Healthcare Improvement Scotland

# Reducing harm in communities, take home Naloxone

Case Study

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NHS SCOTLAND

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# Situation

The Changing Lives Report in 2022 recommended that all community pharmacies within Scotland should be able to supply Take Home Naloxone (THN) which reverses the effects of opioid overdose to the following groups of people:

- People who use opioid drugs like morphine or heroin,
- Families of people who use opioid drugs,
- Anyone likely to witness an opioid overdose.
- This is to help reduce drug deaths and associated harms across Scotland.

Community pharmacies are an essential community-based resource. As discussed in the HIS MAT Standards Pharmacy impact report, they are a key point of access and engagement for individuals who also access drug and alcohol treatment. To support the availability and accessibility of take home naloxone, pharmacy staff should receive training in:

- Overdose awareness,
- Provision of THN.

From 30 October 2023, the Scottish Government and Community Pharmacy Scotland agreed to implement emergency access to supplies of naloxone across Scotland. This was a first step in the aim to have emergency holding and supply of take home naloxone in all community pharmacies.

Challenges faced in relation to the supply of take home naloxone across community pharmacies in Scotland include:

- Gaining appropriate funding,
- Engagement from pharmacy contractors and their staff,
- Finding time and capacity to train staff,
- Implementing an operational IT system to process claims.

This meant NHS Fife saw low levels of uptake of the take home naloxone programme. NHS Fife therefore deployed a senior pharmacy technician for substance use and other pharmacy staff to improve uptake of take home naloxone. Their aim was to:

- Ensure all pharmacies have Naloxone available for emergency use
- Ensure staff are proficient in the use of naloxone
- Increase the number of pharmacies that were able to supply take home naloxone.

These roles were funded by the Fife Alcohol and Drug Partnership.

# Approach

They identified a key first step to improve engagement. This was undertaken in two phases:

- Phase one: Hosting an online seminar for pharmacy teams
- Phase two: Unannounced drop-in visits to the pharmacies to discuss the benefits and process of the take home naloxone programme.

The unannounced visits had the greatest impact and immediately led to an increase in registrations.

To support roll-out and monitoring, it was important to ensure the online NEO360® system access for registered pharmacies was updated. This allows staff to record the provision of and claims for naloxone, as well as monitoring patient training. Having the platform functioning was critical for accurate data collection and measurement.

The next step was for pharmacy staff to undertake the necessary training on overdose prevention and naloxone administration. Learning whilst carrying out the day-to-day operation of the pharmacy was critical. This ensured there was no service disruption for the community. Training was therefore scheduled on days convenient to staff and split into multiple sessions.

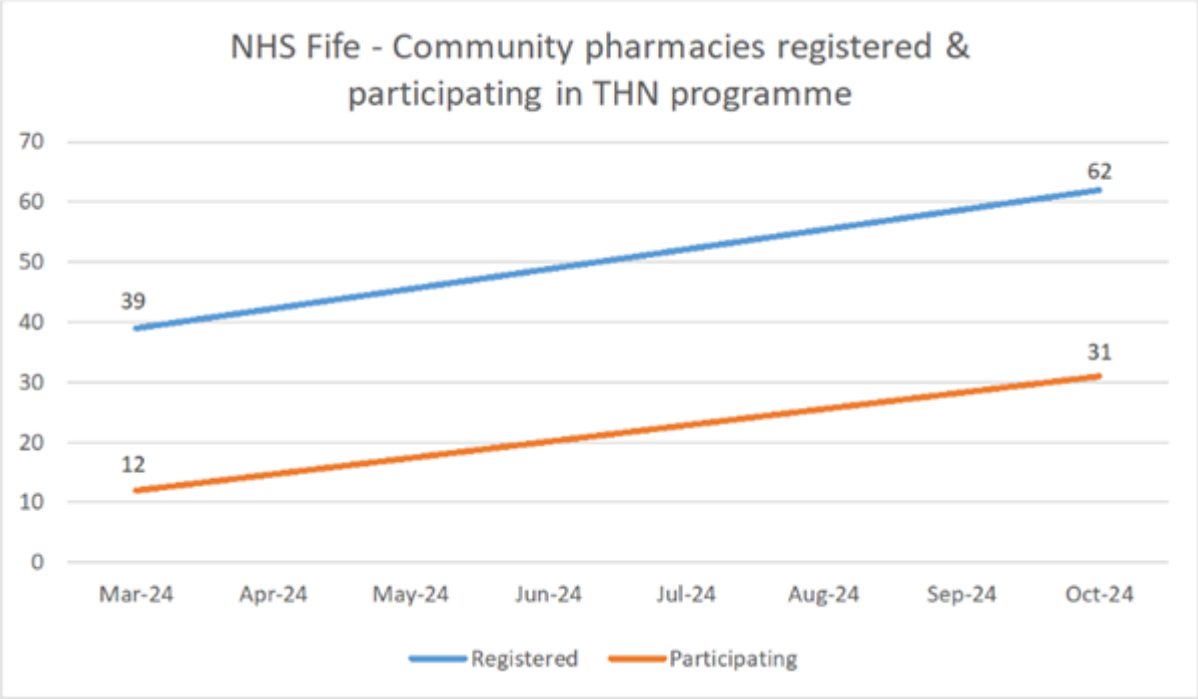
The training was conducted collaboratively with naloxone training specialists from the organisation With You. They facilitated the overdose awareness aspect of the training with pharmacy technicians ensuring proficiency with the NEO claims system. Components of the training included:

- Handling demonstration take home naloxone kits,
- Training checklists for the dispensing of take home naloxone,
- Processing mock claims on NEO,
- Question and answer sessions to solidify learning.

Training was undertaken in-person within the pharmacy. This offered a collaborative space for staff to not only receive the necessary training, but to engage on wider matters including current trends and evidence in substance use disorder. Staff could also discuss and share best practices to allow training to evolve.

To help maintain overall uptake of take home naloxone, the senior technician emailed pharmacies monthly. Giving details of activity for that month, figures for what pharmacies were most active, as well as any upcoming milestones.

# Impact




The figures above highlight the increase in active participation in the programme since changes to increase engagement were introduced in March 2024. In total NHS Fife have trained 300 staff members across 50 community pharmacies and statutory addiction services. This has meant that from April to October 2024, community pharmacies have distributed over 167 naloxone kits within Fife. Compared to 54 kits for the whole of the previous year.

Within community pharmacies that have received training, as of November 2024 there have been three recorded instances of staff intervening in overdose occurrences within the vicinity of the pharmacy.

On one instance, a member of staff responded to a patient experiencing a suspected overdose outside of the pharmacy. Following the correct take home naloxone training steps, they were able to confidently assess whether to administer the naloxone. In this case, it was not necessary as the person was still responsive. Being familiar with the individual helped establish what substances and quantities they had taken, and they made sure to remain with them to await medical attention. The learning from this case has encouraged even further uptake of the take home naloxone programme across community pharmacies.

Success has also been achieved in raising awareness of the training with the those around the patients prescribed Opioid Substitution Therapy. This includes their friends, family and staff who support them. Staff reinforce that naloxone cannot be self-administered, to encourage as many people as possible to undertake the training.

# Next steps

The success in engagement and availability of take home naloxone supports the community-based responses in reducing harm. To maximise the impact that this has, there is an opportunity to expand the training and provision of naloxone for emergency response into GP practices and other community-based health services.

Lastly, there is a need to ensure sustainable funding for this programme and wider harm reduction to help reduce Fife's drug related deaths and in the long run, the aim should be to ensure take-home naloxone is available from as many locations as possible across Scotland.

For updates on the work being done in Fife or if you have any questions please feel free to contact fife.fifepharmacycommpharm@nhs.scot or visit.

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