

EDINBURGH DRUG ACTION TEAM

As it happens

Drug and Alcohol Misuse
In
Edinburgh

December 2003

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FOREWORD

This bulletin represents one of a number of initiatives being taken by Edinburgh Drug Action Team (EDAT) as part of its Communications Strategy.

Effective communication with the wide range of specialist and generalist agencies that comprise the EDAT 'constituency' is a constant challenge, and one that the Team will continue to address. This Bulletin could not be compiled without the contribution from frontline drug and alcohol agencies; it highlights the importance of, and necessity for partnership-working. Through its wide circulation, the Bulletin aims to inform practitioners in other settings, such as youth, social work and health care, about current local substance misuse trends and issues. After all, these practitioners and services will probably have contact with young people who are 'early-stage' problem drug/alcohol users but are not yet minded to engage with the specialist services. Therefore we need to enhance relationships between the substance misuse and youth service networks to make it easier for staff to get the advice and support they need from each other, and to ease the pathways to cross referral when the time is right for the service user.

The content of this Bulletin reflects the wide range of issues that EDAT and its service providers are having to address. Concern about the rise in the number of drug-related deaths at a national level has prompted questions about the efficacy of early-intervention approaches and the accessibility of current services. There are also challenges ahead in regard to working with parents with drug/alcohol problems; for example, how do we ensure the safety and welfare of the children of service users, while encouraging the parents to engage and maintain contact with helping services.

Some of these issues will, hopefully be addressed at national level by the Scottish Executive in its Review of Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Services, which concludes at the end of December 2003. EDAT's response to the Review is available from its office at Shrubhill House.

Edinburgh Drug Action Team is modifying its structure and approach so that it is in a better position to address these and other challenges in 2004, in partnership with stakeholders.

EDAT members extend their best wishes for a safe and enjoyable festive period and we look forward to working with you next year.

Ray de Souza
(on behalf of Edinburgh Drug Action Team)

PURPOSE OF THE BULLETIN

1. *This Bulletin ...*

- Aims to facilitate the exchange of information related to drug and alcohol misuse in Edinburgh.
- Summarises local level information of interest to key stake holders
- Much of this information may be “soft” data in the sense that it is not necessarily the product of systematic research

DRUG RELATED DEATHS

2. *Drug Related Deaths, for 2002*

- The Registrar General for Scotland published on 28 August 2003 a short paper on drug-related deaths. The Registrar General for Scotland collects information on drug-related deaths in Scotland and presented selected statistical information covering the period 1996 to 2002.
- There were 39 drug-related deaths in Lothian in 2002. This compares with 54 in 2001.
- Twenty-eight of these were from drug abuse, 5 from accidental poisoning, 3 from intentional self poisoning, and 3 were undetermined. Fourteen were related to heroin, 9 to diazepam, 22 to methadone, 5 to cocaine and 5 to ecstasy.
- The total number of deaths for Scotland for all age ranges is 382. From this total 100 were under 25 years old, 153 were 25-34,92 were 35-44,37 were 45 and over. From this national total 321 were male, 61 were female. (These figures were released as national aggregates only.)

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE CITY

3. *Ritalin Misuse*

- Following reports in the press that Ritalin was being misused at street level in Edinburgh EDAT surveyed a wide range of service providers and specialist agencies in the city to find out their knowledge and experience of this issue in their locality.
- The results of demonstrated that there was no substantial evidence of Ritalin misuse in Edinburgh. One agency reported an isolated case of such misuse, but this was unable to be substantiated by evidence.

4. Psychostimulants

- There are reports of a rise in the availability of Methamphetamine, which is said to be of good quality. Reports suggest that it is very strong and is available in both tablet and Crystal forms. Yaaba, Ice and Crystal-meth are names being used and it is said to be relatively low cost. Methamphetamine is highly addictive and problematic for both physical and mental health.
- Ecstasy tablets with an illustration of a sunrise coming over a mountain are also newly available.
- A substance called “2C-i”, a hallucinogenic drug related to ecstasy is being sold in Edinburgh. The small white pills, which are marked with an “i” are believed to have originated in Europe, possibly Denmark. Unlike ecstasy, which can now sell for as little as £1 each, 2C-i pills are selling for £10 and may prove attractive to dealers.

5. Volatile Substance Abuse

- Agencies report that volatile substance abuse is still a relevant issue in the drug scene in Edinburgh. A recently published Scottish Executive information leaflet (Volatile Substance Abuse-Know the Score) highlights that the misuse of solvents is not a problem of the past. An average of eight people die each year in Scotland from Volatile Substance Abuse (VSA). See website- www.knowthescore.info

6. Contaminated Heroin

- On Friday 7 November 2003 anecdotal information was received that suggested that there was heroin available in the Leith area which solidifies in the barrel when ‘cooked’ and prepared for injection. The heroin was believed to have been cut with a substance called “geltex”. To date there has been no evidence to indicate any incidents outwith the Leith area of Edinburgh.

7. Tetanus Warning

- Five cases of tetanus have been reported in injecting drug users since July 2003 in England. Of these four were reported in November. To date, there have no reports of any recent cases in Scotland.
- This type of outbreak has been seen before in America where people who inject drugs in the muscle or below the skin (‘skin popping’) are especially at risk of tetanus infection
- A common first sign of tetanus in adults is abdominal rigidity and stiffening in the jaw until it is locked in position (trismus). This is followed by frequent and painful spasms, progressing in severity and becoming accompanied

by dysphagia (difficulty in swallowing), increasing respiratory difficulties and, in the most severe cases, neurological dysfunction

- Recognition and treatment with wound debridement, metronidazole, and tetanus immunoglobulin, can be life saving. It is important that Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), drug workers, and clinicians are aware of early symptoms. Clinicians in A&E, microbiologists, general physicians, and intensive care workers should have a low threshold for considering a diagnosis of tetanus in an IDU.
- Primary prevention includes advising users to change drug use in a similar way to that suggested in the outbreak in IDUs in 2000:
 - smoke heroin rather than inject
 - don't inject into muscle
 - don't inject under the skin
 - if the vein is missed clients should be encouraged to withdraw and start again
 - cut down to the smallest amount of citric acid

8. Counterfeit Diazepam

- Reports of counterfeit Diazepam availability in Edinburgh have been received. Examination of these tablets demonstrated that they mainly consisted of a drug called Promethazine with faint traces of Diazepam.
- Promethazine is an older type of anti-histamine which has some hypnotic side effects.
- Promethazine, in combination with Methenamine has been reported previously as counterfeit Diazepam. On this occasion the Methenamine has not been included in the tablet.

DRUG DRIVING CAMPAIGN

9. Drug-driving has increased 10 fold over the last 18 years in Scotland because of an 'explosion' of recreational (drug) use, according to research conducted recently by the Scottish Executive. From this week Scottish Police Forces will crack down on drivers driving under the influence of drugs, including illegal, prescription and over-the-counter drugs which are likely to affect driving ability. An advertising campaign has been launched warning of the dangers. Practitioners should take the opportunity to explain the impact of drug use on driving ability as part of a harm reduction/risk minimisation intervention with service users.

HIV STATISTICS

10. HIV Reports for Lothian

- Total HIV reports for the year 2003, to 30 June 2003 were 30 reports. One of these reports was identified as relating to injecting drug use.
- There were 23 recorded HIV –1 infected persons in Lothian in the reporting period. One case was recorded as relating to injecting drug use

DRUG PRICES

11. Lothian and Borders Price Values

Lothian and Borders Police have supplied drug value figures for October 2003, as follows for the Lothian area:-

- . Heroin is £80 per gram
- . Cocaine is £50 per gram
- . Crack Cocaine is £100 per gram
- . Ecstasy is £5 per tablet
- . LSD is £4 per tablet
- . Cannabis Resin is £4 per gram
- . Herbal Cannabis is £4 a gram
- . Amphetamine Powder is £5 per gram
- . Amphetamine Tablets are £5 per tablet
- . Diazepam is £1 per tablet
- . Temazepam is £1.50 per tablet

SERVICES

12. Outcome data reported for Edinburgh's specialist Cognitive Behavioural Therapy service for Psycho-stimulant misuse (part of Edinburgh Psychostimulant Users Service or ESUS) has been recently made available and suggests that a psychological approach to treatment of this population has merit. Over the past year they report significant reductions in the BDI scale scores for clients attending the service (measures depression), BAI scale scores (measures anxiety) and significant reductions in scores for a self report measure for drug misuse.

ONGOING RESEARCH - SUMMARIES

13. The Experiences of Older Children of Drug and Alcohol Using Parents: Risk and Resilience -The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at Edinburgh University

- Children whose parents have substance misuse problems are at greater risk of various adverse outcomes, both during their childhood and in later life. Some of the risks they face have been examined by quantitative studies measuring psychological factors. However, qualitative research is needed to explore the social processes, attitudes and experiences underlying these correlations. It is also the case that many young people growing up with parents with substance misuse problems will not develop problems themselves. Research is needed to examine young people's survival, coping or resilience in this context.
- The Centre for Research on families and Relationships at Edinburgh University has been awarded a grant for an 18-month study of these issues. The research focuses on older children's accounts of their childhood, pathways to independence and thoughts about the future. The focus is not only on the difficulties encountered by young people, but also on the coping strategies they have developed and other resources available to them, including support from extended family members, friends, services and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Their analysis will also explore the impact of different substances, as well as gender and socio-economic factors, and the implications for services.
- The aim of the project is to recruit 40 young people aged 16-23, (20 men and 20 women) from a variety of social backgrounds across Scotland before mid-November 2003. So far the team have spoken to over 20 young people, the majority of whom have been affected by parental alcohol problems. They are still recruiting young people affected by parental alcohol problems, but are particularly concerned to speak to young people affected by parental drug problems (including illegal and legal drugs).
- The research team is Sarah Wilson, Angus Bancroft, Sarah Cunningham Burley and Kathryn Backett Milburn of CRFR and Hugh Masters of Napier University. If you would like to find out more about the study, please contact Sarah Wilson (sarah.wilson@ed.ac.uk) on 0131 651 3002/1832. The final report on this project will be prepared for May 2004.

14. *The Drug Outcomes Research in Scotland Study (DORIS) carried out by Glasgow University:-*

- Interim research findings from The Drug Outcomes Research in Scotland Study (DORIS) carried out by Glasgow University and funded by the Robertson Trust have been made available. These findings were reported at The Robertson Trust Drug Misuse Research Programme Second Annual Conference on Tuesday 23rd September. The DORIS research programme is the first national longitudinal outcome study in Scotland to track the progress of clients in drug treatment services. Interim data was reported at initial interview (DORIS1) and at 8 month follow up (second interview-DORIS 2).

- The majority of clients at initial interview expressed a wish to aim for abstinence in their treatment (almost 60%) of participants. There appears to be a pattern of successful abstinence periods-but this is not maintained
- Drug related death-Between interview 1 and 2, 1% of participants had died. 14% had experienced a non-fatal overdose. These represent relatively large figures.
- Access problems-44% of participants had to wait longer than a month to access service. 14% had been turned away from an agency between interview 1 and 2.
- Drug misuse-There were encouraging reductions in levels of misuse across all drug types post treatment and reductions in injecting behaviour.
- Alcohol problems- although drug misuse behaviour is reduced, alcohol misuse behaviour appears to slightly increase overall post treatment
- Crime-there were encouraging reductions in a range of indicators post treatment
- Health and Mental health- clients reported that their physical health had improved but reported that their mental health was problematic (for e.g. low mood and suicidal ideation/self harm behaviours.)
- Employment-there was little indication of any success in accessing employment by second interview.
- Relationships with children/family-by second interview 20% were still reporting problems with relationships with children despite the overall reported decrease in drug misuse behaviour.

EVENTS

15. Do you Know? Information Day

- The Do You Know? group is hosting an Information day on Monday 19th January in Society Hall. This is intended to inform local workers and agencies about drugs and other agencies, which provide a wide range of services. The information day will be open from 10 am until 8.00 p.m. and around 15 exhibitors will be on hand ranging from C.E.C. Housing department, the Sorted Project, Castle Project, Family Support Network, Jewel and Esk Valley College. Also it is hoped, although not confirmed that the L.H.C.C. may wish to provide some information on the new Locality Clinic. The Crime Prevention panel will also be there as will the drugs awareness unit of Lothian and Borders Police. The NHS Lothian's alcohol health promotion stand may also be able there.

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

16. *How to contribute*

- “As it Happens” relies upon contributions from front line agencies and stakeholders in drug and alcohol services. Local level information relevant to the network of the fields of drug and alcohol misuse is requested. We aim to produce this report on a regular basis to keep agencies and practitioners informed about what is happening in other parts of the city.
- Any contributions (the source of which can be withheld) should be provided by e-mail or mail (or by telephone) to:-

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