

14<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Dear Community Pharmacy Colleague,

**RE: NESI – The Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative**

Glasgow Caledonian University, in collaboration with Public Health Scotland and the West of Scotland Specialist Virology Centre, is launching the 9<sup>th</sup> round of NESI (2025-26).

NESI is a biennial survey of people who inject drugs attending needle exchanges across Scotland. Since 2008, it has provided vital data on blood-borne viruses and risk behaviours to inform policy and services. The study has NHS ethics and R&D approval. Results from previous rounds of the survey have been published by Public Health Scotland and are available at:

<https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/needle-exchange-surveillance-initiative-nesi/needle-exchange-surveillance-initiative-nesi-13-august-2024/>.

NHS Grampian is a long-term supporter of NESI and fully endorses this round, which aims to recruit up to 160 participants locally.

**We are seeking your support for the study by hosting trained NESI interviewers at your Community Pharmacy.** Your service has been selected to take part in the study based on its client throughput and/or to ensure good geographical coverage.

**What's involved:**

- A trained interviewer will invite clients attending for needle exchange and/or opioid substitution treatment to participate in the study
- After obtaining informed consent, the interviewer will conduct a one-to-one questionnaire with the participant (~15 minutes to complete) containing questions on demography, drug use, risk behaviours and uptake of services
- The interviewer will also take a blood spot sample from the participant, which will be tested for blood-borne viruses (HCV/HIV/HBV)
- Participants who wish to know their BBV status will be directed to the appropriate service for a named test
- The survey is confidential and the participant will only need to provide minimal personal identifiers (i.e. date of birth and initials)
- Participants will be offered a **£20** Love2Shop voucher for taking part in the study
- A private space to complete the questionnaire and blood spot sample will be required

If you are **unable** to host NESI trained interviewers within your service, then please let us know by **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026**. Otherwise, we will be in touch to arrange a suitable schedule with you to host the trained interviewers from week beginning **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2026 onwards**.

Thank you for your continued support for NESI. If you have any queries, please contact Dr Norah Palmateer ([norah.palmateer@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:norah.palmateer@gcu.ac.uk) / 07979004363).

Yours sincerely,

Phil Mackie, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Grampian  
Lucy Skea, Lead Specialist Pharmacist in Substance & Medicines Use, NHS Grampian  
Dr Norah Palmateer, Reader in Public Health, Glasgow Caledonian University