



Drug Related Harm Communication to Staff

Highland Local Authority Area

The illicit drug market is changing and becoming more dangerous, with drugs producing strong sedative effects, increasing the risk of overdose.

This is happening in a local and national context of existing significant harm. 42 people lost their lives to drug use in Highland in 2022, an increase of 7 deaths from 2021. This is the highest annual total on record. Female deaths account for an increasing proportion of deaths over time in Highland. People in the most deprived areas are far more likely to be affected by drug related harms, including death.

In response, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) wants to mitigate against drug related harms. To this end, we are working in partnership to coordinate plans and responses. Public Health Scotland are supporting this work from a national perspective.

Rapid Action Drug Alerts and Response (RADAR) is Scotland's Drugs Early Warning System. It provides a structured way to collect, assess and communicate information about drugs, identifying risks quickly and informing rapid action to reduce harm and save lives.

RADAR have issued 3 alerts about drugs of concern and their harms to date. You can read the full alert, or the one-minute summary at these links:

Xylazine	Bromazolam	Nitazenes
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Risks from these drugs are significant. Harm reduction is important to reduce risk as far as possible.

What all services can do:

- Share intelligence with [RADAR](#)
- Download the HOPE app and/or encourage service users to do so. The HOPE app contains harm reduction advice.

Android: <https://bit.ly/3tawMkA> | Apple: <https://apple.co/39XfjEi>

To promote the HOPE App, resources are available from [HIRS](#) for free. Search 'HOPE'. Our *Save a Life. How to respond to a drugs overdose* leaflet will come up in a 'HOPE' search.

- Naloxone can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose providing time for emergency services to attend. Anyone can legally administer Naloxone in an emergency to save a life.
 - [HADASS](#), [DARS](#) and [SFAD](#) all offer Naloxone training and supply.

- Community pharmacies can supply Naloxone for emergency use (not take-home supply). All community pharmacy staff should be trained to deliver Naloxone in an emergency.
- If in touch with people who use drugs, encourage testing and treatment for [Hepatitis C](#)

What services should be aware of, and can do to support people:

Drug related harms may be more prevalent at this time.

This might present as severe wounds or skin damage, with recent concerns of amputation. SDF have released [Wound Advice](#) for staff which may be helpful.

The threat of violence, or violence is increased from drug dealers.

Due to sedative effects of drugs, people with drug problems may be less visible than normal at your service. Maintaining contact is a protective factor. You may wish to liaise with other services about common service users / patients.

Support people into recovery services; this is a protective factor for overdose. Encourage people to engage with [DARS](#) or [HADASS](#). In addition, details of other drug and alcohol services in Highland are available in: [Service Directory](#).

A Living Experience group is available, in Inverness, for people using drugs and alcohol, and is run by SDF. For more information contact or peerengagement@sdf.org.uk Hannah Sinclair on 07467788360.

For those working with post-natal women, whose child has been removed, be aware this is a risk factor for overdose or harm.

This may be a challenging time for family and friends of people who use drugs. Support for families is available from [SFAD](#).

Eve MacLeod, HADP Co-ordinator

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