

County lines team (CLT) and the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership to reduce harm caused by drugs

Norfolk Constabulary's county lines team (CLT) work with the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership to reduce the harm caused by drugs misuse, supply and organised crime.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Prevention
Topic	Drugs and alcohol Intelligence and investigation Vulnerability and safeguarding
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Region	Eastern
Partners	Police Health services Local authority
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	January 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Children and young people Offenders

Aim

The aim of the partnership is to reduce the harm caused by synthetic opioids, heroin, crack cocaine and ketamine using a 4P approach.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the partnership are to:

- increase awareness around the issues relating to drugs supply
- reduce the public's harm of taking drugs
- improve intelligence sharing across partners such as police, National Health Service (NHS), and drug users
- improve drug testing for early indications of synthetics

Description

Norfolk Constabulary established the county lines team (CLT) following Project Adder in July 2019, in response to the high number of drug deaths in the county. The force recognised that by identifying the out-of-county source of the drug supply, this led to increased sentences, bringing more offenders to justice and creating a greater deterrence.

The CLT uses the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Orochi method to identify and evidence drug lines through communication work. This work identifies and prosecutes a line holder rather than the street dealers. High-harm lines are a priority for the team. They use the following indicators to

establish the severity of the harm:

- violence
- weapons
- firearms
- exploitation of adults and children

As synthetic opioids have become more prevalent across the UK and have been identified in Norfolk, they have been added as an indicator of high-harm.

4P approach

The CLT use the 4P approach, a strategic framework used by the police and public health partners to tackle drug misuse, supply and organised crime. The 4Ps stand for prepare, prevent, protect and pursue.

Prepare

- Aim - ensure the force are ready for incidents and reduce the impact of drug-related harm.
- Actions - develop plans, train staff, ensure resources such as naloxone are available and run exercises to test readiness.

Prevent

- Aim - deter individuals from becoming involved in drug misuse and supply.
- Actions - provide early intervention, safeguard vulnerable individuals and work with communities to reduce the risk of harm.

Protect

- Aim - safeguard individuals and communities from the harms caused by drugs.
- Actions - support individuals at risk, provide harm reduction services, and protect victims from exploitation.

Pursue

- Aim - disrupt and prosecute those involved in drug supply and organised crime.
- Actions - law enforcement operations, targeting high-harm offenders, disrupting supply chains, and bringing offenders to justice

Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership

The CLT are part of the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership, which is part of the force's combatting drugs partnership. Their purpose is to implement the 4P approach. The partnership also includes representation from:

- Change Grow Live
- local housing partners
- Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust (mental health services)
- National Probation Service
- Norfolk Public Health
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Norfolk Children's Services

The partnership developed a synthetic response plan in the event of a mass casualty incident related to drug overdoses. The plan is a coordinated, multi-agency strategy, created in response to the rising threat of synthetic opioids such as nitazenes and illicit fentanyl. These drugs are much stronger than heroin and carry a significantly higher risk of overdose.

The plan is designed to help local authorities, public health, law enforcement, and treatment services prepare for and respond to incidents involving these substances. The plan set out the:

- roles and responsibilities for each organisation
- monitoring and sharing of relevant data, such as the number of ambulance call-outs
- roll out of naloxone across communities

It is intended to be able to facilitate a rapid response to any incidents of contamination of drugs causing a large number of individuals to become unwell or die.

The partnership work with the local drug and alcohol agency (CGL) to gather and share intelligence. CGL are able to inform Norfolk Constabulary when their own testing procedures or service issued testing strips have identified a batch of drugs contaminated with synthetic opioids. Once identified the partnership use an alert system to provide updates to service users and the partnership.

The partnership have also worked with the local hospital to enhance the drug testing provision to provide an early indication of what is contained in any drugs seized.

The detective inspector for CLT is responsible for monitoring drug related deaths and reporting to the partnership.

Funding

Norfolk's public health commissioning team awarded £30,000 to the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership. The funding has been used for Norfolk and Norwich Hospital to obtain the appropriate licence and to facilitate non-evidential testing where required.

Overall impact

The Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership has ensured that there is regular intelligence sharing and an established early warning system. The partnership has conducted work post-known cluster and single overdoses which have led to arrests and dangerous drugs being seized from dealers to prevent any further incidences.

The warnings have been sent out to drug users through the CGL alert system and also using Operation Pester (using the dealer line number to warn their own customers).

The threat of nitazenes is still present, however the synthetic response plan is intended to minimise the harm caused by drug supply.

Learning

- It is essential to have strong partnerships and Norfolk Constabulary has played a vital role in supporting the Norfolk Drug and Alcohol Partnership. The force has recognised that leaders managing the criminal justice response to drug supply can also play an important role in this partnership work.
- The force recognised that partners working to support addicts have different objectives to police officers. This can often lead to frustrations, if information received is too vague it can hinder an effective criminal justice pursue response. Further work is necessary to ensure support workers understand the value of obtaining more detailed information and have trust that the police are

working in the best interests of their clients.

- There have been no issues getting buy-in from partners and public health have been an important ally in this project. Support from the lead Public Health Commissioner for Drugs and Alcohol has been vital to the success of the reduction of drug harm.
- By establishing the CLT, the force has been able to prioritise the lines that are causing the most threat, harm and risk. The partnership assists with assessing the level of risk associated with a line through shared intelligence. They are also in a position to minimise the harm from an identified line by advising their service users of the heightened risk of using drugs.

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