

**SCOTTISH
DRUG DEATHS
TASKFORCE**

**FORWARD PLAN
2021/22**



A woman with curly hair is shown in profile, looking out a window. The image is overlaid with a teal color and several yellow and black triangles pointing in various directions. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant.

“Scotland faces a unique, multi-faceted challenge...”

CONTEXT

Since the Drug Deaths Taskforce held its first meeting in September 2019 it has been working to draw together the evidence that will enable it to fulfil its task to identify a tailored strategy to tackle the public health crisis in Scotland's rising Drug-Related-Deaths (DRD's). Whilst the progress of some of this work has been interrupted by the impact of Covid19, the urgency underlying this work has not. The Taskforce now sets out its high-level plan for the first time. It does so for the following reasons:

- The Taskforce is committed to being open and transparent, and seeks to give clarity on the what, how and when it expects its intended actions to positively impact DRD's, promoting the widest possible understanding of what we are trying to achieve.
 - It seeks to do so in an accessible way through channels such as its website, social media and mainstream media dialogue; whilst the nature of its work often involves experts exchanging in expert language, Drug-Related-Deaths are a national issue affecting all of Scotland and its communities. It must present its intentions accordingly.
 - Scotland faces a unique, multi-faceted challenge, (<https://drugdeathstaskforce.scot/scotland-s-unique-challenge/>) which demands a unique multi-faceted response. It is only right that this should be open to scrutiny, but any benefit we can gain from debate and exchange around this is maximised if this is forward-focussed and informed, fixing on the best form of actions for the future rather than revisiting perceived past failures. Our plan is offered as such.
 - We have reached a critical point in our response to this particular health emergency. We are now working with a full range of public agencies and organisations to establish and rapidly implement best practice across all touchpoints of the issue. A transformation across Scotland is required, and we need the understanding and support from all Scotland to achieve it.
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DRUG DEATHS TASKFORCE MISSION AND VISION

The Taskforce was formed to identify and advise on an evidence-based strategy, and its component parts, that can successfully tackle Scotland's unique challenge. Inherent within this is the need to source the evidence which informs that strategy.

Whilst some of this is provided by the expert volunteers that make up the Taskforce, a programme of commissioning Tests of Change (TOCs) to provide evidence is now well underway, with these scheduled to provide vital learning over the next 2-3 years. Our plan gives proposed timelines for the collation and consolidation of the evidence together with the broad categorisation of work.

The Taskforce recognises that the nature of the challenge facing us means we cannot simply wait for all evidence to emerge in its complete, collated form; we must seek to save lives as we do so. This means:

- Supporting TOCs which have potential to save lives as well as inform future strategy to reduce DRD's
- Rapid implementation of learning across all relevant agencies whenever these are identified as capable of immediate impact – ***Evidence In Action***

At the highest level, *Evidence In Action* and embracing the dual nature of our mission – Identifying strategy and making every effort to save lives as we do so – are the core of the plan being presented.

The 'Plan on a Page' Schematic gives detail on the planned actions and TOCs around the Taskforce's six identified strategies (<https://drugdeathstaskforce.scot/our-work/>) including addressing stigma. It also identifies where each action sits in relation to the Taskforce's high-level areas of focus detailed below.



“We cannot wait for all evidence to emerge in its complete, collated form.”

TIMELINES

The ‘Plan on a Page’ Schematic highlights planned actions between now and the end of 2022, the deadline by which the Taskforce intends to deliver its final report detailing the evidence-based strategy needed to tackle Scotland’s unique challenge.

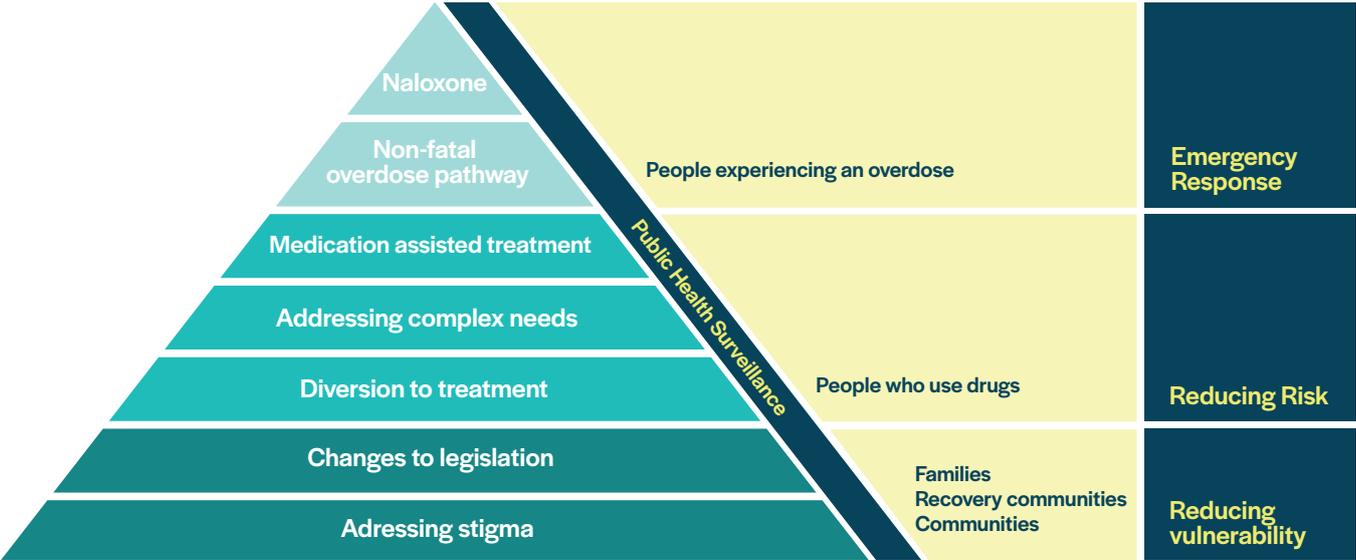
A key milestone is the delivery of an Interim Report in June 2021 which will detail progress against actions. It is intended to deliver this, so that an incoming government in summer 2021 can consider our proposed next steps as part of any new policy approach to DRDs.

Assuming Government approval on a way forward, the Taskforce will develop a further progress report June 2022 and seek stakeholder feedback.

The final full report will be presented by the end of 2022 when the Taskforce envisages completion of its mission.



STRATEGIC EVIDENCE BASED APPROACH



TASKFORCE PLAN: HIGH-LEVEL AREAS OF FOCUS

The previously mentioned six identified strategies themselves can be categorised into the areas of focus this plan will refer to in order to provide clarity on which element in our multi-faceted challenge they address, and when we expect each to impact positively on DRD's.

The Taskforce recognises that whilst the challenge is complex and unique, at the highest level there are only three ways to prevent lives being lost:

- Maximising capacity and capability of emergency services, families and friends and agencies to deal with a potentially fatal overdose by being properly equipped and trained.
- Maximising the support, access, and range of practical and appropriate choices of pathways for anyone with high risk drug use.
- Addressing issues that can pre-dispose the vulnerable to move into higher risk use of drugs through relevant key agencies and reducing the associated impact on wider communities.

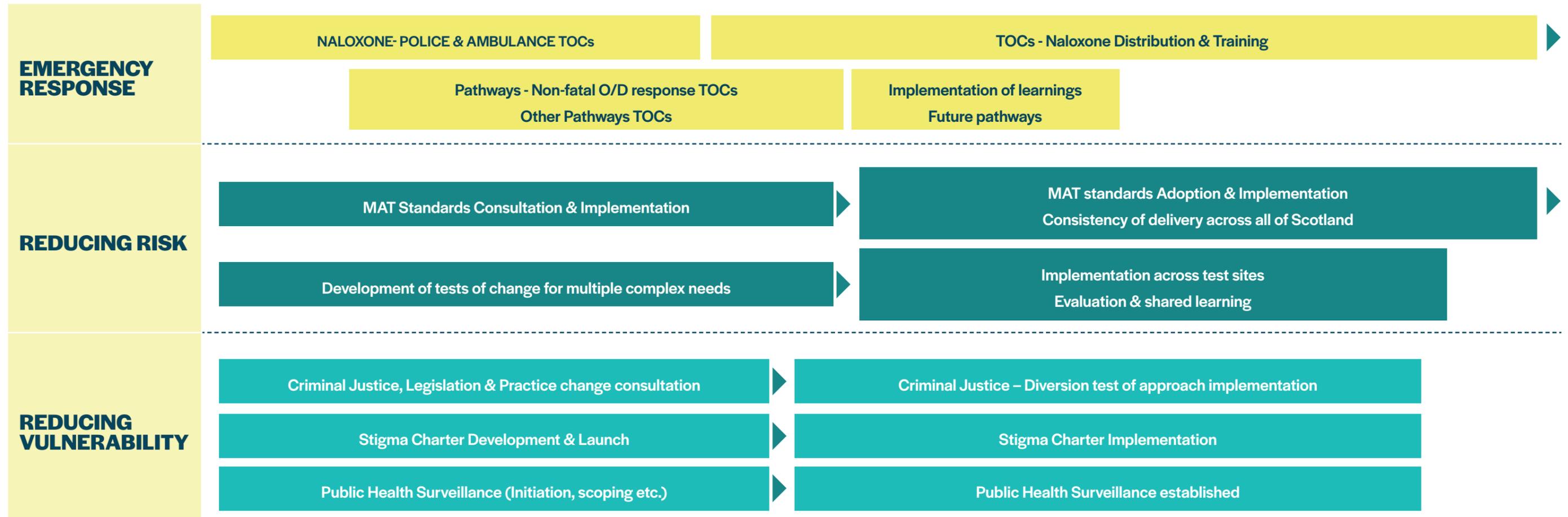
The three areas of focus above create the three broad categories of Taskforce focus – emergency response, reducing risk, and reducing vulnerability, with associated impact timescales of short-term, medium-term and longer-term respectively.

The three areas of focus extend to the indicators to benchmark the Taskforce's progress towards its mission and vision. Our approach operates within the context of the Rights, Respect and Recovery framework established by Scottish Government.

DDTF PLAN ON A PAGE

	2020		2021		2022		
TIMELINE	DEC		JUNE	JULY	DEC	JUNE	DEC
	New DRD Figures for 2019 published Forward Plan published		Interim Report Progress identifying strategies	New Govt response to interim report	Progress strategies	Interim Report	Final Report Recommended Strategy Implementation guide Impact on DTFF and DRDs

Three Focus Areas



INDICATORS AND BENCHMARKS

Plan progress is intended to be monitored as follows:

CATEGORY OF DDTF FOCUS	STRATEGIES	DDTF ESTIMATED TIMELINE IMPACT	POTENTIAL HIGH LEVEL INDICATORS?
EMERGENCY RESPONSE	NALOXONE	SHORT TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach into at risk population across ADP areas. Number of additional orgs & outlets carrying naloxone
EMERGENCY RESPONSE	Non-fatal O/D Immediate Response Pathways	SHORT/MEDIUM TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of ADPs with non-fatal OD pathway Cases through tests of change immediate pathways
REDUCING RISK	CRIMINAL JUSTICE	SHORT/MEDIUM TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pathways for people intersecting with the criminal justice system being referred to services People taking up pathfinder services Naloxone distribution to prisoners upon release
REDUCING RISK	MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT	SHORT/MEDIUM TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numbers of people on OST No of ADPs adopting MAT standards No of ADPs offering treatment choice on drug formularies
REDUCING RISK	TARGETING THOSE MOST AT RISK (MCN) including multiple complex needs	MEDIUM/LONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Care review takes account of needs of PWUD Outcomes from individual MCN Tests of Change e.g. Measures of co-morbidity, mental health, quality of life, recovery, treatment satisfaction Awareness in ADPs of MCN dimension
REDUCING VULNERABILITY	STIGMA STRATEGY	LONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stigma strategy recommendations adopted including Scottish Govt response. Adoption of Stigma Charter across a range of Scottish public organisations Surveys of stakeholders – awareness/action on Stigma
REDUCING VULNERABILITY	Drug law reform (part of Criminal Justice strategy)	LONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published recommendations Greater public discussion/debate
ALL	OPTIMISING PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE	MEDIUM/LONG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-agency progress towards plan

FUNDING & FURTHER TOCs

Taskforce funding detail is available on its website (<https://drugdeathstaskforce.scot/about-the-taskforce/funding/>), together with detail on TOCs which have been approved for funding to date, and an explanation of the selection process by which future TOCs will be chosen in future funding years. A list of current funded initiatives is provided in the appendix.

NEXT STEPS

- Preparation of reports as per Plan timelines
 - Indicators and benchmarks to populate Taskforce website as they become available
 - Further TOCs commissioned, evidenced, Evidence In Action as per high level strategy
 - Publication of reports as per plan timelines.
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APPENDIX ONE: SPECIFIC WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN

The Taskforce has supported a wide range of projects and tests of change. These projects are ongoing and are required to provide regular feedback to the Taskforce as well as a final report.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Naloxone

The following projects have been funded/supported:

- Pilot of police carriage of naloxone in three areas. [Early 2021 – for six months]
- Scottish Ambulance Service national programme of take home naloxone distribution following non-fatal overdose calls. [January 2020 – September 2023]
- Made further progress in supply of naloxone to prisoners on release (support for ongoing work). [ongoing]
- Increased supply of naloxone in response to COVID-19 through amended prosecution guidelines from the Lord Advocate. [May 2020-COVID period]
- The delivery of a peer to peer naloxone supply project across Scotland through Scottish Drugs Forum. [December 2020 – March 2022]
- Glasgow Caledonian University evaluation of the peer to peer naloxone training supported (research fund). [September 2020 – September 2021]
- University of Stirling’s novel Intranasal Take Home Naloxone (ITHN) intervention overdose prevention package for the prescription opioid overdose risk (POOR) population attending community pharmacies in Fife (research fund). [September 2020 – September 2021]

- The DDTF Emergency Response Fund for ADPs supported naloxone-related proposals in East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Borders, Fife, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrew, Inverclyde, Argyll & Bute, Highland, North Lanark, South Lanark, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Orkney, Shetland, and Angus. These proposals include – amongst others – distribution of naloxone kits from non-treatment services (North Ayrshire), improved peer supply of naloxone (Borders), increased supply of naloxone (Aberdeen City), distribution via postal kits (East Renfrew), training in naloxone (Argyll & Bute), a coordinator to develop peer supply (Highland), pharmacy provision (South Lanark), safe storage boxes (East Lothian), and employment of a naloxone champion (West Lothian). [July 2020 – 2021, funding for 1 year]

Non-fatal O/D Immediate Response Pathways

The following projects are funded:

- Glasgow pilot of rapid response to a non-fatal overdose, followed by a focused period of support to individuals, engaging them with mainstream alcohol and other drug services. [December 2020 – 2021]
- Scottish Recovery Consortium pilot in Lanarkshire to support people into an immediate response pathway following a non-fatal overdose. This will combine a community based response with a residential rehabilitation service. [January 2021-January 2023]
- University of Stirling research project to examine the characteristics and outcomes of overdose-related ambulance call-outs (research fund). [September 2020- March 2022]
- University of Dundee project to understand the psychosocial factors associated to Non-Fatal Overdose (NFOD) among people who use drugs and to identify intervention strategies that will have an effect on rates of NFOD, thereby reducing the incidence of DRD (research fund). [September 2020 – September 2021]
- The DDTF Emergency Response fund is supporting non-fatal overdose pathways in East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Highland, North Lanark, East Lothian, Orkney, Dundee City and the Western Isles. [July 2020 – 2021, funding for 1 year]

REDUCING RISK

Criminal Justice

- Developed a test-of-change proposal which will create a police referral pathway, for people who use drugs, to Peer Navigators who will facilitate support at the earliest point of interaction with the criminal justice system. Information on the referred individual's needs and interaction with support services will then be shared with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to inform their prosecutorial decision making. [January/February 2021 – March 2023]

Medication Assisted Treatment

- Developed a set of 10 Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) standards which will ensure the necessary range of support is available, wherever an individual lives in Scotland. The DDTF MAT sub-group are also working directly with partners to achieve these MAT standards through a programme of quality improvement support. [Work began in September 2020 – implementing standards will be ongoing]
- Scottish Drugs Forum funded to support the delivery of a programme of work to support the delivery of the MAT standards. [November 2020 – November 2022]
- University of St Andrews are designing and implementing effective telehealth MAT projects, addressing the MAT standards implementation gap by collaboratively addressing service provider concerns, both in conventional delivery but primarily delivery through telehealth, in order to pandemic-proof access to treatment as much as possible. [December 2020 – December 2021]
- Glasgow Caledonian University funded project to measure the risks of mortality and quantify the impact of specific interventions (MAT and Take-Home Naloxone) to protect against drug-related deaths (research Fund). [September 2020 – September 2021]

Targeting Those Most at Risk

- Families as Lifesavers project: Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs. This project is developing and testing a programme with family members to provide wraparound, intensive family support, harm reduction and a death prevention model, with the focus on family members who are concerned their loved one is at high risk of drug-related death. [November 2020 – November 2022]
- NHS Lothian – We Start by Seeing the Person. This COVID 19 legacy project provides person centred, trauma informed, coordinated co-production partnership approach to complex human needs. Delivered in partnership by NHS Lothian Harm Reduction Team, The Salvation Army Wellbeing Centre and Edinburgh Access Practice. [December 2020 – December 2022]

- Working with all of Scotland's Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) the Multiple Complex Needs (MCN) sub-group is working with a number of sites to develop tests-of-change to address the needs of those with multiple complex needs (such as problem substance use, homelessness and mental health problems) and who are in that most at risk population. This includes tests of change in: the use of a drug liaison service; Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) training; peer-led engagement and advocacy services; developing integrated mental health and substance use treatment and testing a 'one stop shop' approach for holistic care. [These projects will get underway in early 2021 for 18 months].

Optimising Public Health Surveillance

- Leading on the development of a multi-organisational surveillance system for Scotland, how it can be established, and how it will function, to support whole system, public health action to prevent and address harms from drug use. [July 2020 – ongoing]
- Public Health Scotland will be running a number of webinars in December 2020 to inform how such a system should be developed and identify priorities for its development. [December 2020]
- Funded a project through Stirling University to research and develop the key components required ahead of the implementation of a drug checking facility in three areas in Scotland. [January 2021 - January 2023]

REDUCING VULNERABILITY

Addressing Stigma

- Published a Stigma Strategy 'A Strategy to Address the Stigmatisation of People and Communities Affected by Drug Use' was published in July 2020. The delivery of the recommendations sit with the Scottish Government and partners. [July 2020 – ongoing]
- The DDTF members with lived experience are leading the development of a stigma charter. [December 2020 – ongoing]

Drug Law Reform

- A phased consultation on drug law reform, to explore views on changes, amendments and new regulations which could be made to the 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act, considering the options available under the reserved Act and those available in the event that UK Government agrees to devolve the powers in the Act to Scotland. The consultation will promote debate, within a framework of evidence, and may lead to a wider consensus that change is needed. [Phase one January/February 2021, Phase two May 2021 – Dec 2022]

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