



Dear Colleagues,

In recognition of International Overdose Awareness Day, Public Health England's (PHE) London Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco team is taking this opportunity to share some data, resources and guidance to support stakeholders in considering further actions to tackle Drug Related Deaths (DRDs) at a local level.

DRDs have been increasing nationally in recent years and London has also seen a large increase in the number of DRDs since 2012. Although the latest 2017 Office of National Statistics data shows that deaths have decreased this year in London compared to 2016, (215 in 2017, from 284 in 2016), more work is required to bring down the number of preventable deaths.

Nationally, heroin related deaths continue to make up the largest proportion of DRDs. Around half of all heroin deaths are among people not in treatment. Cocaine deaths have continued to rise since 2011, with another increase from 371 in 2016 to 432 in 2017. This figure includes deaths from crack cocaine and echoes the story seen elsewhere of increasing cocaine and crack availability, purity and use. Deaths from new psychoactive substances (NPS) in 2017 halved compared to the previous year, from 123 to 61, following the successful introduction of the Psychoactive Substances Act. Deaths where synthetic cannabinoids were mentioned on the death certificate were again the largest category of NPS and made up nearly half of these (24 of the 61).

Nationally, fentanyl and fentanyl-analogue related deaths have increased from 58 to 75 and 1 to 31 respectively in the latest published statistics. Many of these deaths relate to an incident of heroin adulterated with fentanyl in late 2016 and early 2017. PHE continues to coordinate a public health response to the risks of potent opioids, based on information gathered through local areas and national agencies.

Commissioners and Service Providers should consider how they can increase their efforts to reach out to those most at need. The PHE London Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco Team will continue to support local authorities (LAs) in delivering tailored, effective services where people stand the best chance of recovery.

Please contact your Programme Manager if you would like to discuss these resources further.

Data and Statistics

Office of National Statistics (ONS) Statistical Bulletins

Annual Drug Related Deaths Statistics

ONS publishes annual statistics on DRDs in England. The latest statistical bulletin detailing 2017 death registrations is available [here](#).

Drug Misuse Deaths by Local Authority data:

Borough level DRD data is published by the Office of National Statistics and this data gives information on the number of deaths in each local area [here](#).

Drug Related Deaths Deep Dive into Coroner's Records

The Office of National Statistics has also released this 'deep dive' report. This was carried out on a sample of 115 drug misuse deaths, reviewing the available records in coroner's offices in detail. The findings suggest a vulnerable at-risk population engaging in unsafe drug-taking practices such as taking drugs alone and consuming multiple types of drugs alongside alcohol. This report is available [here](#).

PHE Health Matters Blog on Drug Misuse Deaths

Following the release of the 2017 statistics PHE has produced a Health Matters Blog covering the issues raised by the statistics. The blog is available [here](#).

Guidance Documents

Fentanyl: Preparing for a Future Threat

PHE has produced guidance for local areas on planning to deal with a fentanyl or another potent opioid threat. Local areas should use these resources when preparing their response to incidents caused by fentanyl or other potent opioids. This can be done by working through existing mechanisms for emergency preparation, response and recovery, to develop a plan that can be enacted quickly in the event of an incident. Naloxone modelling information has also been provided to inform local areas of the amount of naloxone which might need to be made available to prevent opioid overdose deaths in different scenarios. These documents are available [here](#).

Fentanyl Safety Recommendations for First Responders

PHE has provided advice for first responders who may encounter fentanyl (and its analogues) in their work. It gives information on what people need to know and

actions they can take to protect themselves from exposure. The guidance is available [here](#).

Drug Alerts and Local Drug Information Systems (LDIS)

This PHE Guidance provides LAs with information and advice to support them in assessing intelligence and issuing public health alerts on new and/or novel, potent, adulterated or contaminated drugs. It suggests systems and approaches that local areas may choose to adopt, adapt or use to inform their local systems. It encourages LAs to have a local LDIS Coordinator to manage local information and with whom PHE can liaise with to disseminate regional and national alerts where appropriate. PHE encourages LAs to review this guidance and consider building on current systems to provide a robust response to drug alerts and other local intelligence. The guidance can be viewed [here](#).

Improving Clinical Responses to Drug Related Deaths: A Summary of Best Practice and Innovations from Drug Treatment Providers

Collective Voice and the NHS Substance Misuse Provider Alliance have published a set of recommendations for drug treatment providers to help improve clinical responses to drug-related deaths. Practice points covered include: the identification of risk of drug-related death; the delivery of safe, recovery-orientated drug treatment; preventing overdose in people who use drugs; meeting physical and mental health needs; and reducing the risk of drug-related death for people outside drug treatment. Read the guidance [here](#).

Understanding and Preventing Drug Related Deaths: The Report of a National Expert Working Group to Investigate Drug Related Deaths in England

PHE launched a National Inquiry in 2016 in order to better understand the factors impacting on the increase in deaths. The final report of the inquiry and recommendations arising from it is available [here](#).

PHE Drugscope DRD Summit Report (attached)

Prior to the national inquiry, PHE and Drugscope hosted a DRD summit to look at the issues impacting on the rise in DRDs, which led to the following report and recommendations. The outcomes of the summit are available [here](#).

Health Matters Blog: Preventing Drug Misuse Deaths

This online resource outlines how providers and commissioners can prevent deaths from drug misuse, as well as providing a range of infographics which can be used at a local level. The resources can be accessed [here](#).

Turning Evidence into Practice: Preventing Drug Related Deaths

This is part of a series of briefings to support commissioners and providers who want to improve the recovery orientation of their services as recommended by 'medications in recovery: re-orientating drug dependence treatment'. This briefing contains a series of prompts to consider in relation to tackling DRDs at a local level and can be found [here](#).

Local Government Association Guidance on Preventing Drug Related Deaths

This guidance provides information on preventing drug related deaths and case studies from LAs around the country on how they have dealt with the issue. The guidance is available [here](#).

Naloxone information

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is an emergency antidote to overdose which can be provided to service users at risk of overdose from heroin and other opiates/opioids. The main life-threatening effect of heroin and other opiates is to slow down and stop breathing. Naloxone blocks this effect and reverses the breathing difficulties. PHE encourage commissioners and drug treatment providers to ensure those at risk, and those who care for those at risk of overdose, are provided with take home naloxone. The National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS) has been updated to reflect whether naloxone has been provided. This will give PHE the opportunity to feedback data to you in future reports on current provision in your local area.

Take Home Naloxone for Opioid Overdose

This PHE guidance provides advice for LAs and other partners on widening the availability of naloxone to reduce overdose deaths from heroin and other opioids. This guidance is available [here](#).

Widening the Availability of Naloxone

This briefing covers the current advice on how LAs and providers of drug treatment can provide naloxone to those who use drugs. It was updated to reflect legislative changes made to the way naloxone can be provided after October 2015. The briefing can be viewed [here](#).

Additional Drug Related Deaths Data

Public Health Outcomes Framework

The DRD statistics are now being published alongside the Public Health Outcomes Framework Indicator for drug treatment at a local authority level, to draw attention to the rise in deaths. They can be accessed [here](#).

PHE Drug Related Deaths Statistical Bulletin: Trends in Drug Related Deaths 1999-2014

A statistical analysis of data going back to 1999-2014, looking at year by year data, highlighting trends. Available via this [link](#).

National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths (NpSAD)

NpSAD produces DRD data with the aim of collecting and analysing data in a systematic way. Collected from various sources, it informs policy makers, clinicians, researchers and media on risks associated with premature death due to the misuse of drugs, both licit and illicit. The latest report is available [here](#).