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**Briefing on Drug Related Deaths Drugs**

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Tragically the number of people who are dying from a drug related death in Borders and Scotland are still high. For each person who loses their life, they leave behind grieving family, friends and possibly children.

Borders ADP is committed to reducing the number of accidental drug related deaths in Borders. As part of their reduction strategy the ADP is including this briefing sheet in delegates pack for all training events during 2025-26

**What is my role?**

All of us can take a role in preventing drug related deaths. Please read the important information below and use it to help identify if the people you work with could be at risk of overdose.

**Risk factors**

Some of the main causes of overdose include:

- Reduced tolerance following a break or reduction in use (e.g. after a period in prison or residential rehabilitation)
- Mixing drugs can increase risk of overdose including alcohol (including prescribed medications)
- Previous experience of an overdose
- Poor physical health
- Using too much (circumstances such as increased funds or depression can lead to using too much)
- Using alone (no one to intervene or seek medical assistance)
- Mode of administration: Injecting drug use is generally riskier than other forms of administration but overdose can occur with any method
- Variation in strength and content (illegal drugs can vary in strength, using low purity drugs followed by higher purity drugs may have implications for tolerance levels)

## **Risk times**

The following have been identified as high-risk times when people would be more at risk of overdose and death:

- On release from prison (especially short sentences)
- On leaving residential rehabilitation or hospital
- When recently had detoxification ('detox')
- Recently relapsed
- When in poor physical or mental health (including respiratory infections)
- After a recent life event, such as bereavement, relationship breakdown or loss of custody of children

## **Take Home Naloxone**

Naloxone is a medication which can be used to temporarily reverse an opioid (e.g. heroin) overdose to allow emergency help to arrive. Take Home Naloxone is available to anyone at risk of opiate overdose or their family and friend from: Borders Addiction Service, WithYou Borders and all Injecting Equipment Providers ('needle exchanges'). With the emergence of synthetic opioids such as [Nitazenes](#), we recommend carrying at least two naloxone kits. Click [HERE](#) for more information on where to access take home naloxone kits.

## **Training**

E-learning on overdose prevention, intervention and Naloxone is now available via [Scottish Drugs Forum](#) and will allow you to analyse key aspects of drug-related deaths in Scotland, learn how to prevent an opiate overdose and explains what to do in the case of witnessing an opiate overdose.

By the end of the course, you will also have an understanding of the THN, where to obtain a kit and how to use it in the case of an overdose. The concise course can be completed in around an hour, or alternatively be completed in separate sittings. Please see our [website](#) for more details.

If you would like an awareness session for staff teams on overdose and risk, please email [adp.borders@borders.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:adp.borders@borders.scot.nhs.uk) and we will try to organise this

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for you.

### **Other sources of information**

Please be aware that the ADP offers a range of training and the most up to date information can be obtained from our [website](#).