



RADAR

Rapid Action Drug Alerts and Response

Scotland's Drugs Early Warning System

Rapidly detecting, assessing
and responding to threats
of drug harm.

Why is RADAR needed?

Drug-related harms in Scotland are at record levels. Drug deaths in Scotland are the highest in Europe and are several times the rate in England and Wales.

The reasons for these high numbers are complex and include a number of factors such as an evolving drug supply, the use of multiple drugs at the same time and changes to treatment services.

Drug harms are also closely linked to social and health inequalities – people living in more deprived areas in Scotland are significantly more likely to experience drug-related harms and deaths than those living in less deprived areas.

To respond to this public health emergency, RADAR provides a structured way to collect, assess and communicate information about drugs, identifying risks quickly and informing rapid action to reduce harm and save lives.

RADAR aims to reduce the short, medium and long-term harms associated with drugs in the Scottish population by:

- identifying trends, risks and clusters of overdose and intoxication
- responding to new and emerging substances, changing harms and other relevant scenarios
- advising on and implementing immediate harm prevention and control measures
- providing high-quality current public health information
- informing decision-making about resource allocation, prevention and service design and delivery.

Who is involved?

Public Health Scotland (PHS) coordinates the national programme. We use a partnership approach to support local services, community members and public health teams to ensure the system is relevant and meets the needs of the people and places it serves.



National

We provide coordination, consistency and support, including guidance documents and toolkits.



Local

Communities are at the heart of the system and local knowledge and context is central to successful response.



People

People come first and foremost. We strive to have a system that is useful, trusted and accessible.

RADAR involves people and services from across the country and it is made up of three multi-agency groups:

- **The Development Group:** formed of communication, data and intervention subgroups that support system design and development, including the creation of a communication and response toolkit.
- **The Network:** a wide and inclusive group that collects and shares drug trends and data, helps to validate information and processes outputs and communications.
- **The Assessment Group:** a specialist technical team that studies data, assesses potential threats and decides on action to reduce harm.

Optimising public health surveillance is a priority of the Drug Deaths Taskforce and is defined in the Scottish Government's National Drugs Mission.

How does it work?

1

Monitoring

We actively encourage services and local communities to share information such as drug-related incidents or harms by using:

- RADAR reporting forms
- regular monitoring surveys
- the RADAR mailbox.

RADAR routinely receives data from healthcare, prison, police and toxicology services. Where possible, statistical indicators are added to datasets to signal significant changes and quickly highlight threats to the system.

2

Validation

To understand the accuracy and importance of the information received, we check:

- context
- source
- other reports (including from the Network).

If information cannot be validated, we will continue to monitor and may investigate further through targeted requests or enhanced surveys.

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RADAR collects and shares essential information on drug trends and harms by using a consistent process to monitor, assess and respond.

3 Assessment

If validated, a report is sent to the Assessment Group who consider the level of potential risk and decide on the:

- threat level
- action needed
- type of response.

4 Communication

The action and response agreed by the Assessment Group is shared widely, including to the Network who share the information with their contacts.

Communications may take the form of:

- warnings or alerts
- information summaries
- risk assessments
- reports.

The impact of these communications will be regularly evaluated for effectiveness.

What type of information can I share?

RADAR collects information about trends, new drugs, incidents, health harms and social harms related to drugs. This may include details such as adverse effects, drug appearance, patterns of use, routes of administration and testing data.

By providing as much information as possible you help us to develop a better response.

But you do not need to have all the information requested on the form to make a submission. If you have incomplete information or if you are not sure if the report is useful, please submit the form anyway – **all information received helps us to develop a much-needed picture of drug use and harms in Scotland.**

Please do not include any personal information such as a name, private address, date of birth and Community Health Index (CHI) number.

How can I send information?

Reports can be sent using the RADAR reporting form **www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR**

This form is used to share information about drugs such as incidents, adverse effects or other harms. This form should not be used in an emergency.

Please note: this form contains questions on drug use, overdose and drug deaths. Hard copies of the reporting form are available on request.

Submissions can also be sent to our dedicated mailbox, which is monitored by the PHS Programme Team:

phs.drugsradar@phs.scot

How can I get involved?

Do you have a keen interest in reducing drug-related harm? Would you like to share and receive information from RADAR? Sign-up to the Network here: www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR

For enquiries about other groups (Development Group and Assessment Group) please email the Programme Team at: **psh.drugsradar@psh.scot**

How will PHS use my data?

Our reporting forms inform our public health response to drug harms. Anonymised submissions may be shared with services and the public. PHS will not share information for enforcement purposes, unless we have a legal obligation to do so.

We collect the minimum amount of personal information needed to identify the rough location of an incident (postcode sector, town or workplace) and contact the person who submitted the form by email should we need more information. The submission of this information is optional.

PHS will not share identifiable data with third parties. This information is collected and stored in accordance with Public Health Scotland's published privacy notice:

www.publichealthscotland.scot/our-privacy-notice



Translations



Easy read



BSL



Audio



Large print



Braille

Translations and other formats are available on request at:



phs.otherformats@phs.scot



0131 314 5300

Information correct at time of publication.

Please visit: **www.publichealthscotland.scot/RADAR**
for the most up-to-date information.

For further information email: **phs.drugsradar@phs.scot**

For more information on drugs and drug use visit:
www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/drugs-and-drug-use

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