



The Association of Directors of Public Health

Response to the latest drug-related deaths figures

Drug related deaths are a major concern; while there has been some progress there is much still to do.

The Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) welcomes today's new publication on drug-related deaths, which shows some areas of progress and but much work still to do. Drug-related deaths have continued to rise overall since 1993 and are a major concern to councils and our health partners.

Directors of Public Health are fully committed to reducing the harm caused by drug misuse. The ADPH welcomes the shared ambition set out in the Government's new Drugs Strategy but the scale of the challenge requires it to be adequately resourced and clear joined up pathways need to be agreed across services.

Professor Jim McManus, ADPH Lead for drugs, has said:

"The reasons for the continued high number of drug-related deaths are varied. When Public Health England and the Local Government Association, with ADPH input, investigated this last year, they came to a number of conclusions:

- *The increased availability of heroin since 2012 (this followed a period when the purity and availability was significantly reduced).*
- *The ageing cohort of heroin users, many of whom started to use heroin in the 1980s and 1990s. The cumulative impact of their drug use means many are now experiencing physical and mental health conditions that make them much more susceptible to overdoses. Over 90% of local authorities now making naloxone available is recognised by ONS as one possible success in preventing this increasing further. But there is more to do.*
- *The growing availability of Novel Psychoactive Substances.*
- *A significant increase in purity in some street drugs means people used to less pure drugs are at increased risk of death from overdosing on purer drugs.*
- *Other factors including suicides and poly-drug and alcohol use.*

We have also seen, since the 1990s, pockets of different risk to drug users, including infections and most lately the impact of very pure drugs including parafentanyl causing problems which can result in unintentional death."

ENDS

Further information

The [Association of Directors of Public Health](http://www.adph.org.uk) (ADPH) is the representative body for Directors of Public Health (DPH) in the UK. It seeks to improve and protect the health of the population through collating and presenting the views of DsPH; advising on public health policy and legislation at a local, regional, national and international level; facilitating a support network for DsPH; and providing opportunities for DsPH to develop professional practice.

The Association has a rich heritage, its origins dating back 160 years. It is a collaborative organisation working in partnership with others to maximize the voice for public health.

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