



Lanarkshire ADAT
ALCOHOL & DRUG ACTION TEAM

Report to : Alcohol and Drug Action Team
Date : 1st December
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Title : Critical Incident Group update – for information

1) Purpose of Report: Information

The purpose of this report is to update ADAT members on the work of the Critical Incident Group (CIG). The CIG was convened in 2003 to pool and analyse information on drug-related deaths in order to identify risk factors and opportunities for intervention.

2) Progress

2.1 Prison release

Analysis of the Lanarkshire data for 2001/02 suggested a correspondence with national data and research literature highlighting the greatly increased risk of drug-related death for recently released prisoners. This led to the prioritisation of education and awareness-raising regarding this risk and the improvement of links to community-based services. These issues were presented to the Communities and Availability sub-group who agreed to:

- feed into the SPS contract review of prison and throughcare services
- Involve Barlinnie prison in local discussions and processes
- Identify and resolve local inconsistencies, for example regarding continuation of substitute prescribing within prison

The Communities and Availability sub-group are currently preparing an issues paper in this regard.

2.2 Know the Score materials

An audit of the distribution of the Know the Score materials on Preventing Overdose Deaths has led to concerns from the group about the lack of strategic targeting of these materials. This will be addressed in the short term by ensuring the information is distributed to all the appropriate services, and in the longer term through discussion with Health Promotion regarding the targeting and use of information in general.

2.3 Training

The training group are currently preparing a strategy for the December ADAT meeting. One of the clear issues from the work of the CIG has been the need for training on overdose prevention for non-specialist staff, particularly workers such as criminal justice. This is currently being progressed via the ADAT Training sub-group with the Harm Reduction Team and STRADA.

Local work is also commencing with the newly appointed SDF Critical Incident Training and Development Officer in relation to providing first aid training to drug users, their friends and families.

2.4 Naloxone

Based on preliminary work undertaken last year, the investigation of opportunities for the provision of Naloxone (the overdose-reversing opioid antagonist) to appropriate groups in the community was identified as part of the CIG's plan for preventative action. Unfortunately, correspondence with the Lord Advocate (see letter from Procurator Fiscal tabled at the September ADAT meeting) has established obstacles to local action on this issue.

In the recently published summary of the Review of Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services, the Scottish Executive have however pledged to *"monitor the impact of best practice initiatives in other countries and ask the Scottish Advisory Committee on Drug Misuse to consider the potential case for widening availability of Naloxone in order to counter the effects of heroin overdose."*

In addition, the Lanarkshire CIG are using their influence on the DAT Association drug-related deaths sub-group to marshal further support for this initiative.

2.5 Engaging with families and service-user groups

In October of this year the Chair of the CIG met with a service-user group to discuss their views on issues surrounding drug-related deaths. One of the key points to emerge from this was the importance of educating drug users and their families on overdose prevention. While the existing information in the Know the Score packs was regarded positively, it was made clear that the information was not being conveyed appropriately by the right people at the right time.

It was suggested that this could be addressed, for example, by key workers as part of the induction process when entering treatment or support, or indeed prison. Other important issues raised by the service-users included the punitive measures used by some workers/services which could increase the likelihood of reverting to the use of illicit drugs instead of, or on top of, substitute medication. Meetings with families and cares have yet to be arranged, but remain as part of the group's workplan.

2.6 Non-fatal overdoses

Early work undertaken on this issue revealed that readily available information from A&E was of limited utility. However, the importance of this in terms of improving the understanding of what interventions can prevent a fatal overdose have led the group to pursue alternative avenues of investigation. Work to obtain information directly from the Scottish Ambulance Service, for example, is currently underway.

2.7 In-depth reviews of subsequent fatalities

Throughout 2004 the group have been striving to collate and review information on recent deaths as opposed to those occurring in the previous year. This has presented some difficulties however, not least the fact that there can be a delay of up to three months between a death and confirmation as a drug-related death.

Accessing prison records for 2004 cases has also been problematic. ***This in combination with the emergence of new trends in the substances involved in the deaths between January and August 2004 has led to the decision to postpone the presentation of findings to the ADAT pending further investigation of these crucial variables.***

In terms of basic frequency and demographic information, however, it is clear that there has been an increase between 2003 and 2004, with 23 deaths being recorded in the first eight months of 2004 alone (see chart 1 below). A similar increase between 2003 and 2004 has been noted across the majority of Strathclyde Police Force divisional areas (chart 2).

Chart 1

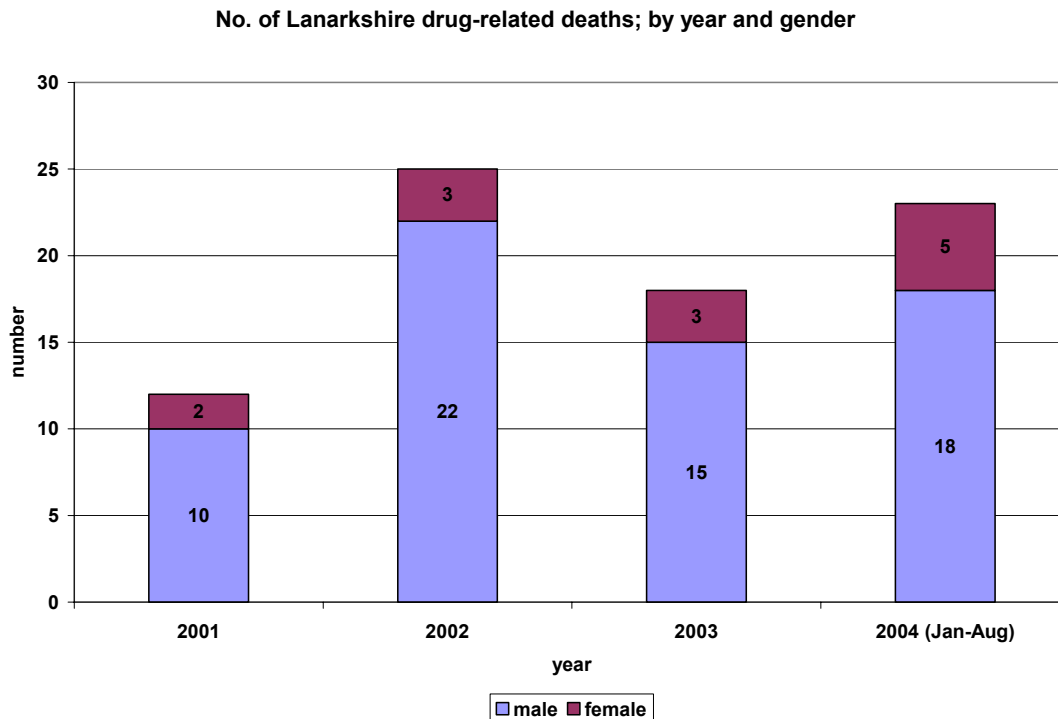
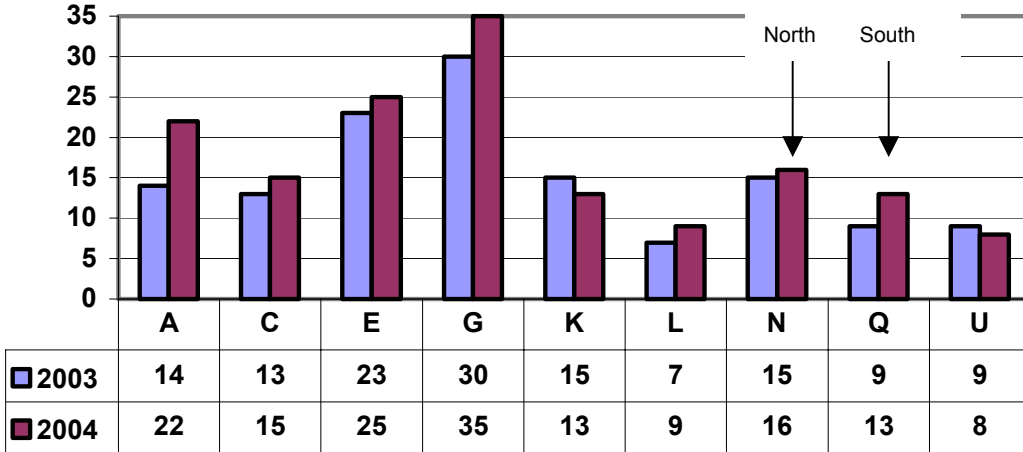


Chart 2

**Confirmed Drug Deaths
(1 Jan - 22 Nov 2004); by Divisional Area**



Strathclyde Police Divisional Areas:

A division - Glasgow Central and West (city centre and West End)

C division - Glasgow North and East Dunbartonshire

E division - Glasgow East

G division - Glasgow South and East Renfrewshire

K division - Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (Argyll & Clyde)

L division - Argyll, Bute and West Dunbartonshire

N division - North Lanarkshire

Q division - South Lanarkshire

U division - Ayrshire