



SDF Stop the Deaths Keynote Address

Alison Byrne – Deputy Director for Drugs Policy



- 1. NRS Statistics and Key Findings**
2. National Mission: Progress to Date
3. Delivery from now to 2026
4. Post-2026

Drug Misuse Deaths in Scotland in 2023

2023 drug misuse deaths **1,172**

Change relative to 2022 **↑ 12%**

2023 drug misuse death rate
age standardised, per 100,000 **22.4**



69%
Males

2022: 66%



31%
Females

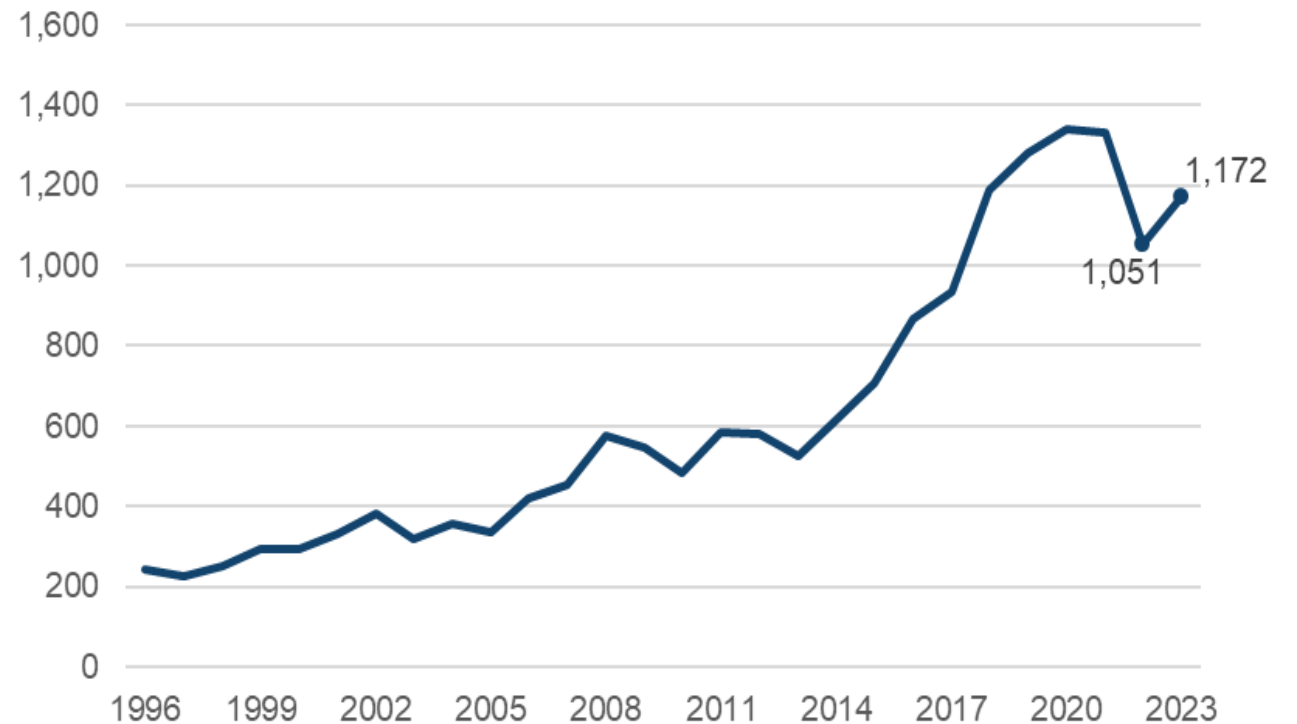
2022: 34%

Average age
45 years

2022: 45 years

Drug misuse deaths increased in 2023. This follows a large decrease in the previous year.

Drug misuse deaths, 1996 to 2023



What are the risks



More than one substance implicated

81%

2021: 79%



Opiates/opioids implicated

80%

2022: 82%



Benzodiazepines implicated

58%

2022: 57%

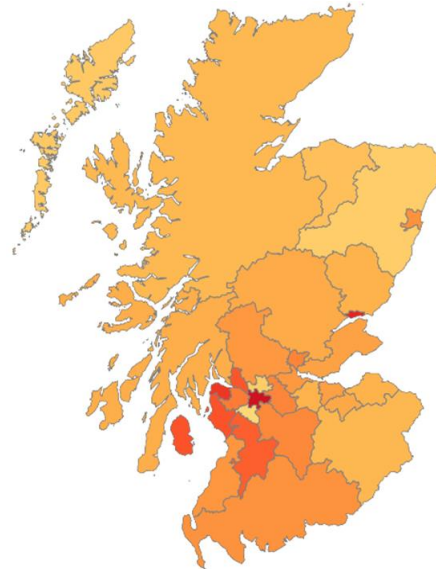


Cocaine implicated

41%

2022: 35%

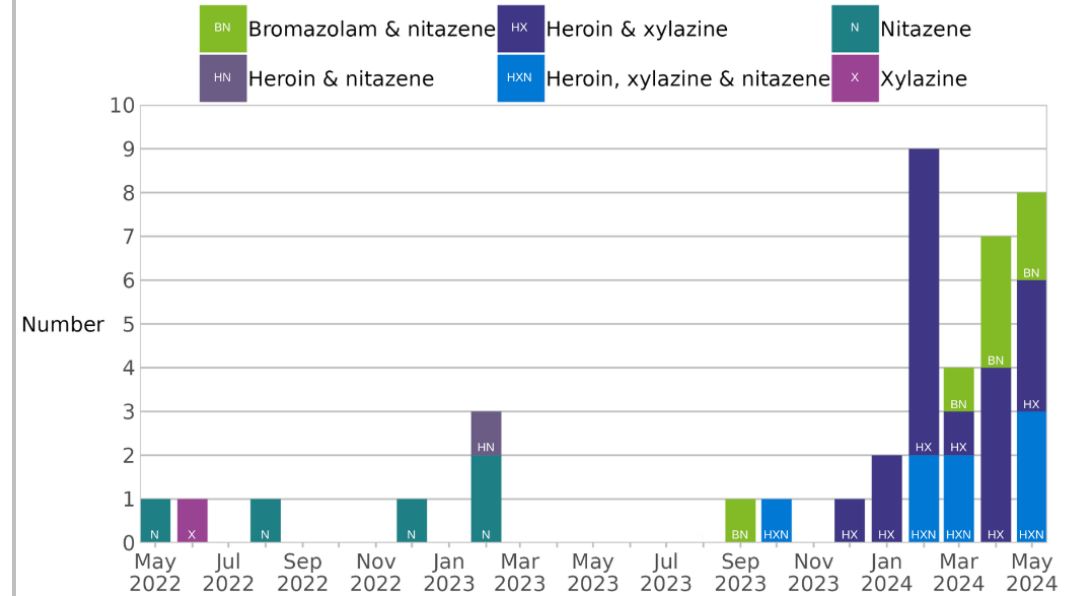
People in the **most deprived areas 15.3 times as likely to die** from drug misuse as those in the least deprived areas.



50
40
30
20
10
0

Age-standardised drug misuse mortality rate per 100,000 population. 2019-2023. Shetland and Orkney not shown.

Synthetics in Scottish samples tested by WEDINOS



Source: WEDINOS

Detections of **nitazenes** and **xylazine** are increasing in Scotland, often in samples sold as heroin and bromazolam



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National Mission: Our approach

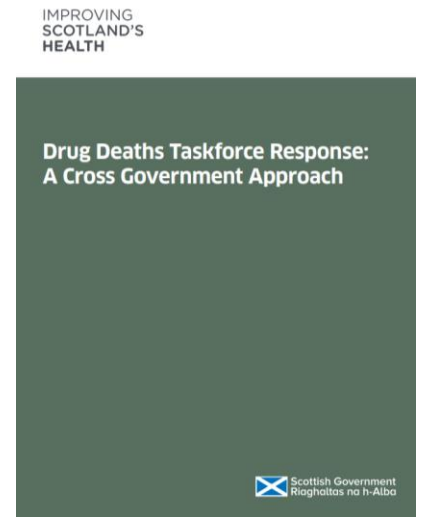


Cross-Cutting Priorities

Lived Experience at the Heart	Surveillance and Data Informed
Equalities and Human Rights	Resilient and Skilled Workforce
Tackle Stigma	Psychologically Informed

Additional £250m for lifetime of this parliament

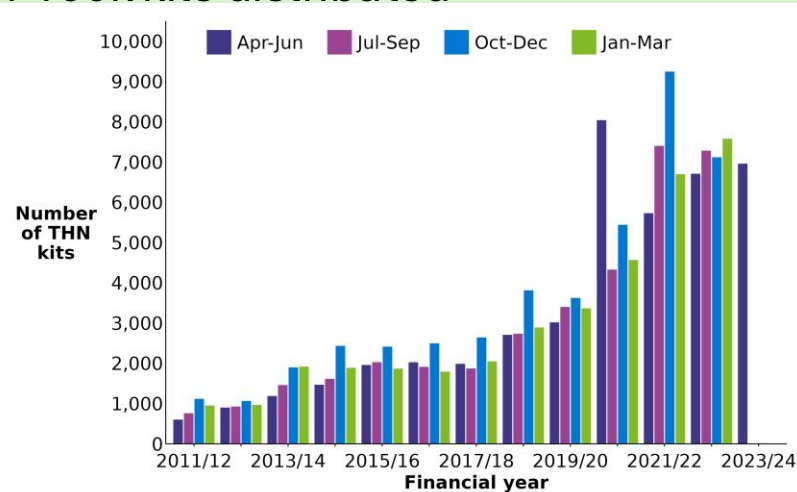
- **Harm Reduction:** focusing on harm reduction and preventing fatal overdose.
- **Improving Treatment:** through the introduction of Medication Assisted Treatment Standards and complementary treatment target and widening access to residential rehab.
- **Workforce and culture:** taking a rights-based approach to reduce stigma and support staff
- **Holistic support:** cross cutting and reliant on delivery of priorities beyond the scope of the drugs policy division.



Delivery: Harm Reduction

Two-fold increase in the distribution of Naloxone

- Major media / PR campaign
- New routes – click and deliver and peer supply
- Emergency service initiatives including police carriage
- Over 100k kits distributed



Working within the existing legislative framework

- **Safer Drug Consumption Rooms** Following Lord Advocates response Glasgow service due to be operational in summer
- **Drug Checking** – license application being developed for submission Home Office
- **Heroin Assisted Treatment** – one licenced site in Glasgow

Non-Fatal overdose pathways

NFO Pathways have been introduced or improved across the country.

Glasgow Overdose Response Team (GORT) launched September 2021 and proved successful in providing life-saving links to services.

Delivery: Improving Treatment

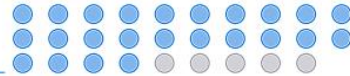
Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards: Published May 2021

Ten evidence-based standards to enable consistent delivery of safe, accessible, high-quality drug treatment across Scotland.

MAT standard 1

All people accessing services have the option to start MAT from same day of presentation.

24 out of 29 ADPs completed initial MAT assessments within 1 day of presentation for 75% of people.

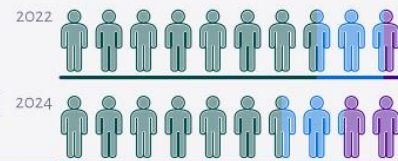


MAT standard 2

All people are supported to make an informed choice on what medication to use for MAT and the appropriate dose.

Type of drugs prescribed changed between 2022 and 2024:

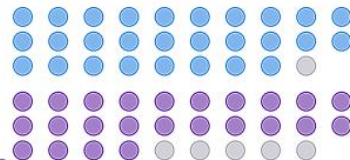
- methadone (75% to 65%)
- oral buprenorphine (19% to 17%)
- long-acting injectable buprenorphine (6% to 18%)



MAT standard 3

All people at high risk of drug-related harm are proactively identified and offered support to commence or continue MAT.

28 out of 29 ADPs attempted first contact within 3 days for 75% of people and 24 out of 29 ADPs attempted contact within 1 day.



MAT standard 5

All people will receive support to remain in treatment for as long as requested.

Across Scotland, 89% of people continued with MAT for 6 months or more.



Residential Rehab:

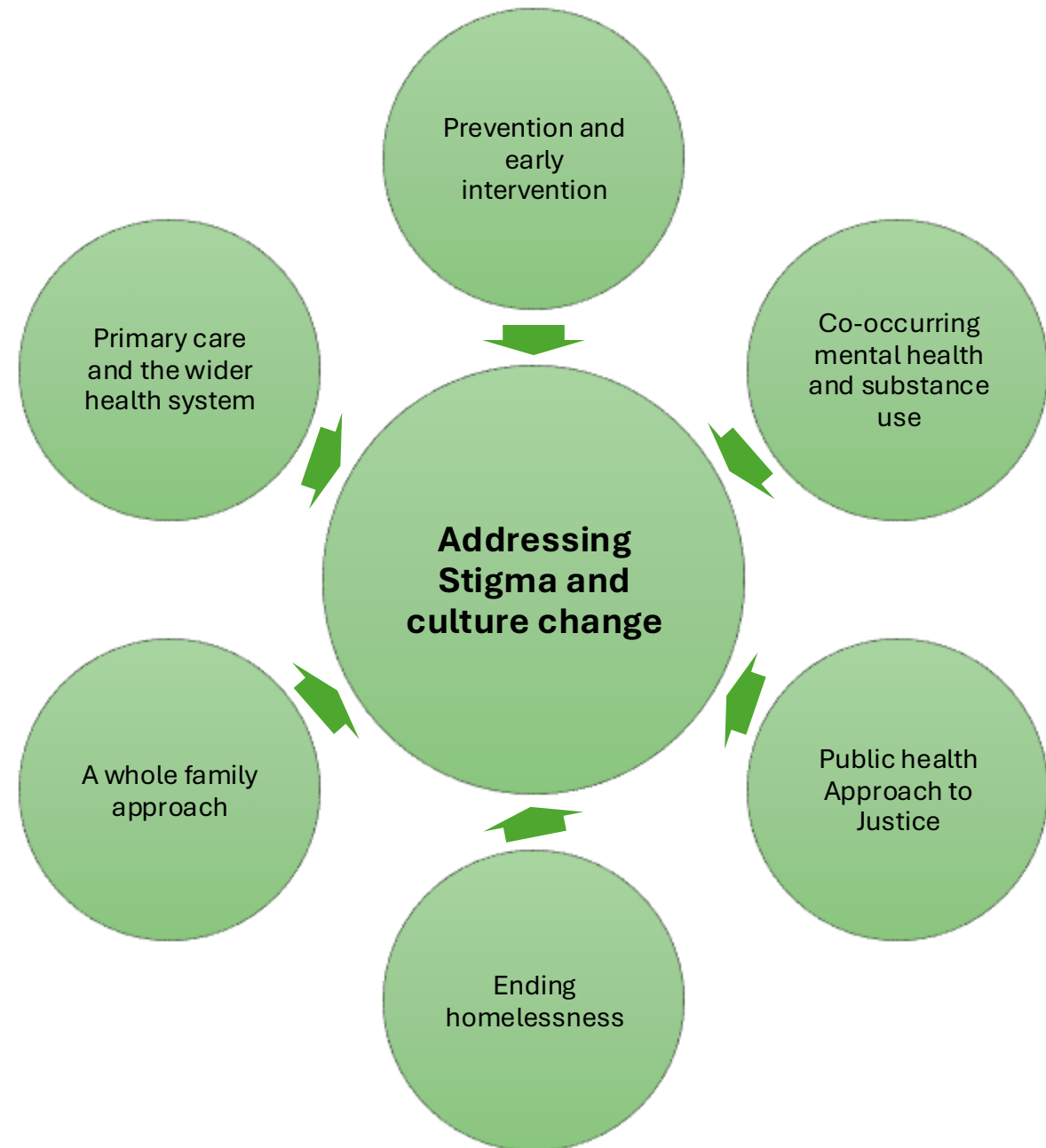
Target to increase the number of statutory funded residential rehab placements to 1,000 a year by 2026.

Delivery: Whole systems

Cross-Government response to the Taskforce

Over 80 actions from across government to address complex needs. Supported by spending commitment of £68m

National Collaborative: a Human Rights Based Approach





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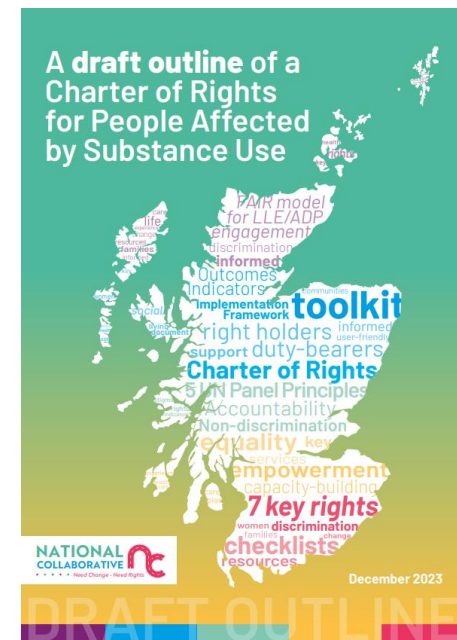
On-Going Priorities



National Specification
for drug & alcohol
services



Prevention



RADAR Scotland's Drugs Early Warning System **alert**

Xylazine – newly detected drug

In Scotland, detections of xylazine are increasing. It has been linked to harms and identified in suspected drug deaths. It is most likely to be consumed unintentionally and is usually found as an adulterant.

In the UK, it is most often detected in brown powders sold as heroin, but it has also been identified in the wider drug supply, including in counterfeit opioid painkillers (codeine and tramadol).

Xylazine is a non-opioid depressant drug that produces sedative effects. There is a high risk of overdose, particularly when mixed with opioids like heroin. It can also increase the risk of severe wounds.

Alert for: people taking heroin.

Cascade to: drug and alcohol services, emergency services, healthcare and high-risk settings.

Xylazine and heroin mix sold as heroin.

Photos credit: WEDNOC, W048383

Adverse effects

- wounds, ulcers and skin problems
- sudden collapse
- unconsciousness
- loss of coordination
- feeling sick or unwell

Harm reduction

The safest choice is to not use drugs, but if you do:

- Test drugs using www.wedlines.org
- Dose low. Take the smallest amount you can and leave a long gap in between doses.
- Use with people you trust and take turns to dose.
- Maintain good hygiene and keep wounds clean. Cover open wounds with a simple dressing and seek medical care straight away.

Depressant overdose signs

- unresponsive (will not wake when shaken)
- snoring or noisy breathing
- blue or pale lips and skin
- seizures or fits

In an emergency

Always get help quickly – stay calm, call 999 and ask for an ambulance. Give as much information as you can and be open about what drugs were taken.

Naloxone should be given to anyone who is unresponsive and displaying the signs of an overdose.

To make a report or find out more visit www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR

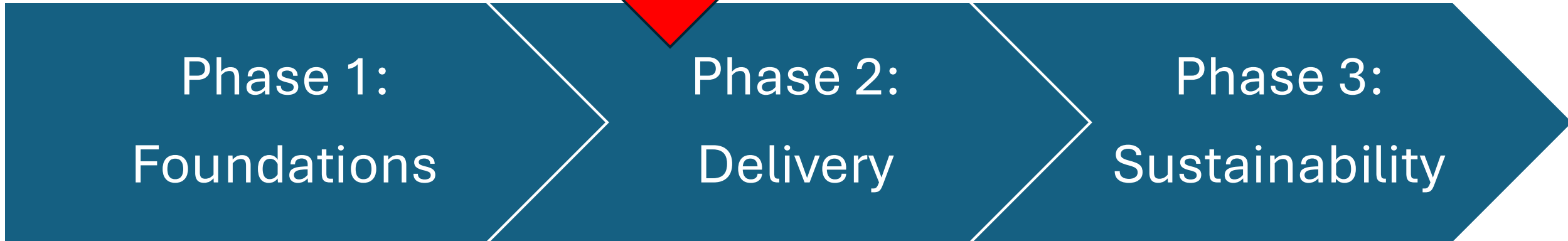
Alert number: 2024/09
Version: V1.0
Release date: 9 May 2024



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National Mission Programme

We are here



In the service
of Scotland



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Contact:

Alison.Byrne@gov.scot