

HIPS/20/09 – Developing an Intervention to Manage Benzodiazepine Dependence and High-Risk Use in the Context of Escalating Drug Related Deaths: A feasibility study

Scotland has the highest rate of drug related deaths (DRD) in Europe. These are deaths in people who use drugs such as heroin, cocaine, benzodiazepines and gabapentinoids. It is a feature of deaths in Scotland that people use combinations of drugs which increases the chance of a DRD. Many deaths involve 'street' benzodiazepines (BZD), especially a drug called etizolam. This is not licenced in the UK so comes from illegal sources. People who use opiates can be prescribed a safer replacement drug (e.g. methadone). Guidance on management of benzodiazepine use highlights that there is little evidence to support replacement prescribing. However, evidence is conflicting. This study will test a new intervention, designed by consulting people who use 'street' BZD and clinicians. The intervention will likely be a combination of prescribing and psychosocial support. The process of designing the exact intervention will be done in workshops. The workshops will include people across a range of relevant experience (clinical, psychology, academic, people with experience). The intervention will be tested in 50 people across three sites in Scotland. Questionnaires and interviews will be used to assess whether the intervention is feasible. This study will help the research team plan a further trial of the intervention with more people to see if it is effective at reducing harm