

Subject: Number of drug related deaths with recordings of Buprenorphine

FOI reference: FOI/18/01047

Date received: 29 March 2018

Date responded: 10 April 2018

Information requested:

You referred to our Table HBX (which amalgamates the number of deaths associated with Heroin, Methadone, Buprenorphine and Morphine) and asked for a breakdown of where Buprenorphine alone was recorded as present, and then where Buprenorphine plus one or more of these other drugs was present. You said that it should exclude any combination of drugs that does not involve Buprenorphine.

NRS Response:

The information that you requested is summarized in Appendix 1, in the form of a table which is like Table HBX but which is restricted to those deaths for which buprenorphine was found to be present in the body.

Please note that there were no drug-related deaths, registered in Scotland in 2016, for which buprenorphine was the only drug that was recorded as present.

Should you wish more information about the other substances that were present in the body, in the cases of the deaths for which buprenorphine was present in the body, you could refer to our annual Vital Events Reference Table 6.12 (which is available via <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/general-publications/vital-events-reference-tables/2016/section-6-death-causes>) and use a search facility to find all the rows of the table which include the word “Buprenorphine”.

Appendix 1:

Drug-related deaths for which buprenorphine was found to be present in the body, by selected drugs reported¹ and NHS Board area, 2016

Deaths for which buprenorphine was found to be present in the body, in which particular drugs were involved, counted on the 'ALL DRUGS PRESENT' basis.

So, this table counts BOTH

(a) drugs implicated in, or which potentially contributed to, the cause of death;

(b) other drugs which were present, but were not considered to have had any direct contribution to the death so these figures are NOT on the standard basis that NRS uses to produce statistics of individual drugs

NHS Board area	Heroin / morphine ²	Methadone	Heroin / morphine, Methadone or Bupren- orphine	Codeine or a codeine- containing compound	Dihydro- codeine or a d.h.c- containing compound	Benzodiazepines			Cocaine	Ecstasy- type	Amphet- amines	Alcohol
						Any opiate or opioid	Any benzo- diazepine	of which: Diazepam				
Scotland	30	8	47	0	5	47	47	22	13	2	2	24
Ayrshire & Arran	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Borders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dumfries & Galloway	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fife	3	0	3	0	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	1
Forth Valley	1	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	1
Grampian	3	1	5	0	2	5	5	3	3	0	0	4
Greater Glasgow & Clyde	12	4	20	0	0	20	20	7	4	1	1	11
Highland	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Lanarkshire	6	1	8	0	2	8	8	2	2	0	0	3
Lothian	4	0	5	0	0	5	5	4	2	0	0	3
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
Tayside	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Footnotes

1) More than one drug may be reported per death. These are mentions of each drug, and should not be added to give total deaths. Up to 2007, some pathologists reported only those drugs which they thought caused, or contributed to, the death. With effect from 2008, pathologists report separately (a) drugs which were implicated in, or which potentially contributed to, the cause of death and (b) other drugs which were present but were not considered to have had any direct contribution to the death. Basis (a) is now the standard basis for figures for individual drugs.

The figures in this table are for all drugs found present - They cover both (a) and (b) - so are NOT on the standard basis for figures for individual drugs. While they are on the same basis as the 'individual drugs' figures that were published in 'Drug-related Deaths in Scotland in 2008', they are NOT on the same basis as the figures published in later editions (which include some revised figures for individual drugs for 2008).

There may be other differences between years and/or areas in the way in which the information was produced - see Section 2 of the commentary.

2) Refer to paragraph 3.3.1 of commentary.