

Gaps in Britain's harm reduction defences of the kind previously highlighted in **FINDINGS 1** are permitting a minor **resurgence in HIV infection**. The most compelling findings were reported by researchers from the Health Protection Agency and the Centre for Research on Drugs and Health Behaviour. **2** To model HIV spread from 1990 to 2003 they combined the results of HIV tests on injectors attending drug services in England and Wales with tests on injectors recruited on the street and in non-treatment locations. The proportion infected with HIV bottomed out at 0.5% in 1999 but then more than doubled in the first years of the new millennium, reaching over 1.5%. In each year of the 2000s injectors were two to three times more likely to be infected than in the mid '90s. Though numbers were very small, there was an increase in the proportion of new (under three years) injectors who had become infected. The rate at which injectors became seropositive was greatest among new injectors in London, where it had increased since the late '90s to around 3% in the first year of injecting. In UK terms (modest compared to other nations), the figures were consistent with an upsurge in new infections since 1999 focused on London. Other reports indicate that most of the newly diagnosed infections in the capital involved injectors from mainland Europe.

Though this report was reassuring about trends outside London, later tests on injectors attending drug services revealed that outside the capital there had been a six-fold increase in HIV prevalence from 0.2% in 2002 to 1.2% in 2005. **3** Though the numbers were small, nationally over the same period the proportion of new (last three years) injectors infected had increased from 0.3% to 1.3%, consistent with a recently increased rate of spread.

1 Ashton M. "Hepatitis C and needle exchange: part 3 • the British record." *Drug and Alcohol Findings*: 2004, 10, p. 22–29.

2 Hope V.D. *et al.* "HIV prevalence among injecting drug users in England and Wales 1990 to 2003: evidence for increased transmission in recent years." *AIDS*: 2005, 19(11), p. 1207–1214.

3 Health Protection Agency. "Evidence of a continuing increase in the HIV prevalence among injecting drug users in England and Wales." *CDR Weekly*: 16 March 2006, 16(11).