

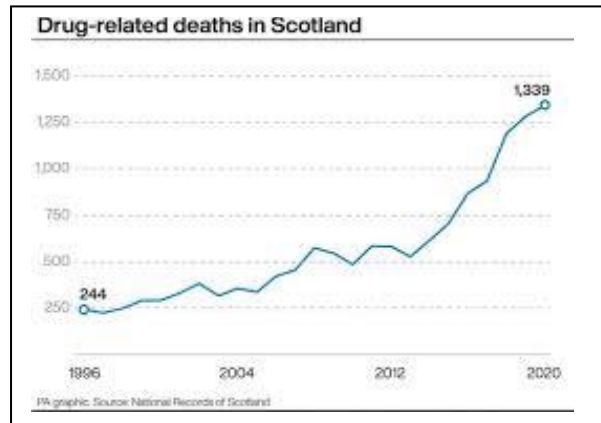
Fact Sheet 4

NALOXONE

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a medicine that can reverse the effects of opioid drugs such as heroin or methadone. It is a first aid intervention that temporarily stops the effects of opioid drugs and can legally be administered by anyone.¹ It presents no threat to the person administering.

This means that when a person has overdosed when taking an opioid, Naloxone could be used to re-establish normal breathing within minutes of receiving a treatment. It can be administered either through the nose via a nasal spray (a preferred option due to ease of administration), or it can be injected into somebody's veins or muscles.



Drug Related Deaths in Scotland

Naloxone has been used in other countries, such as in Northern Ireland where the ambulance service has been trained to administer the drug since 2017². Scotland was the first country in the world to introduce a National Naloxone programme, which the Scottish Government funded from 2011 to 2016.

Purpose

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment. To meet these demands now and in the future Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012).

This series of public focused and user-friendly factsheets has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.

¹ <https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drug/naloxone-hydrochloride.html>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-51179028>

£1 million was allocated for the national initiative.

This programme marked a significant shift in addressing problem drug use from a criminal justice approach to a public health one. It highlighted Scotland's desire to tackle its unique relationship with drugs with a direct and compassionate response.

Following this, many Scottish councils have begun introducing Naloxone into their policies. Aberdeen City Council³ and Stirling Council⁴ have trained many of their staff to administer Naloxone. Glasgow's homeless units are now issued with the medication⁵; and the 'Take Home Naloxone Project' in Dundee has been applauded for its effort to reduce harm associated with problem drug use⁶.

Why is Naloxone used in policing?

Over the past 20 years, Scotland has seen a rise in social harm associated with alcohol and drug use. The number of drug related deaths in 2020 increased by 5% compared to the previous year (1,264 in 2019 to 1,339 in 2020)⁷. 87% of these deaths were related to opioid overdose. This figure represents the highest number since records began in 1996, and is double the amount of

deaths 10 years prior (in 2009, 545 drug-related deaths were recorded)⁸.

Notably, deaths associated with heroin and morphine use reached the highest numbers yet in 2019. Many have called for a public health response to Scotland's drug use "crisis" to tackle this growing area of concern⁹. In July 2019, The Scottish Government established a Drugs Death Taskforce to address the rising number of deaths.



A Naloxone nasal spray kit

Following this, Police Scotland convened the Naloxone Delivery Steering Group on 12 March 2020. The Group aims to directly respond to the increase of recorded opioid overdoses and to understand the community benefits of frontline police officers carrying Naloxone.

³ <https://news.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council-staff-to-be-able-to-administer-medicine-to-counter-suspected-drug-overdoses/>

⁴ <https://my.stirling.gov.uk/news/2020/december-2020/council-approves-life-saving-first-aid-training/>

⁵ <https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/glasgow-news/glasgow-council-drug-deaths-naloxone-17064854>

⁶ https://www.dundee.gov.uk/news/article?article_ref=3876

⁷ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/drug-related-deaths/2019/drug-related-deaths-19-pub.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/drug-related-deaths/drd2009/j1206604.htm>

⁹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmselect/44/44.pdf>

Police Scotland implementation and use of Naloxone

Police Scotland began training officers in March 2021 and the pilot for use commenced in May 2021. The 6-month pilot phase will equip officers in Falkirk, Dundee City, and Glasgow East with nasal spray kits to administer to people who have overdosed during opioid drug use, enabling officers to potentially save lives. This pilot will allow Police Scotland to fully assess the potential benefits of equipping frontline officers with Naloxone.



How Police Scotland officers carry Naloxone

The programme will train officers to effectively recognise indications of overdoses, as well as how to administer the nasal spray to victims. There have been a number of notable successes since the trial began. On Saturday 27 March 2021, a volunteer Police Scotland special constable gave two doses of the nasal spray to somebody who had collapsed and was suspected of overdosing¹⁰. Two days later the

¹⁰ <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2021/april/volunteer-police-scotland-officer-saves-a-life-after-naloxone-training/>

¹¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmselect/44/44.pdf>

overdose patient was discharged from hospital.



A Police Scotland officer carrying Naloxone

The House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee found evidence that treating drugs as a criminal justice matter overwhelmingly demonstrates that the current approach is counterproductive¹¹. Instead, many have proposed that Scotland should be open to implement innovative evidence-based solutions to address the issue of problem drug use¹².

According to the Scottish Drugs Forum, Scottish Government statistics state there are approximately 56,000 people with a drug problem involving opiates (mainly heroin) or benzodiazepines (valium-like drugs) in Scotland¹³.

¹² Dickie E et al. Drugs related deaths narrative rapid evidence review: Keeping people safe. Edinburgh: NHS Health Scotland; 2017

¹³ <http://www.sdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/SDF-Scot-Aff-Com->

What safeguards are in place?

Police Scotland has a duty of care towards all citizens of our country. When thinking about individuals in need of emergency first aid, Police Scotland recognises the public expectation and obligation to save life.

From a human rights perspective, Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Human Rights Act 1998 is the 'Right to Life'. By employing a human rights based approach to address social harm, the administering of Naloxone by officers to people who have overdosed should be recognised as a first aid response to preserve life.

This legal duty is also detailed within the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

In Section 32 'policing principles' – The main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland; and in Section 20 'general duties' – It is the duty of a constable to prevent and detect crime; to maintain order; and to protect life and property.

Last year, Public Health Minister Joe Fitzpatrick MSP noted; "Across Scotland, and probably particularly in rural areas, police will be the first

Problem-Drug-Use-in-Scotland-Apr-2019-SDF-Response.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.sdf.org.uk/positive-noises-being-made-towards-scottish-police-officers-carrying-naloxone/>

people to come across someone who is experiencing an overdose"¹⁴.

The World Health Organisation state; "any person that is likely to come into contact with a person who is likely to overdose, should carry naloxone" and have listed police as one of the emergency services likely to come into contact with such a person.

The chair of the Scottish Government Drug Deaths Taskforce, Professor Catriona Matheson applauded the Test of Change pilot; "Well done to Police Scotland for its ambition to contribute positively to addressing Scotland's dreadful levels of drug-related deaths"¹⁵.

Assurance for citizens

Following the pilot a comprehensive evaluation will be undertaken by a group of independent academics from Edinburgh Napier and Glasgow Caledonian Universities. Oversight and reporting procedures of the trial programme will allow the assessment of processes and implementation. By forming a robust evidence base to determine the effectiveness of the Naloxone pilot trials, the SPA can then consider carefully any plans to widen the roll out.

Looking forward

¹⁵ <https://www.scotland.police.uk/what-s-happening/news/2020/december/partnership-funding-facilitates-officers-for-police-scotland-naloxone-pilot-project/>

Police Scotland remains committed to improving the safety and wellbeing of people across the country. Clearly, given the recent increase in drug related deaths, there is a need to drive change in how drug related harm is addressed in Scotland.

Public bodies, particularly frontline responders, must consider new approaches to tackling the crisis.

The Naloxone project trialled by Police Scotland is an acute response to what was described by the Scottish Government as a 'public health emergency'.

By developing appropriate harm-reducing measures to tackle problem drug use, the pilot project has the potential to be a new chapter in how Scotland handles its relationship with drugs.

Further reading

You can find out more about Police Scotland's [Naloxone Test of Change Steering Group](#).

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority's [website](#) where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter:

@ScotPolAuth @policescotland

Date published: October 2021