

**LIVING
EXPERIENCE
DRUG TRENDS**

BULLETIN

APRIL - JUNE 2024

INTRODUCTION

SDF have 11 living experience engagement groups currently operating across Scotland in:

- Glasgow
- West Dunbartonshire
- Highland
- Argyll and Bute
- Borders
- Fife
- East Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire
- South Lanarkshire
- Edinburgh
- Perth and Kinross

The groups provide a safe space for people who currently use drugs and/or are on medication assisted treatment to share issues that are important to them, including drug trends information.

This bulletin contains both anecdotal information from the 100+ weekly attendees at the groups and from testing results- both from a nitazene testing strips pilot and samples submitted to the WEDINOS postal testing service.

As part of a pilot, SDF have been disseminating nitazene testing strips and providing training on nitazene awareness and overdose prevention to at risk groups in SDF's regional living experience engagement groups.

So far we have found this has a number of benefits in that it:

- Provides real time information to allow people to make more informed decisions about using a substance
- Offers an opportunity to open up a health-based intervention with people at risk
- Engages people who may be less engaged with standard harm reduction messages or interventions.
- Allows further opportunity to promote carriage of naloxone.

Between April-June 34 sessions were delivered, in 11 ADP areas with a total of 326 people attending.

Group members are asked to inform staff of positive and negative results. Where a positive result is obtained, SDF support the group member to utilise the WEDINOS system for confirmatory testing.



NITAZENE TESTING STRIPS

RESULTS

Between April and June 2024:

- 300 testing strips have been given out
- 6 positive results were found via testing strips
- 3 of these returned negative for nitazenes after confirmatory analysis, 1 was positive and 2 results are pending.

Some participants have reported that they would change their pattern of drug use due to the presence of a nitazene, e.g. take a smaller initial dose, redose less often, reduce the overall amount consumed in a drug using session and avoid or be more cautious around mixing drugs.

The samples submitted so far are outlined below.

INTENDED PURCHASE	APPEARANCE/EFFECTS	RESULT
Heroin	Pink/brown powder-expected effects	Paracetamol, Noscapine, Heroin, Caffeine, 6-Acetylcodeine, 6-MAM, Papaverine
Heroin	Pink/brown powder-relaxed effects	Paracetamol, Noscapine, Heroin, Caffeine, 6-Acetylcodeine, 6-MAM, Papaverine
Heroin	Brown powder-chemical taste, trippy effects	Awaiting result
Street benzo	Yellow tablet- no reported effects	Amitriptyline
Heroin	Brown powder- no adverse effects	Paracetamol, Noscapine, Caffeine,, 6-MAM, Papaverine, Heroin, Diazepam, Papaverine, Metonitazene
Heroin	Brown powder-no adverse effects	Awaiting result

WEDINOS RESULTS

APRIL- JUNE 2024

SAMPLES SUBMITTED

At Scottish Drugs Forum, the living experience engagement team have supported people attending their groups to access testing via WEDINOS. The service both supports gaining confirmatory analysis for positive samples from nitazene testing strips and more generally for any substances used by group members.

Over the period April to June 2024, the following 24 samples have been sent by attendees of the groups for testing.

15 sample reports involving tablets bought as benzodiazepines:

- 4 bought as xanax
- 2 bought as valium
- 1 bought as clonazepam
- 8 bought as 'street benzos'

- 2 sample reports of other tablets including ecstasy and pregablin.
- 5 sample reports of heroin which had tested positive for nitazenes using testing strips
- 1 sample report of crack cocaine
- 1 sample report of cannabis

RESULTS

6 results returned:

- 2 x heroin (Paracetamol, Noscapine, Heroin, Caffeine, 6-Acetylcodeine, 6-MAM, Papaverine)
- 1 x bromazolam (bought as diazepam)
- 1 x amitriptyline (bought as street valium)
- 1 x sample with no active ingredient (bought as cannabis)
- 1 x heroin/nitazene (Paracetamol, Noscapine, Caffeine, 6-MAM, Papaverine, Heroin, Diazepam, Papaverine, Metonitazene)

19 results not yet returned by WEDINOS.

63%
**OF SAMPLES
SUBMITTED FOR
TESTING, A
BENZODIAZEPINE
WAS THE INTENDED
PURCHASE**

NATIONAL TRENDS

The most commonly reported drug trends across all groups are:

- Street benzodiazepines
- Cocaine/Crack
- Heroin

There is less heroin use being reported than previously, generally due to more people being on buprenorphine.

Various reports of poor drug quality. In the West there are reports of generally poor quality heroin and in the East poor quality cocaine that they believe to be adulterated as it feels less 'clean' and can cause different effects to what they usually experience e.g. agitation and restlessness. There are also concerns about presence of synthetic opioids.

GLASGOW

The group meets in Glasgow city on Wednesdays at 2pm

Group members report predominately smoking crack/freebase cocaine or injecting cocaine and street benzos. Cocaine/crack use tends to be more street based use. Buprenorphine is linked with increased crack use for some as they feel they get limited support to progress, just their injection.

People report heroin is being used to a lesser extent and generally being smoked, use tends to be in more social/peer settings. Pricing/deals for heroin and cocaine/crack dual purchases have changed, e.g. set price for each drug £10 bag/£10 rock. Mostly young people are involved in supply of drugs within the city centre. Less heroin is being sold in city centre, it tends to be sourced in the outskirts of the city.

LANARKSHIRE

Groups cover North and South Lanarkshire, Coatbridge meets on Mondays 10am, Cambuslang Thursdays at 6pm (monthly)

Group members report street benzos and crack/cocaine are the most commonly used substances. People report being able to arrange to have substances dropped to their door and that they receive texts on a daily basis to inform them of available substances.

The most common tablets in circulation are the blue Roche marked D-10. Good quality cocaine is also reported.

WEST

DUNBARTONSHIRE

The group meets in Dumbarton on Wednesdays at 2pm

Group members report using predominately street benzos, crack/cocaine and alcohol. There is some use of heroin reported, although due to a lot of people attending being on Buprenorphine there is less opiate use in this group. Some are injecting cocaine along with heroin, but the majority are smoking crack. Poor quality heroin is being sold locally, people report it is mostly paracetamol and does not burn well on foil. Substances are very available and they can be dropped off to buyers most times of day.

Poly-drug use is reported in those prescribed methadone. (pregablin, heroin, crack, street benzos) with this resulting in regular near fatal overdoses for some.

EAST AYRSHIRE

The group meets in Kilmarnock on Thursdays at 2pm

Group members report using poly use of crack (smoking), street benzos, with some also using heroin. Those using heroin are mostly using IV with a couple smoking due to injecting related damage to veins.

Group members report availability of deals e.g. cocaine/crack and heroin sold together and drop offs via telephone order. Some reports of adverse effects from heroin e.g. waking up hours after using with people suspecting batches may contain a synthetic opioid. Conversely some reports of poor heroin e.g. not showing on urine screens after recent use.

HIGHLAND

The group meets in Inverness on Mondays at 1.30pm

Group members are reporting cocaine in the area which is provided through county lines. Group members have said freebase cocaine is mostly available rather than crack cocaine. Members attending group report use of cocaine has risen due to people being started on Buprenorphine without receiving enough support in conjunction with moving to a monthly injection.

Most of the guys that attend the group are intravenous users of cocaine which they have said is poor quality.

FIFE

The group meets in Dunfermline on Thursdays at 2pm

A wide range of drugs are reported including cocaine, heroin, street benzos and ecstasy. Some reports of snowballing (using heroin and cocaine together). Increased frequency of re-dosing and larger doses reported where people are snowballing.

The quality of cocaine is reported to be poor. Some of those injecting report cocaine is not dissolving whilst preparing it to inject. They also report different effects from what they expect, and they can feel like they are in withdrawals after taking it. Some suggest the high feels like it is cut with mephedrone.

PERTH

The group meets in Perth city on Fridays at 2pm

Group members predominantly report using street benzos mostly with cocaine use. Some report intravenous use of cocaine. Group members report drug trends have shifted away from heroin to cocaine and street benzos due to the majority being on Buprenorphine.

Group members report the quality of cocaine is poor with less pleasurable effects. Purchase tends to be from street dealers.

ARGYLL AND BUTE

The group meets in Helensburgh on Tuesdays at 2pm

Group members report using predominately alcohol, crack and street benzos with the majority currently prescribed Espranor or Buprenorphine. Most people attending report poly-drug use of street benzos and crack with some pregabalin/gabapentin and heroin use. The majority are smoking crack with one report of IV use.

Substances are often purchased outwith the area e.g. West Dunbartonshire. Poor quality heroin is reported, with one person describing having no withdrawal effects recently after a period of abstinence due to quality being so poor.

EDINBURGH

The group meets in Edinburgh city on Tuesdays at 2pm

Group members report using mostly opiates and/or cocaine. Both intravenous use of cocaine and smoking of crack cocaine is common among group members.

Quality of cocaine is reported to be generally poor in Edinburgh city but is better quality in East Lothian. Typical price for a half gram is £20 in Edinburgh city.

BORDERS

The group meets in Langlee on Wednesdays at 2pm

Group members predominantly report using street benzos mostly with cocaine use. Some report IV use of cocaine. The majority suggest overall quality of cocaine is currently poor.

Xanax is a fairly common trend, purchased both online and on the street. One near fatal overdose reported recently after a 3mg xanax bar and 25mg 'red apple' Previous analysis from June last year found a tablet sold as a red apple locally to be the opioid Tapentadol. Intended purchase for these is generally a street benzo.

CONTACT US

For more information about the trends outlined in this bulletin or for further details about the regional living experience groups, please contact us:

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