

Police launch multi-agency operation to reduce harm caused by substance abuse

Police in East Lothian have today launched a new operation which addresses priorities identified in the 2020 – 2023 Policing Plan for the county, particularly reducing the harm caused in communities by substance misuse.

Operation Juneau sees Police Scotland working with partners, including East Lothian Council and NHS Lothian, as well as third sector organisations, including charities, to provide effective early intervention and support to those affected by drugs.



Police Scotland: Photo Martin McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

It will lead to the creation of a new East Lothian multi-agency taskforce with the sole aim of reducing the long term effects of substance misuse and reducing drug related deaths in the county.

Drugs warrants have been executed across towns in East Lothian targeting those who sell, manufacture and supply controlled drugs. As a result, so far there have been five arrests in connection with the supply of drugs and four in connection with anti-social behaviour associated with drugs. Cash amounting to £6,500 has been seized along with controlled drugs with an estimated street value of £5,500 and 3,000 tablets.

In the coming weeks officers will be working with partners and the third sector to raise awareness. As part of Operation Juneau they will also visit all the main towns in East Lothian to engage with the public and raise awareness.

Chief Inspector Neil Mitchell, Local Policing Commander for East Lothian, said: "Operation Juneau is a multi-agency operation to protect and support vulnerable people and reduce the harm caused by drug misuse in the county.

"Substance misuse affects many aspect of our communities and one of Police Scotland's greatest strengths is utilising a number of specialist national teams to support Operation Juneau and using our strong partnership and third sector relationships to engage with the public to raise awareness of drug issues.

"The effect of drugs on our communities goes beyond those who supply and manufacture drugs and that is why I want to highlight the full range of work that is being done, including giving advice to those who need it and linking in with the council and health authority, including adult mental health services, as well as charities working in this area.

"The operation is also addressing anti-social behaviour connected to substance misuse and officers are working with partners to ensure that we maximise opportunities to reduce and effectively tackle disorder."

"Our joint priority is to provide effective early intervention and support to those affected by drug misuse. That means getting the right services to the right people as quickly as we can. To make this happen, we are piloting a new way of sharing information with our colleagues in East Lothian Council and the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership.

"In the longer term Operation Juneau will evolve into new East Lothian multi-agency taskforce with the sole aim of reducing

the long term effects of substance misuse and reducing drug related deaths in the county.

“Our aim is to make East Lothian a safer place for those who live, work and visit the county. Anyone who has information relating to drugs that will help officers investigating this kind of crime should contact us on 101, or make a call anonymously to the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.”

Iain Gorman, Head of Operations for East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership, said: “East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership is keen to support initiatives that take drugs off the streets, but our main focus will always be on caring for and supporting people who are affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

“We believe that this multi-agency approach is the best way to tackle drug and alcohol misuse because of the wide range of issues involved. We are here to support the individual person and our role is to help people to begin and sustain their recovery. Our multi-agency approach enables us to look at housing needs, family support and person-centred treatment. We also support people towards recovery through education, training and employment opportunities.

“We are also committed to tackling the stigma associated with drug and alcohol misuse. People need the support of their families, friends and the wider community to help them address their problems and make a sustained recovery.’

Councillor Jim Goodfellow, Cabinet Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing, East Lothian Council, said: “Drug misuse can have a devastating impact on individuals, their families and communities. That’s why partnership working to support those affected and tackle the issues associated with the harmful effects of drugs is absolutely critical.

“East Lothian Council works closely with Police Scotland and we are totally supportive of Operation Juneau, which has a

firm focus on supporting vulnerable people and reducing harm, as well as addressing issues with anti-social behaviour.

“We welcome plans to develop the operation into a multi-agency taskforce. This can play a key role in helping to ensure East Lothian remains a safe place in which to live and work, as well as providing a supportive environment for those impact by drug misuse.”

Further advice on drugs misuse can be found on the Police Scotland website:

If you are affected by drug misuse, or are caring for someone who is you can call the East Lothian Substance Misuse Service on 0131 446 4853 or Mid and East Lothian Drugs [MELD] on 07843 339958 or go to the website: www.meldap-recovery.co.uk