

Police officers save man's life by administering Naloxone for first time

Police Scotland officers have administered Naloxone for the first time, within two hours of receiving training in the use of the spray to reverse an opioid-related drug overdose.

The constables, who are participating in a six-month test of change for the carriage and use of intra-nasal naloxone spray, responded to a call in Glasgow's East End last night (Tuesday, 9 March, 2021) and successfully administered the reversal agent, stabilised the man until Scottish Ambulance Service clinicians attended and took over emergency medical care.



Police Constables, Sergeants and Inspectors in Glasgow's East End (Greater Glasgow Division) and Falkirk (Forth Valley Division) have been taking part in training since Monday, 1 March, and sessions for officers in Dundee City (Tayside Division) will begin in the coming weeks.

Carriage of Naloxone by Police Scotland officers is voluntary during the pilot, with officers asked to make their decision having completed the training course. Those who do are issued with a personal Naloxone kit, to be worn on their utility belts, containing a supply of naloxone as well as after-care cards to be issued whenever police administer the nasal prior to ambulance attendance.

Assistant Chief Constable Gary Ritchie, Head of Drug Strategy

for Police Scotland, said: "I'm very proud of the officers last night. Their quick thinking, having only completed their training a few hours before, has clearly saved a life which may have otherwise been lost. We have since learned the patient left hospital later that same night and we have highlighted this incident to our community partners who support people living with addiction.

"It is heartening that the vast majority of our officers who have received training have disregarded the misinformation which has been presented about naloxone from some quarters. Clearly operational officers recognise that naloxone is a safe, simple way to help people who may be dying from an overdose and are willing to be involved in a pilot to see how beneficial it is to have police officers carrying it more widely.

"This first administration is an early indication of the potential value that police carrying Naloxone could have in helping people who use drugs, as well as their families, friends and communities. However, the test of change has only just begun and we will continue to monitor and assess the value over the next six months. This will take place with the support of an external team of academics at Edinburgh Napier University who will independently evaluate the entire process."

The pilot was approved last year as part of the national public health approach to tackling the impact of drugs. The most recent National Records for Scotland drug related deaths statistics showed 1,264 drug-related deaths in 2019, an increase of six per cent on the previous year, and the highest total since recording began in 1996, with drug deaths in Scotland having been classified as a public health emergency.

Funding from the Scottish Government Drug Deaths Taskforce enabled a Sergeant and Constable to take up new posts in December to undertake the development, administration,

implementation and delivery of the pilot. Further Taskforce funding has also supported the Naloxone devices carried by Police Scotland officers.

Professor Catriona Matheson, Chair of the Scottish Government Drug Deaths Taskforce, said: "We are delighted this Drug Deaths Taskforce project is now well underway and clearly already saving lives"

A custom training package for officers has been developed with inputs from people with lived experience of Naloxone, as well as the Scottish Drugs Forum, whose Strategy Co-ordinator for Drug Death Prevention, Kirsten Horsburgh said: "SDF is highly supportive of this Police Scotland initiative to support ongoing naloxone efforts across the country. Police are often present at overdose incidents, which may provide an opportunity for naloxone to be administered without delay, prior to an ambulance attending.

"Naloxone has been used by lay people in Scotland for more than ten years, potentially saving thousands of lives. During a crisis such as we have in relation to drug deaths, we require support and assistance from all partners who may witness an overdose.

"To see the immediate benefit of police carriage of naloxone at such an early stage in the project is extremely positive and hugely encouraging. We thank the officers involved for their quick thinking and actions."

Scottish Ambulance Service Medical Director, Jim Ward, said: "This response to a person in a life-threatening situation demonstrates the value of our Police Scotland partners having access to this life-saving intervention.

"I would like to thank the officers involved for their quick actions in administering naloxone, and look forward to strengthening our collaboration with Police Scotland and other partners to reduce harm from drug use."

A supplementary aim of the pilot is to address and reduce the stereotypes and stigma faced by people who use drugs and may require Naloxone treatment. It is hoped the visible carriage of Naloxone by officers will also help change the attitudes of people who use drugs towards the police.

Scottish Government Minister for Drugs Policy, Angela Constance, said: "I am delighted Police Scotland has been able to progress this work so quickly over recent months, and I welcome their ongoing commitment to tackling the many challenges we face in relation to drug related deaths.

"Increasing the provision and availability of naloxone is a key priority in our national mission to help save the lives of those most at risk, and ensuring that emergency responders such as police officers and ambulance staff are equipped to utilise this life saving drug is critical.

"We have already provided funding to help support this initiative and I look forward to seeing the results of the tests of change and continuing to work with Police Scotland to support a wider roll-out."