

REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: SCOTTISH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DRUG MISUSE (SACDM)	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		WORKING GROUP REPORT ON DRUG RELATED DEATHS	
Date: 4 OCTOBER 2005	Ref: JD/GM		

1. **Purpose of Report**

To advise Committee of the publication of a recent report on drug related deaths and inform members of work which is being undertaken in Lanarkshire in this connection.

2. **Background**

2.1. In 2003 the General Register Office for Scotland reported the countries highest ever annual number of drug related deaths, 382 deaths during 2002. Consequently, the Deputy Minister for Justice commissioned a national investigation into all drug related deaths in Scotland for the year 2003.

2.2. The aims of the national investigation were: -

- To collect and analyse information relating to the clinical and social circumstances surrounding all drug related in Scotland for the period January to December 2003.
- To identify patterns in social and clinical circumstances surrounding the deaths and associations between them; and
- To make recommendations for policy and practice that may lead to a future reduction in drug related deaths.

2.3. The subsequent report produced by the Scottish Advisory Committee on Drug Misuse (SACDM) made a total of sixteen recommendations, which include, for example: -

- The Scottish Executive and Alcohol and Drug Action Teams (ADATs) consider methods to raise the level of resuscitation skills among drug users, family members, friends and social networks.
- The Association of Chief Police Officers and the Scottish Executive should jointly explore ways in which contact with the Police can be used as an opportunity to intervene with vulnerable individuals in order to prevent further drug related deaths.
- Research should be commissioned into how delays in contacting emergency services can be reduced.
- ADATs and their partners should be required to demonstrate that services are delivered in an effective and co-ordinated way. There should be evidence based outcomes and improved engagement with drug users, with reduced waiting times for services.
- There should be a review of services for groups where drug deaths occur at a higher rate than the overall population (people released from prison, homeless).

- Priority should be given to greater development of single shared assessments.
 - The establishment of local monitoring and prevention sub groups.
 - The definition of drug related deaths should be standardised nation wide.
 - A National Preventing Drugs Death Forum should be established.
- 2.4. The Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Action Team have also been concerned with the number of drug related deaths which have occurred in the various communities throughout Lanarkshire, and set up a Critical Incident Group under the Chair of the local Procurator Fiscal to investigate and act on lessons to be learned from the deaths which have taken place.
- 2.5. Between January 2001 and June 2005, a total of 55 drug related deaths have occurred in North Lanarkshire. This figure consists of 49 men and 6 women.
- 2.6. An analysis of the drug related death figures in North Lanarkshire shows a similar pattern to the national figures. There were four deaths in 2001, the figure peaked in 2002 with 20 deaths and in the two succeeding years there were fourteen deaths in each year. In the current year 2005 there is a marked decrease in the numbers with only three deaths so far being recorded.
- 2.7. The 25 to 34 age group experienced most drug deaths, a total of 30 people (55%) in this age category died. The next highest group was the 15 to 24 years where 14 people (25%) died.

3. **Proposal/Considerations**

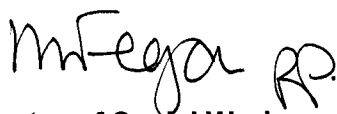
- 3.1. As a result of the work which the Critical Incident Group has undertaken in Lanarkshire, a number of important steps have been taken which are in line with the recommendations made by the SACDM Working Group, these include: -
- Prioritising education and awareness raising regarding the increased risk of drug related deaths for recently released prisoners and improving links to community based services;
 - Conducting an audit of the local distribution of "Know the Score" materials to vulnerable groups and their families/friends;
 - Continuing and expanding upon the work initiated by Lanarkshire's Harm Reduction Team regarding the provision of resuscitation training for agency staff, service users and their families/friends;
 - Investigating opportunities for the provision of Naloxone (the overdose reversing opioid antagonist) to appropriate groups in the community; and
 - Engaging with families and service user groups.
- 3.2. In addition the Critical Incident Group has agreed to look into the individual circumstances of each drug related death. This action will provide the opportunity to address any identified problems as a matter of urgency.
- 3.3. A seminar on drug related deaths was recently held in Lanarkshire which set out the findings and the work of the Critical Incident Group. The seminar was addressed by the Chair of the SACDM Working Party. As well as reporting on the findings of the National Group, she commended the Lanarkshire ADAT on the actions which have been implemented to date and expressed the view that "Lanarkshire is well on the way with the local Planning Agenda".

4. **Financial, Personnel, Legal and Policy Considerations**

- 4.1. There are no financial, personnel or legal considerations in this report.
- 4.2. The responsibility for monitoring the implications arising from drug misuse lies with the Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Action Team. However, North Lanarkshire Council, as a constituent member of the ADAT, requires to note the recommendations of the SACDM report and to apply these wherever possible.

5. **Recommendations**

- 5.1. Committee is requested to note this report.



Director of Social Work
2 September 2005

For further information on this report please contact George McNally, Manager Social Work Strategy on telephone 01698 332555