



Summary briefing: The pharmacy naloxone (Prenoxad) supply service

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The aim of this briefing is to describe the importance of the pharmacy naloxone (Prenoxad) supply service in County Durham, and why it should be offered alongside the supervised consumption and/or needle exchange services.

Why is this service so important?

- Potent synthetic opioids, such as nitazenes and illicit fentanyls, are sometimes added to or substituted for heroin (<https://codurhamrecovery.co.uk/advice/nitazenes/>). They are also added to or substituted for other drugs or openly sold as synthetic opioids. Drugs of this type are becoming more common and are typically many times stronger than heroin therefore carry a much higher risk of overdose.¹
- The risk is such that a national patient safety alert in July 2023 advised that all NHS staff should be made aware of nitazenes' high potency and toxicity to help avoid increasing overdoses.²
- The North-East continues to have the highest rates of deaths relating to drug poisoning and drug misuse.³
- National guidance asks all areas to *do everything they can to..... minimise the potential future impact of potent opioids (for example, through naloxone provision)*.
- Local council commissioned drug treatment services are asked to make take-home naloxone more readily available from a wider range of outlets, e.g. pharmacies.⁴
- The RPS recommends that:⁵ *Naloxone must be available from every community pharmacy for supply to people who use drugs, family, healthcare professionals, and carers. Naloxone should also be kept in first aid boxes for emergency use in any clinical setting, and staff trained to use it, where people who use drugs attend.*
- Naloxone can almost immediately and temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose by reversing breathing difficulties until an ambulance arrives.

What is the legislation?⁶

Naloxone injection (Prenoxad) is a POM, however following legislative changes:

- **In 2015:** It can be supplied without a prescription by persons engaged in the provision of drug treatment services (e.g. on behalf of a local authority) for the purposes of saving life in an emergency.
- **In 2024:** In December 2024, legislation enabling pharmacy professionals to supply take-home naloxone without a prescription came into force.⁷ This is in addition to the 2015 exemptions in the Human Medicines Regulations which allow drug treatment

¹ Deaths linked to potent synthetic opioids. OHID. Published 03/10/24. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deaths-linked-to-potent-synthetic-opioids>

² Everything you need to know about nitazenes. Pharmaceutical Journal. Published 08/02/24. <https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/feature/everything-you-need-to-know-about-nitazenes>; Potent synthetic opioids implicated in heroin overdoses and deaths. Central Alerting System. Published 26/07/23. <https://www.cas.mhra.gov.uk/ViewandAcknowledgment/ViewAlert.aspx?AlertID=103236>

³ Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2024 registrations. Office of National Statistics. Published 17/10/25. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2024registrations#drug-poisonings-from-selected-substances>

⁴ Potent synthetic opioids: preparing for a future threat: Incident planning for potent synthetic opioids arriving into the illicit drug market. OHID. Updated 01/08/24. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fentanyl-preparing-for-a-future-threat>

⁵ Improving care, reducing harm and preventing death in People Who Use Drugs: Pharmacy's role. RPS. <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/policy-a-z/drug-deaths-and-the-role-of-the-pharmacy-team>

⁶ Supplying take home naloxone without a prescription: A guide to the legislation enabling drug services and others to supply take home naloxone without a prescription to save a life in an emergency. DHSC. Updated 12/09/25. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/supplying-take-home-naloxone-without-a-prescription>

⁷ Take-home naloxone: could community pharmacies be the answer to tackling drug deaths?. Pharmaceutical Journal. Published 28/05/25. <https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/feature/take-home-naloxone-could-community-pharmacies-be-the-answer-to-tackling-drug-deaths>



services (e.g. a pharmacy providing supervised consumption of opioid substitute medication) to supply take-home naloxone without a prescription to people who need it.

In County Durham **this commissioned service will pay a supply fee of £8 exVAT (plus drug cost) for each supply made**, and any trained member of the pharmacy team can make these supplies.

To provide this important service

(SLA at <https://cpdands.org.uk/county-durham-services-2/>)

Staff

- The service lead can either be a pharmacist or a registered pharmacy technician.
- Any trained member of the pharmacy team can supply Prenoxad.

Training

- All mandated training is online and should be refreshed every 2 years.

Resources

- The pharmacy should stock Prenoxad injection with a minimum stock level of two.
- The pharmacy should have supplies or signpost to the *Prenoxad Injection Clients Guide*.⁸

Providing the service

- This should be considered as an add-on service for pharmacies providing the supervised consumption and/or the needle exchange service.
- The person receiving the supply of Prenoxad should be a County Durham resident, aged 18 and over, and either be the individual currently, or with a history of, using opioids; or be a carer, family member, or friend liable to be on hand in case of overdose.
- The PharmOutcomes claims template has minimal data recording requirements described in Appendix 2 of the SLA.

Getting started

Claim the one-off set-up fee on PharmOutcomes which includes the initial cost of the minimum stock level of two Prenoxad injections.

Once the online mandated training is complete, view the non-mandated 30-minute training video at <https://cpdands.org.uk/drug-and-alcohol/> which describes how to run a successful pharmacy supply service.

Consider the top tips for supply in Appendix 1 of the SLA.

Email the Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service at cddars.clinicaladmin@spectrum-cic.nhs.uk to arrange an onsite support visit to show pharmacy staff how to interact with clients and to provide the necessary practical materials (Note: The mandated online training must be completed first).

⁸ Supplies can be requested at <https://www.prenoxadinjection.com/hcp/prescription.html>