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Campaign aims to cut drug harms and deaths in Aberdeen

A campaign has been launched by Aberdeen City Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) to help prevent avoidable deaths and hospitalisations from drug overdoses across the city.

Adverts will run on local radio, social media and buses over the festive period and will focus on these key messages:

- How to 'SPOT' the signs and symptoms of overdose and how to respond
- Naloxone – a lifesaving drug which can buy time for an ambulance to arrive by reversing the effects of opioid overdose
- 'Stop and Think' to try and reduce drug-related harm.

ADP Lead Simon Rayner said: "Although the festive period can be a time when spirits are high and inhibitions lowered, it is also a difficult time for those people who are most at risk of overdose.

"Isolation, loneliness, stress and anxiety are common issues which can increase the harms associated with taking drugs. There are many reasons why people use substances and we want to encourage people to be as safe as they can be and 'stop and think' before taking a substance to reduce their risk of overdose."

Mr Rayner added: "We know that there are lots of fake tablets around, which can have toxic effects. They are often made to look like real prescription medicines which increases the risk of harm. Tablets bought online or on the street can sadly be fatal.

"We also know that the risks of taking any drug are increased when taken with other substances. This includes mixing alcohol and some medicines including diazepam, methadone and pain medication, along with mixing alcohol and cocaine. Our advice to everyone is to test the effects of a small amount of every substance first and try to avoid using multiple substances."

The campaign also focuses on encouraging people to know how to 'SPOT' the signs if things do go wrong and what to do.

This includes Naloxone, a lifesaving drug which can buy time for an ambulance to arrive by temporarily reversing the effects of opioid overdose. It can be given by anyone to save a life.

Naloxone is free and easy to use and is available to order online. You can also get it from most pharmacies in Grampian and all local drug services.

Mr Rayner added: "Time is critical if you suspect someone has had an overdose. We should all know the signs and symptoms of overdose so we know how to respond if faced with an emergency.

"Many substances slow down breathing. Snoring or raspy breathing can be a sign someone is struggling to breathe. Don't leave anyone to 'sleep it off' – if someone isn't responding to you or you can't wake them, this is a clear signal to take action. Pale, clammy skin and blue lips or fingernails are other important signs. Call 999. Ask for an ambulance. Stay with the person. If you know someone at risk of overdose, make sure you have naloxone and use it."

Alcohol and Drugs Action offers a seven-days-a-week helpline on (Freephone) 0333 3 448 355 and can provide access to Naloxone (free of charge) and support with substance use. Naloxone is also available from most community pharmacies in Grampian and can be accessed online.

To find out more on Naloxone and how to recognise and respond to an overdose visit www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/overdose/

NOTES TO EDITORS

Key Messages:

'SPOT' the Signs

See and know the signs of overdose and know what to do

Phone 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance

Overdose can be reversed use Naloxone

Take action. Time is Key. Don't wait

'Stop and Think' – Reduce your Risk

- Do you know what you are taking: You can't tell by looking at it what drug is present or how pure it is – even in the same batch. Start with a small amount and go slowly.
- Avoid mixing different drugs including alcohol and medicines: This can cause dangerous, unintended or unpredictable effects and should be avoided.
- Avoid taking drugs alone: Have a 'sober' friend with you to help if things go wrong.
- Carry Naloxone: Naloxone is a medicine that can be a life-saver when an overdose has occurred. Get it, carry it, use it.
- Call an ambulance: Make sure professional help is on the way as soon as possible.

The Alcohol and Drug Partnership

The Alcohol and Drug Partnerships leads and coordinates a whole-system approach to better plan, deliver and improve services for those affected by alcohol and drugs, and to monitor the effectiveness of approaches to reducing risk and harm. The ADP brings together a range of stakeholders including representatives from local strategic partnerships, statutory and voluntary sector organisations, as well as community members and people with lived experience.