

# Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce submission of 7 November 2022

## PE1900/J: Access to prescribed medication for detainees in police custody

**Declaration :** I am employed by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and an appointed member of the UK Government Advisory Council on Misuse of Drugs (ACMD). The comments below are made in my capacity as the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS Scottish Branch) representative on Scotland's Drug Deaths Task Force (DDTF).

**Briefing:** The petition calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that all detainees in police custody can access all current prescribed medication, including methadone, in line with existing relevant operational procedures and guidance. The pharmacy profession has an important role in facilitating access to all prescribed medications.

The Medication Assisted Treatment Standards (MAT) published in 2021 are evidence-based standards. It is recognised that the health of individuals with opioid dependence is safeguarded whilst in opioid substitution treatment (OST) and that OST is a protective factor in reducing drug related deaths. This includes the prescription of methadone, buprenorphine and, for a small number of patients, diamorphine. Engagement and retention in prescribed treatment is therefore a key element in helping to reduce the number of drug related deaths in Scotland. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/medication-assisted-treatment-mat-standards-scotland-access-choice-support/pages/2/>

In Scotland instalment dispensing and supervision, when required, of OST medications takes place in community pharmacies. If an individual is in police custody or unable to collect their medication in person for any reason, alternative collection and supply arrangements should be made to support retention in treatment. Consultation with the dispensing pharmacist is key to facilitating alternative arrangements.

Section 4.4.4 of the staff Guidance , [Alcohol-Drugs-and-Tobacco-Healthcare-Services-in-Police-Custody-Guidance-v1.pdf](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/Alcohol-Drugs-and-Tobacco-Healthcare-Services-in-Police-Custody-Guidance-v1.pdf) (scot.nhs.uk)

outlines procedures for collection by the patient's representative from the community pharmacy and Appendix F gives an example of a collection form. This document states that *"patients in receipt of a prescription for methadone or buprenorphine can have the prescription confirmed by telephone contact with the dispensing pharmacists"*. It is essential that the community pharmacy is contacted to confirm the prescription information. Treatment services can provide information on the prescription details and date of issue but the community pharmacy will have the most current information on collection and dose consumption. This information is important to support continued safe supply and administration of doses.

In June 2021 the RPS published a report, *"Pharmacy's Role in Reducing Harm and Preventing Drug Deaths"*. This document noted that pharmacists and the pharmacy teams already play a significant role in *"supporting and providing treatment to people who use drugs"*. It has been acknowledged that pharmacy played a significant role in maintaining access to medications, including OST, during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report made 14 recommendations. Recommendation 6 advises that *"All pharmacists should have access to shared patient records and clear communication pathways with other healthcare professionals involved in the care of people who use drugs"*.

<https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/policy-a-z/drug-deaths-and-the-role-of-the-pharmacy-team>

The pharmacy profession will continue to work with patients, carers and relevant partners to ensure that all patients, including those detained in police custody, can continue to safely access their prescribed medication.