

Meeting of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership	Integration Joint Board	
Held on:	12th November 2025	
Agenda Item:	12	
Title:	South Ayrshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership - Working together to reduce drug related deaths	
Summary:		
<p>The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Integration Joint Board with an overview of the National Records Scotland Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2024 report, and outline actions being taken forward aimed at increasing identification and support of vulnerable people to reduce risk.</p>		
Author:	Gary Hoey, ADP Chair / Chief Social Work Officer Faye Murfet, ADP Coordinator	
Action required:		
It is recommended that the Chief Officers Group		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Note the confirmed number of drug related deaths in Scotland and South Ayrshire in 2024. ii. Note the increase in the number of suspected drug related deaths in 2025. iii. Note the activities being taken forward by members of ADP aimed at improving the identification of vulnerable individuals, providing support, and reducing risk. iv. Otherwise note the content of the report. 		
Route to meeting: via Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Chief Officers Group.		
Directions:		Implications:
1. No Directions Required	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Financial <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Directions to NHS Ayrshire & Arran	<input type="checkbox"/>	HR <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Directions to South Ayrshire Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Directions to both SAC & NHS	<input type="checkbox"/>	Equalities <input type="checkbox"/>
		Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/>
		Policy <input type="checkbox"/>
		ICT <input type="checkbox"/>

WORKING TOGETHER TO REDUCE DRUG RELATED DEATHS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Integration Joint Board with an overview of the National Records Scotland Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2024 report, and outline actions being taken forward aimed at increasing identification and support of vulnerable people to reduce risk.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Chief Officers Group
- i. Note the confirmed number of drug related deaths in Scotland and South Ayrshire in 2024.
 - ii. Note the increase in the number of suspected drug related deaths in 2025.
 - iii. Note the activities being taken forward by members of ADP aimed at improving the identification of vulnerable individuals, providing support, and reducing risk.
 - iv. Otherwise note the content of the report.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In 2020, 1264 people lost their lives in Scotland to a drug related death, equivalent to three people losing their lives every day. This was the highest level ever recorded in Scotland.
- 3.2 In January 2021, the Scottish Government launched the [National Mission to reduce drug related harm and deaths](#). The national mission was supported by additional investment for 2021 – 2026.
- 3.3 On the 2nd September 2025 National Records Scotland (NRS) published the [Drug Related Deaths in Scotland in 2024](#) report.
- 3.4 This reported provides an overview of NRS Drug Related Deaths in Scotland 2024 report and an update on suspected drug related deaths in Scotland and South Ayrshire in 2025.

4. REPORT

4.1 NRS Drug Deaths in Scotland in 2024 report

- 4.1.1 In 2024 national statistics showed that 1,017 people died in Scotland as a direct result of a drugs related death, a decrease of 13% in comparison to 1,051 in 2022. While drug related deaths have been increasing over the last two decades, this is lowest recorded number since 2017.
- 4.1.2 The national report showed that there were 20 drug related deaths in South Ayrshire in 2024, in comparison to 23 in 2021, 15 in 2022 and 16 in 2023.

4.1.3 The number of drug related deaths fell in 21 council areas, was unchanged in two areas and increased in nine areas including Dumfries and Galloway, Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire, and South Ayrshire.

4.1.4 Glasgow City council area has the highest rate per 100,000 of drug misuse deaths with 41.1 deaths per 100,000 people for the period 2020 – 2024. Table 2 shows age standardised rate of drug misuse deaths, 2020 – 2024.

Table 2: Age Standardised mortality rate of drug misuse deaths, 2020 - 2024

Scotland	Rate per 100,000 2020 - 2024
Glasgow City	41.1
Dundee City	35.6
Inverclyde	35.6
West Dunbartonshire	29.8
North Ayrshire	29.5
East Ayrshire	27.9
South Ayrshire	21.5

4.1.5 Across Scotland, males were twice as likely to have died of a drug related death than females, and the average age of death has increased from 32 years in 2000 to 45 years old in 2024, similar patterns were seen locally.

4.1.6 Drug related death rates are linked to deprivation with people living in the most deprived areas 12 times more likely to die from drug use than in the least deprived areas.

4.1.7 More than one drug was implicated in 80% of the drug related deaths in Scotland. Opiates/opioids (80% of deaths), benzodiazepines (56%), cocaine (47%) and Gabapentin and/or pregabalin (37%) were the most common drugs implicated in death.

4.1.8 The number of drug related deaths with opiates/opioids, benzodiazepines, and Gabapentin and/or pregabalin implicate in the death fell in 2024, while the number of deaths where cocaine was implicated was 479 deaths in both 2023 and 2024, the highest level recorded.

4.1.9 Nitazines (synthetic opioids) were recorded in 76 toxicology reports in Scotland in 2024. Comparative data is not available prior to 2024 as routine testing for Nitazines was not embedded until 2024.

4.1.10 The majority (91%) of drug misuse deaths were classified as accidental poisonings, with 6% classed as intentional self-poisonings.

4.1.11 Similar themes were found in drug related deaths in South Ayrshire in relation to age, gender, deprivation, drugs implicated, and classification of death. The

KA8 post code area continues to experience the highest number of drug related deaths. Nitazines were recorded in the toxicology reports for two people in South Ayrshire in 2024.

4.2 Suspected Drug Related Deaths in 2025

4.2.1 There were [607 suspected drug related deaths in Scotland](#) in the first six months of 2025, a 3% increase for the same period in comparison to 2024. The Police Division areas with the greatest numbers of drug related deaths were Greater Glasgow (133), Ayrshire (73) and Edinburgh City (60).

4.2.2 Within South Ayrshire there has been an increase in the number of suspected drug related deaths in 2025 in comparison to 2024. There is emerging intelligence that Nitazines may be implicated in the increases in drug related harms and deaths and the outcome of toxicology and cause of death reports are awaited.

4.2.3 The ADP continues to work closely with Public Health, Police Scotland, Emergency Department (ED), Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), the third sector and other partners, and with individuals accessing services, to increase local understanding of the drug related harms and to increase awareness of risks across services, individuals who use drugs and their family and friends.

4.2.4 Where an assessment of intelligence (including ED attendances, ITU/HDU admissions, SAS data, near fatal overdoses) indicates the threshold of risk has been met, NHS Ayrshire & Arran Public Health have conveyed multiagency Problem Assessment Groups (PAG) and Incident Management Team (IMT) meetings.

4.2.5 Similar increases were seen in clusters in other areas including Dumfries & Galloway and Lothian and National IMT meetings have taking place.

4.3 Local Review Process

4.3.1 The ADP have developed a process for reviewing all suspected drug related deaths in South Ayrshire. The review of suspected drug related deaths allows the ADP to increase its understanding of factors contributing to suspected drug related deaths, help identify people who may be at risk, explore possible intervention points and consider test of change / service improvements. Key learning and recommendations from the reviews are included in a multiagency improvement plan.

4.3.2 The ADP also works closely with Police Scotland and Public Health to allow rapid consideration of factors where increased drug related risks and harms are identified.

4.3.3 The ADP has also recently requested that toxicology reports be expedited following an increase in suspected drug related deaths in a short period of time.

4.4 Activities Aimed at Reducing Risk

4.4.1 Members of the ADP are taking forward range of activities aimed at improving the identification of vulnerable individuals, providing support, and reducing risk including:

- Engagement with individuals with lived and living experience to inform understanding of drug related harms and risk, and for ongoing service improvement activities.
- Implementation of Compass, the ADPs new multiagency drop-in one stop shop, which aims to remove barriers and offer a safe space for individuals at high risk of alcohol or drug related harm to access a range of support. Between 17th June 2024 and 31st March 2025 3,769 individuals accessed of which 19% were first time visitors and ~20% were not being supported by any service.
- Exploring opportunities for ‘spokes’ of the Compass model in rural areas.
- Further developing joint working to improve the identification and coordination of support for people at high risk of alcohol or drug related harm, including people who have experienced a near fatal overdose.
- Expanding the provision of the peer-to-peer Naloxone training and supply network including across the wider system services and families, and friend.
- ADP Lunchtime Briefing Sessions – Recognising Risk and Reducing Harm – to increase awareness of risk factors and develop collaborative working.
- Further developing joint working with strategic groups, and local partners working in the KA8 post code area to raise awareness of risk and increase identification of individuals at risk and assertively linking to services and supports.
- Developing the collection and sharing of surveillance information with stakeholders including individuals, families, and communities and services across South Ayrshire, and through the national RADAR programme.

5. **Strategic context**

5.1 The activities being progressed by the ADP are aimed at reducing drug related deaths and are in line with the vision, principles and priorities set out within the [ADP Strategy Recovery is Reality](#) and [Change Story](#), and the [National Drugs Mission Plan 2022 - 2026](#).

5.2 This report contributes to the IJB Strategic Objective to ‘operate sound strategic and operational management systems and processes’.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

6.1.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising directly from this report.

6.2 Human Resource Implications

6.2.1 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the consideration of this report.

6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6.4 Equalities implications

6.4.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6.5 Sustainability implications

6.5.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

6.6 Clinical/professional assessment

6.6.1 The ADP includes representatives from a range of partners including clinical professionals who are represented across the structure including Joint Chair of the ADP Reducing Drug Related Deaths Working Group.

7. CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

7.1 The ADP is a partnership with over 100 members from statutory and third sector services, and individuals and families with lived experience, who are involved in the development and the implementation of the ADP Strategy and service improvement activities.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no immediate risks arising from the content of the report.

APPENDICES

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

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