

Consideration of naloxone: supplementary information on the Welsh naloxone programme

Background

The Welsh Government's substance misuse strategy 'Working Together to Reduce Harm' was launched in October 2008 and contained a commitment to implement actions to reduce drug related deaths.

In response, the Welsh Government invited key stakeholders to engage in a National Working Group in January 2009 to develop guidance and protocols for the introduction of take home naloxone across Wales. A number of demonstration sites followed in June 2009 based on drug related death hotspots and included all prisons and a number of selected community sites. The demonstration sites were evaluated by the University of Glamorgan over an 18 month period and involved both process and outcome measures. The evaluation was completed in March 2011 with the main recommendation being that take home naloxone is effective and should be rolled out across Wales.

National Rollout

The then Minister for Health and Social Services, Edwina Hart MBE announced the national rollout of take home naloxone in April 2011. An implementation plan was drawn up and the challenging target of delivering take home naloxone across Wales by March 2012 was set. This was achieved by November 2011, four months ahead of schedule. Take home naloxone is now being delivered in **all** community sites and prisons across Wales, the first UK country to achieve this. To date 1200 kits have been dispensed with over 120 uses of naloxone administered by service users to reverse opiate related overdose.

Harm Reduction Database

To support the implementation of naloxone, a harm reduction database was launched on 1st March 2012. This database is a robust secure web based tool which provides statistical reports by area on the distribution, use and outcomes of take home naloxone. In addition, demographic and health data is also collected which enables onward referral to other services, thereby addressing wider harm reduction needs.

Recent Developments

Police Training

Take home naloxone training now forms part of police officers annual first aid and officer safety training in Wales. This familiarises police officers with the scheme, helps them to recognise the take home naloxone kit and to also understand its purpose.

Information Sharing Protocol

An information sharing protocol has been developed between Accident & Emergency (A&E) departments and community drug treatment providers to facilitate onward referral of individuals who attend A&E with a non fatal overdose, to appropriate substance misuse and harm reduction services. This encourages multi agency working and enables those who are currently not in treatment to access the take home naloxone schemes.

Patient Group Directive (PGD)

One area of Wales has amended their PGD to allow them to distribute two take home naloxone kits to one individual. This enables the service user to give a kit to a carer or hostel for safekeeping in case of overdose.

Future Developments

Paramedic Study

Ethical approval was gained in December 2011 for a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) in the Cardiff and Vale region to examine:

- What is the feasibility of paramedics supplying take home naloxone kits to service users when they attend for an opiate overdose for which a 999 call has been made? and;
- What is the feasibility of conducting a RCT to determine safety, clinical and cost-effectiveness of take home naloxone distribution by paramedics?

The study will involve 90 paramedics and will include follow up interviews and focus groups with service users and paramedics.

Accident and Emergency (A&E)

Finally, the Welsh Government is currently in discussion with one of its Health Boards to undertake a pilot whereby individuals who attend A&E with a non-fatal overdose will be given one to one brief training on overdose and administering naloxone and provided with a take home naloxone kit.