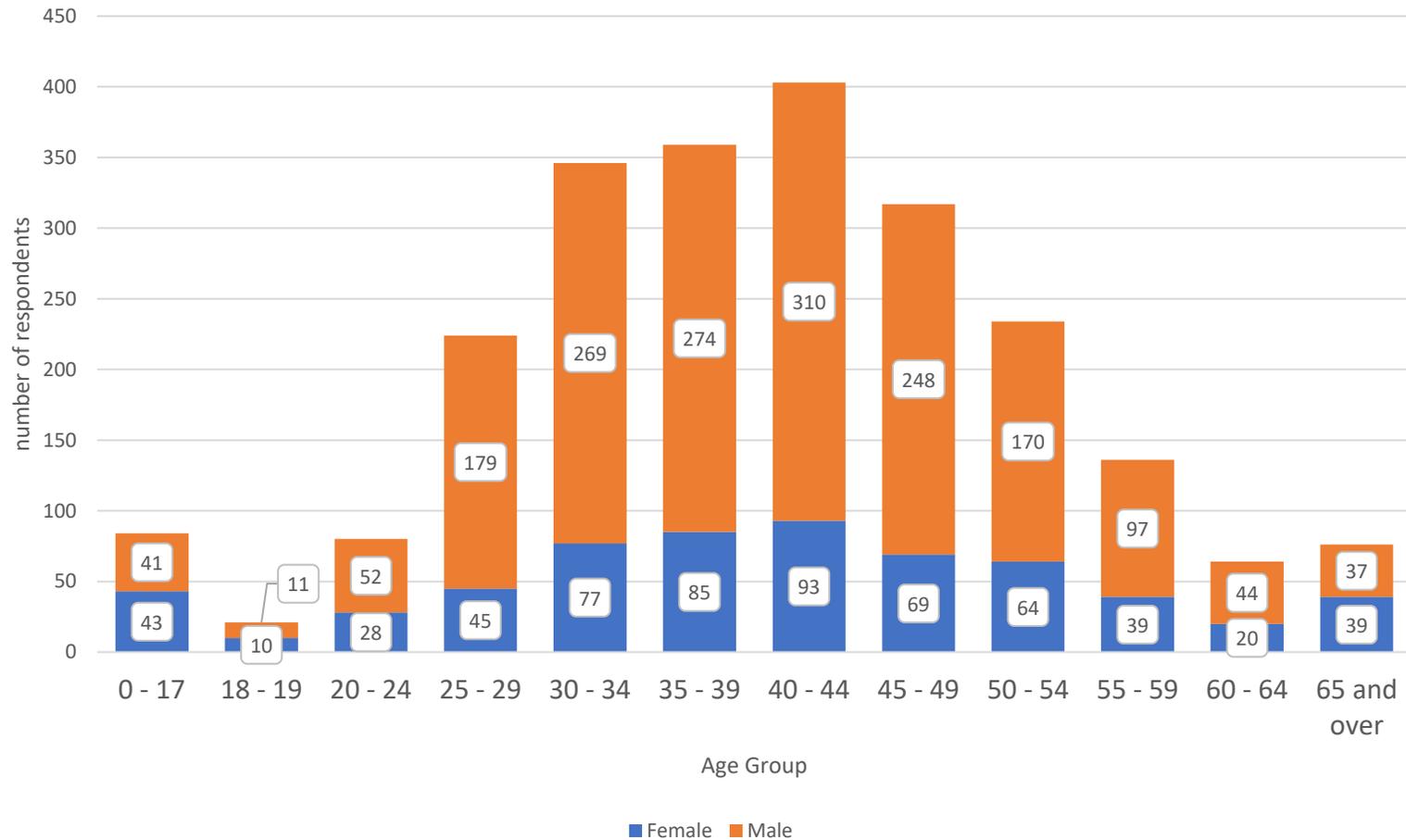
Gender of respondents



■ Female ■ Male

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

Age and gender of respondents



Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

One survey per individ (first survey)							
Survey	Yes	No	Don't k	Total	% Yes		
The client reported concerns about having symptoms of Coronaviru	39	2055	264	2358	1.7%		
The client reported difficulties with 'social distancing' from o	282	1946	130	2358	12.0%		
The client reported problems accessing basic needs, such as food	121	1948	289	2358	5.1%		
The client reported problems accessing medicines, healthcare or	83	2028	247	2358	3.5%		
The client's alcohol/drug/tobacco use has increased, or changed,	224	1581	553	2358	9.5%		
The client's mental health had been affected by the current envi	325	1590	443	2358	13.8%		

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

One survey per individ for those with 2+ surveys (first survey)

Survey	Yes	No	Don't k	Total	% Yes
The client reported concerns about having symptoms of Coronaviru	22	706	101	829	2.7%
The client reported difficulties with 'social distancing' from o	159	637	33	829	19.2%
The client reported problems accessing basic needs, such as food	67	663	99	829	8.1%
The client reported problems accessing medicines, healthcare or	47	691	91	829	5.7%
The client's alcohol/drug/tobacco use has increased, or changed,	116	550	163	829	14.0%
The client's mental health had been affected by the current envi	179	528	122	829	21.6%

One survey per individ for those with 2+ surveys (last survey)

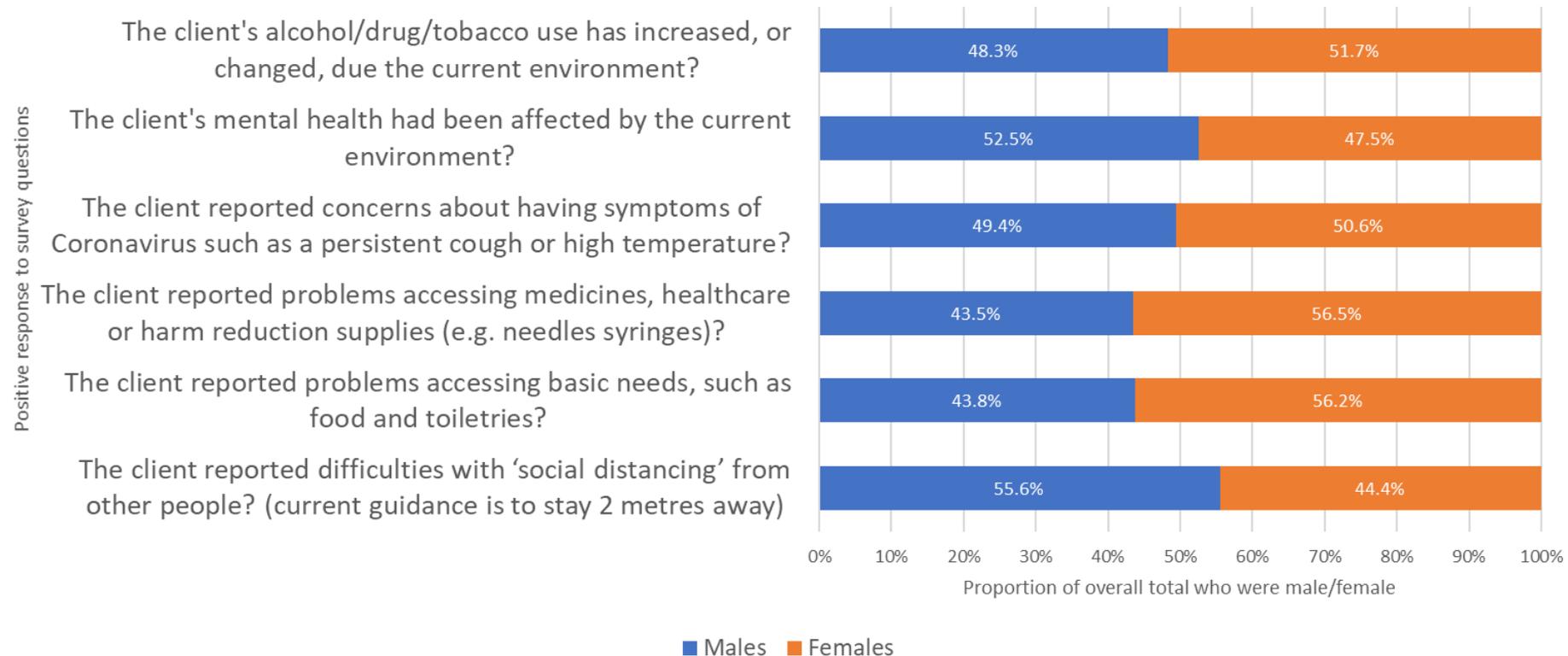
Survey	Yes	No	Don't k	Total	% Yes
The client reported concerns about having symptoms of Coronaviru	16	675	138	829	1.9%
The client reported difficulties with 'social distancing' from o	114	656	59	829	13.8%
The client reported problems accessing basic needs, such as food	53	640	136	829	6.4%
The client reported problems accessing medicines, healthcare or	33	654	142	829	4.0%
The client's alcohol/drug/tobacco use has increased, or changed,	97	541	191	829	11.7%
The client's mental health had been affected by the current envi	130	526	173	829	15.7%

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

Age	The client reported concerns about having symptoms of Coronavirus	The client reported difficulties with 'social distancing' from others	The client reported problems accessing basic needs, such as food or	The client reported problems accessing medicines, healthcare or	The client's alcohol/drug/tobacco use has increased, or changed,	The client's mental health has been affected by the current environment
0 - 17	3.6%	31.0%	4.8%	1.2%	19.0%	29.8%
18-19	9.5%	38.1%	9.5%	4.8%	23.8%	33.3%
20 - 24	1.3%	10.0%	3.8%	2.5%	3.8%	13.8%
25 - 29	1.3%	7.1%	4.5%	5.4%	5.8%	9.4%
30 - 34	1.2%	10.7%	2.9%	2.6%	6.6%	6.9%
35 - 39	0.6%	10.6%	5.3%	4.5%	9.2%	10.3%
40 - 44	2.5%	13.4%	6.2%	5.0%	12.9%	15.6%
45 - 49	0.9%	13.6%	6.6%	3.5%	12.0%	15.8%
50 - 54	1.7%	9.4%	4.7%	0.9%	8.5%	16.2%
55 - 59	2.2%	7.4%	5.1%	3.7%	7.4%	15.4%
60 - 64	1.6%	6.3%	0.0%	1.6%	6.3%	14.1%
65 and over	1.3%	11.8%	3.9%	1.3%	2.6%	17.1%

Covid survey April 2020 – April 2021

Covid 19 restrictions appear to have affected females more than males



Covid IMS survey April 2020 – April 2021

Comments from people completing survey:

“Client when intoxicated struggles to keep personal space as he wants affection from others. Staff have encouraged client to consider keeping distance for his own and other's safety.

Client expressed that he is extremely concerned about Coronavirus. It is making him paranoid and giving him anxiety. He stated that today he did not want to drink, he went to the shop for crisps and snacks and the shelves were empty which triggered a craving to drink, so he bought two bottles of vodka”

Covid IMS survey April 2020 – April 2021

Comments from people completing survey:

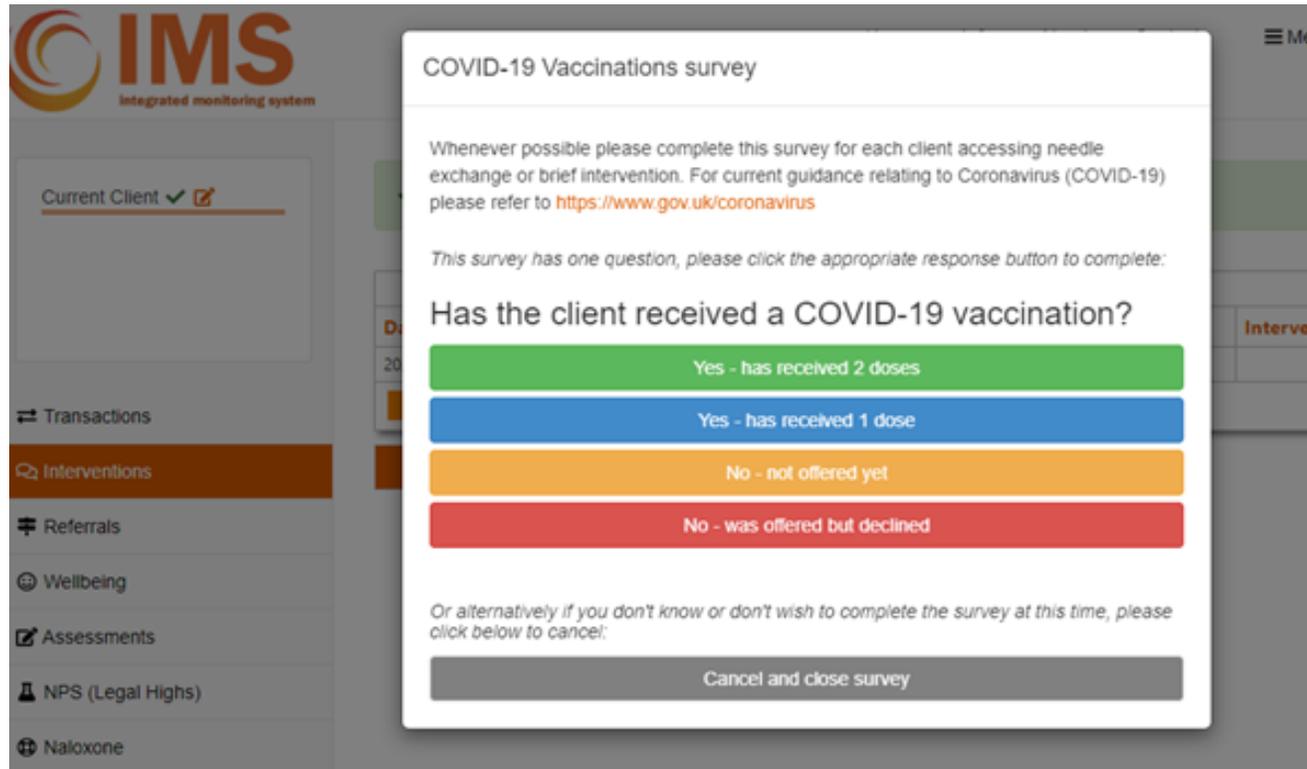
“This client who is a service user appears to have had lost a considerable amount of weight due to restricted access to food and stated that his mental health condition has deteriorated due to isolation.”

“Service user is extremely stressed about Covid-19. He has been very angry with other residents who he believes are breaking the rules and he does not want anybody to die. He states that he has been buying "tests" on the black market daily to check if he has it, and they have all said negative.”

“Client feels the need to get out her flat, as it becomes too much for her and she gets depressed... Will contact her daily to check her mental health doesn't get worse.”

Covid IMS vaccination survey May 2020 – current

- Pop up box with one question relating to vaccination status
- 28 agency based sites from 8 LA areas participated



The image shows a screenshot of the IMS (Integrated Monitoring System) interface. A pop-up window titled "COVID-19 Vaccinations survey" is displayed over the main application. The pop-up contains the following text and options:

COVID-19 Vaccinations survey

Whenever possible please complete this survey for each client accessing needle exchange or brief intervention. For current guidance relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

This survey has one question, please click the appropriate response button to complete:

Has the client received a COVID-19 vaccination?

- Yes - has received 2 doses (Green button)
- Yes - has received 1 dose (Blue button)
- No - not offered yet (Orange button)
- No - was offered but declined (Red button)

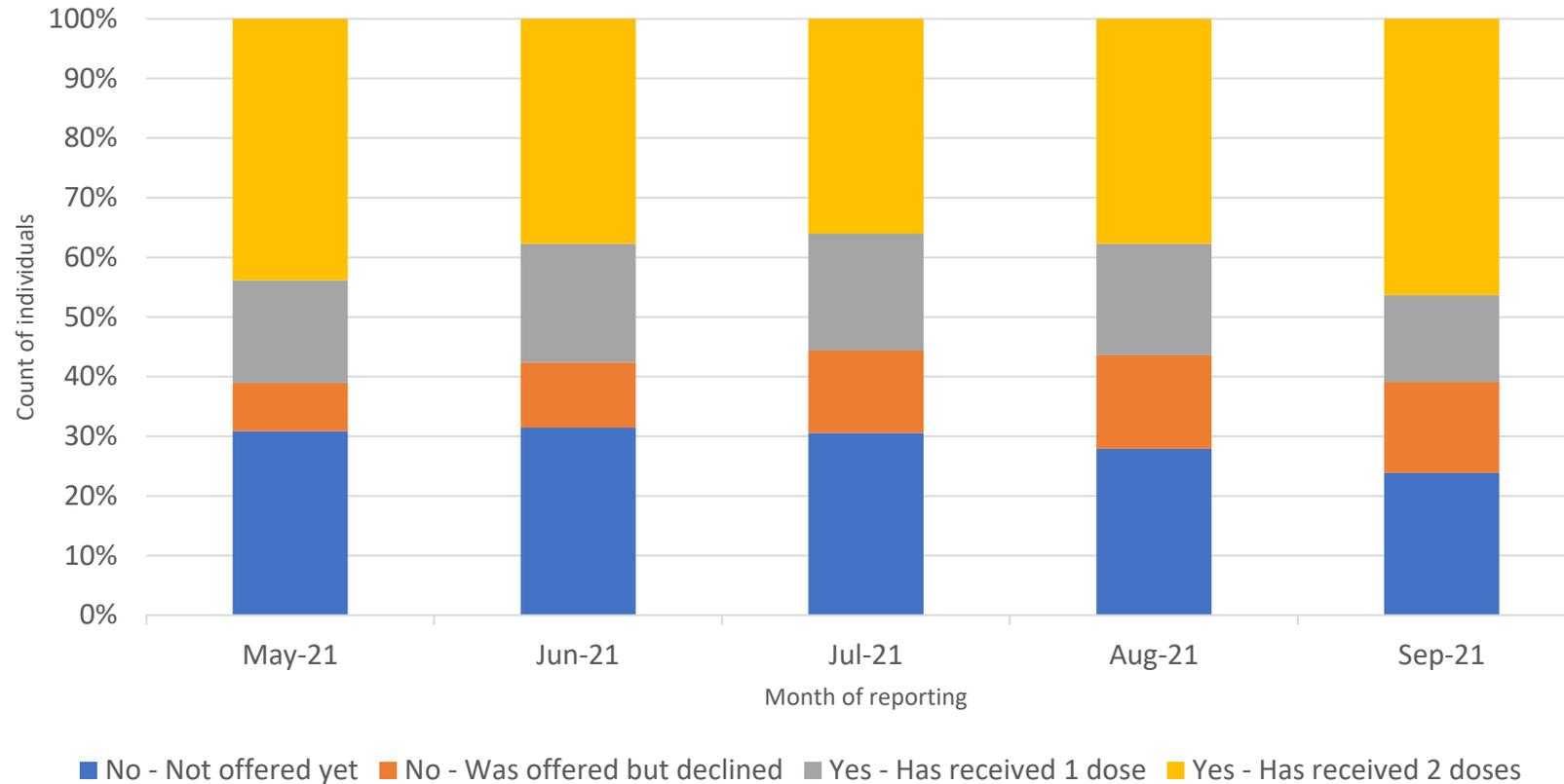
Or alternatively if you don't know or don't wish to complete the survey at this time, please click below to cancel:

Cancel and close survey (Grey button)

The background of the screenshot shows the IMS logo and a sidebar menu with items like "Current Client", "Transactions", "Interventions", "Referrals", "Wellbeing", "Assessments", "NPS (Legal Highs)", and "Naloxone".

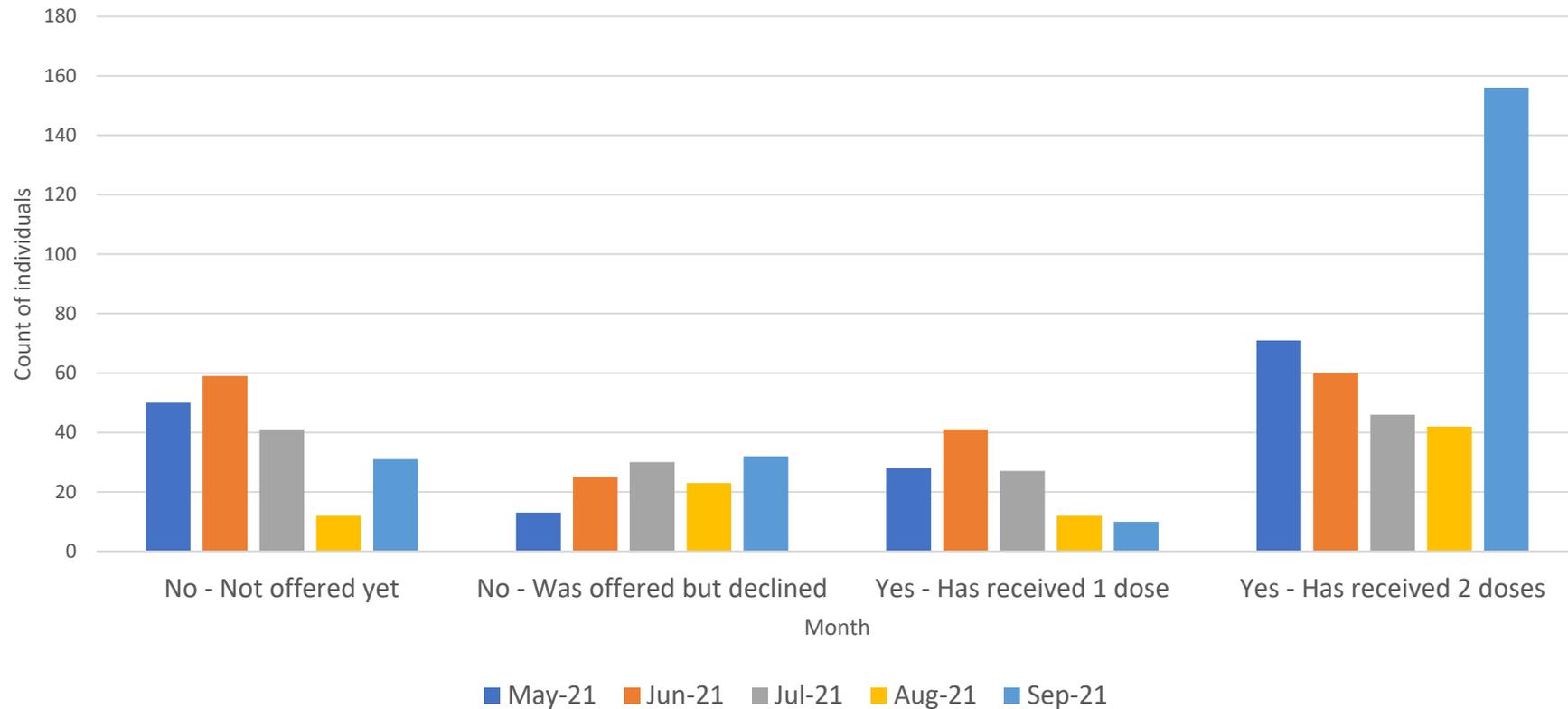
Covid IMS vaccination survey May 2020 – current

Vaccination status, IMS survey responses 2021



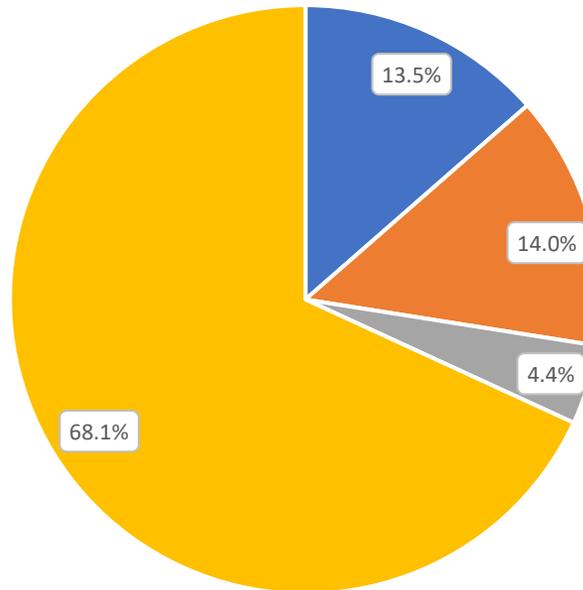
Covid IMS vaccination survey May 2020 – current

Vaccination status, IMS survey responses 2021



Covid IMS vaccination survey May 2020 – current

Proportion of individuals vaccinated - September 2021



■ No - Not offered yet ■ No - Was offered but declined ■ Yes - Has received 1 dose ■ Yes - Has received 2 doses

In summary

- Social distancing restrictions introduced at beginning of pandemic impacted access to NSP services.
- Use of NSP declined across both cohort groups.
- Examples of impact on mental health and drinking.
- Younger people and females appear to have been affected most by the impact of restrictions.
- Vaccination take-up has largely mirrored general population across UK but increasing numbers declining, and around 14% still say haven't been offered.