

Former Director of Nursing appointed as vice-chair of Drug Deaths Taskforce

Drugs Policy Minister Angela Constance has appointed former Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) Professor Fiona McQueen as Vice-Chair of the Drug Deaths Taskforce.

Professor McQueen has experience across a range of clinical areas and is a former Executive Nurse Director at NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Ayrshire & Arran, having retired from that position only last year.

She takes up the post with immediate effect and attended today's [Taskforce](#) meeting, chaired by David Strang following his appointment last week.

Ms Constance, who was also in attendance, said: "This was a constructive meeting of the Taskforce and I am pleased to welcome David Strang and Professor Fiona McQueen to their new roles.

"I am confident Mr Strang's experience as a former senior police officer and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons in Scotland, and as chair of the Independent Inquiry into Mental Health Services in Tayside, will provide strong leadership for the group ahead of its final recommendations being delivered this summer.

"I was pleased to announce Professor McQueen's appointment as

vice-chair. She has wide experience across many clinical areas and as CNO, she played a key part in helping to shape Scotland's early response to the pandemic. I am sure the knowledge she brings with her will of huge benefit as we shape our response to Scotland's other public health emergency.

"The Taskforce is an important contributor to the work being carried out to prevent drug deaths and I look forward to regular updates from the new chair and vice-chair on the progress being made. Their evidence based approach has already led to the development of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards and helped deliver significant expansions to Scotland's naloxone distribution network and non-fatal overdose pathways and we await their final reports outlining a roadmap for tackling drug related deaths in Scotland."



Professor McQueen at a Covid-19 briefing with the First Minister in February 2021.

David Strang said: "I am pleased to be chairing this important Taskforce as it continues its work to reduce drug deaths in Scotland. I look forward to working closely with Professor

McQueen and all the members of the Taskforce.

“During this first meeting we explored initiatives taking place in partnership with Police Scotland, including the pilot scheme for police officers carrying naloxone to reduce the risk of people dying from a drug overdose. We also heard about the work of navigators in police custody, who provide vital support for people wanting to access treatment for their drug dependency.

“Our next meeting will be on 2 March, when we will be examining how we can best reach people who are in urgent need of support and treatment.”

Professor McQueen said: “I am delighted to have been appointed to the Taskforce and am looking forward to learning about the progress that has already been made and building upon that in the development of the Taskforce’s final recommendations.

“This work is critical in changing peoples’ lives when they are at their most vulnerable and I am privileged to have been invited to be part of it.”