



Controlled Drugs: Learning from Incidents

North of England
Commissioning Support

Partners in improving local health

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NECS supports the NHS England Area Team Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer in ensuring the safe management and use of controlled drugs within the North East & Cumbria region. Based on the commonly reported incidents and the lessons learned, we aim to share good practice across the region

COUNTY LINES

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks (from big cities i.e. London and Manchester) involved in moving illegal drugs into one or more areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of a "deal line".

Vulnerable children and adults will be targeted often outside pharmacies, drug treatment establishments and schools.

They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money using coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

In many cases gangs will force vulnerable persons to courier drugs and money from area to area.

Homes of vulnerable persons will be taken over exclusively for drug dealing, described under the term 'cuckooing' and their movements may be severely restricted.

Front line staff should look out for the following:

- Has a child, young person or vulnerable adult gone missing from home or school?
- Have they acquired money, clothes or mobile phones they can't account for?
- Are they meeting unfamiliar adults?
- Are they in excessive receipt of texts or phone calls?
- Are they in relationships with controlling, older individuals or gang association?
- Do you have suspicion of self-harm, physical assault or unexplained injuries?
- Has there been a significant change in emotional well-being?

Further information is available on line:

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines>

Should there be any concerns regarding an individual then the police should be contacted via 101. Please also feel free to contact the NECS CDLO.

Pregabalin and Gabapentin dispensing incidents:

Since the rescheduling of pregabalin and gabapentin to a schedule 3 controlled drug, there continues to be frequent dispensing errors, where the wrong product has been given i.e. gabapentin has been dispensed instead of pregabalin and vice versa.

When dispensing these prescriptions please ensure the following:

- Correct product is chosen
- Correct formulation is chosen
- Correct strength is chosen
- All prescription details correspond to the patient by confirming - name, address, D.O.B.

Pharmacies who have reported these incidents have also benefited by highlighting the shelves these drugs are stored on and ensuring they are separated well to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Use of promethazine OTC in drug related deaths:

Recently there have been cases of promethazine mixed with other drugs, such as opioids or other CNS depressants in post mortems. This has been seen nationally including Scotland, it may be linked to illicit promethazine in fake Xanax tablets.

Pharmacists are being advised to speak to the customer/patient about its use before selling it to the customer. It has been noted that the customers ask pharmacists for promethazine to help with travel sickness.

Pharmacists need to be aware of the potential abuse.

Have you seen the NECS Medicines Optimisation website?

<http://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/controlled-drugs/>

CD DESTRUCTIONS and T28's

We would like to remind pharmacies and G.P practices that they should organise a CD Destruction visit at least once a year by contacting the relevant CD Team member for your area (details below). We are finding pharmacies have not been highlighting the need for destructions and are going without visits for up to 3 years and holding a lot of expired schedule 2 CDs which at itself is a risk.

All premises where CD's are destroyed either in the presence of an authorised witness or by pharmacy staff, need to have a T28 Exemption Certificate issued by the Environment Agency. This includes Schedule 2, 3 and 4 controlled drugs. T28 Exemption Certificates are valid for 3 years from date of issue and premises should receive an email reminder from the environment agency about one month prior to expiry. Should you require an up to date certificate please follow the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/environmental-permit-how-to-apply>

FRAUDULENT PRESCRIPTIONS!!!!

Any prescription that has been altered other than by a G.P is considered **FRAUDULENT** and nothing on that prescription should be dispensed!! Community pharmacies should notify the prescriber, the police on 101 and the Counter Fraud Service on 0800 068616. The prescription should **NOT** be handed back to the patient/client but kept as evidence. Good practice would be to take a photocopy for reference. The police may take the original as evidence. Retain any CCTV footage and make note of suspects description.

PHARMACY SECURITY

Burglaries to pharmacies within our area are unfortunately still very common. We encourage **ALL** pharmacies to review your existing security arrangements and to also be alert to preparatory acts (i.e. suspects tampering with door alarm sensors etc.). Please keep in mind:

CD cabinet keys should **NEVER** be hidden anywhere on the premises overnight.

Burglaries **DO NOT** just happen outside of working hours

CD TEAM NEWS:

- ◆ Congratulations to Victoria Bennett who left us on the 31st December to go off on maternity leave. We wish her all the very best with her new arrival.
- ◆ Welcome to Laura Luke who will be covering the Durham, Darlington and Tees Area during Victoria's maternity leave. (Please see below for Laura's details).
- ◆ Congratulations to Phil Utting who will be leaving us to go on a years secondment from 20th January 2020. We wish him all the best in his new role. Emma Post will be point of contact in his absence. (Please see below for Emma's details)



If you need advice, or would like an article to be included in a future issue, please contact one of the Controlled Drugs Team Senior Medicines Optimisation Technicians or the CD Liaison Officer:

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