Annual Report on the Take Home Naloxone Programme

1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

NALOXONE SAVES LIVES

HSC Public Health Agency

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Section 1: Introduction

Naloxone is an opioid antagonist, which temporarily and rapidly reverses the effects of heroin and other opioids. Naloxone has been used world-wide for many years to reverse opioid overdoses in emergency settings by drug treatment services staff and other healthcare professionals.

Following overdose by heroin injection, death typically occurs within 1 to 3 hours, limiting the window of opportunity to intervene. Therefore supplying naloxone to people who work with, or have family members, who inject opioids ensures that this medication is on hand with people who are trained to use it, should it be needed.

Since 2012, the Public Health Agency (PHA) has funded a Take Home Naloxone programme (THN) , which aims to supply naloxone packs to those at risk of opioid overdose.

THN includes the take home supply or emergency administration of the following products:

- Prenoxad® 2mg/2ml pre-filled syringe for intramuscular injection.
- Nyxoid® 1.8mg nasal naloxone spray

PHA is currently expanding this to also include Pebble® 1.26mg intra-nasal spray x 2 doses in the coming months. All of these naloxone products can be administered by anyone in an emergency situation.

The programme is coordinated by the PHA and packs are supplied by staff within Low Threshold Services, Community Addiction Teams and voluntary sector drug treatment services. Service user representatives have also played a major role in providing advice, support and training.

The PHA currently funds Extern to provide opioid overdose response training (CPR and administering Take Home Naloxone), to enable appropriate individuals to provide the training to those at risk. This training programme was evaluated in 2014-15 and the evaluation described feedback on the training as “universally positive”. (GILLIAN SHORTER, TIM BINGHAM, 'Service Review: Take Home Naloxone programme in NI. Consultation with service users and service providers', [Report], Public Health Agency, 2016)

Please also note that in addition to the THN programme, naloxone is also used to reverse overdoses by the Police Service of Northern Ireland within the Belfast area and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

Section 2: How the Take Home Naloxone Programme works

Supply of naloxone is made by staff from Community Addictions Team within each Health and Social Care Trust, and/or by staff in community drug treatment services such as Low Threshold Services and Drug Outreach.

On 1 October 2015, legislation changed to allow staff working in Drug Treatment services / needle exchanges to supply naloxone even if they have no medical or nursing status. *(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/widening-the-availability-of-naloxone/widening-the-availability-of-naloxone)*

Staff supplying naloxone provide training to the recipient in how to use the naloxone. The service user receives either one or two naloxone packs and is advised on how to get replacement supplies if they use their naloxone, or if it goes out of date. Staff may provide more than two packs of naloxone to a single recipient in exceptional circumstances.

Staff may only make supplies of naloxone to individuals, and so cannot supply packs to an organisation (e.g. hostel or housing provider). Naloxone can be supplied, however, to "any individual working in an environment where there is a risk of overdose for which the naloxone may be useful"; accordingly, naloxone can be supplied to staff of any organisation who come into regular contact with opiate users.

Seventeen hostels are also currently registered on the Take Home Naloxone programme. Whilst they cannot supply an individual they do record their Naloxone usage in an emergency situation.

Section 3: Take Home Naloxone Providers

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, the Public Health Agency funded the THN programme through the following providers:

Table 1: Participating Service Provider by Trust Area in reporting period

Trust Area	Provider	Provider Type
Belfast	Belfast Drug Outreach Team	Low Threshold Service and Trust
	Belfast Health Inclusion Service	Trust
	Extern – Belfast	Community-Based needle exchange service
	BHSCT Community Addictions Team	Trust
South Eastern	SEHSCT Community Addictions Team	Trust
	Simon Community	Low Threshold Service
Northern	Extern	Low Threshold Service
	NHSCT Community Addictions Team	Trust
Southern	Extern	Low Threshold Service
	SHSCT Community Addictions Team	Trust
Western	Western Consortium Provider -Foyle Haven, ARC HLC and First Housing	Low Threshold Service
	WHSCT Community Addictions Team	Trust

Section 4: How information is collected

PHA have commissioned a new digital system for reporting naloxone supply and resupply, the Neo360 Harm Reduction Information System for Northern Ireland. This system went live in July 2022 and providers have been phased into digital recording. The figures provided in this report are based on both manual returns submitted via email and data downloaded from Neo360 submitted by staff within both HSC Trust and PHA commissioned drug treatment services.

The PHA requests only minimal information on supply so that clients can remain anonymous and unidentifiable when given the initial supply. When naloxone is then resupplied to someone who has used it to reverse an overdose, the PHA requests additional information about the overdose, in order to build a better picture of how naloxone is used and its impact in reversing overdose.

PHA is aware that there are organisations supplying naloxone who have not completed either manual or digital returns, therefore, the figures provided are likely to be much higher. PHA is working to ensure that all naloxone providers are given training and are accessing the live digital system to report all naloxone distribution by 31st March 2024.

Section 5: Data Review

5.1 Clients supplied with Naloxone 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, 4,170 THN packs were provided to low threshold services directly from PHA and 1,000 packs were provided to Trust services, so a total of 5,170 were funded by PHA within this timeframe. Of these packs we have received 1,063 reports on these having been supplied through the THN Programme.

The data set collated across manual and digital returns is:

1) Recording of the dispensing of naloxone as an initial supply or resupply;
2) Number of units dispensed (One single syringe of Prenoxad includes 5 doses= one unit);
3) If resupply, information of usage of previous unit requested, ie if it was used to reverse overdose, stolen, expired, lost, service user not carrying naloxone and has expressed an intention to use opiates or not specified.

Table 2: Number of Naloxone packs reported to have been supplied by year

Year	Number of THN packs dispensed
April 2012-March 2013	139
April 2013-March 2014	163
April 2014-March 2015	188
April 2015-March 2016	247
April 2016-March 2017	271
April 2017-March 2018	807
April 2018-March 2019	1,332
April 2019-March 2020	1,321
April 2020-March 2021	1,666
April 2021-March 2022	1,385
April 2022-March 2023	1,854
April 2023-March 2024	1,861
Total supplied	**11,234**

The amount of Naloxone dispensed in 2023/24 (1861 packs) has increased slightly from the previous year.

The reported distribution includes 314 initial supplies to those who had never received THN before; this will have included training on naloxone administration by the supplier. Also, there were 749 resupplies to those who had already completed training but required replacement naloxone supplies.

5.2 Take Home Naloxone packs used to reverse an overdose

During the period 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, Naloxone was reported to have been administered on 225 occasions.

Table 3: Number of times naloxone was used to reverse an overdose as reported to the PHA

Year	Number of times naloxone was reportedly used to reverse an overdose
April 2012-March 2013	<5
April 2013-March 2014	<5
April 2014-March 2015	16
April 2015-March 2016	34
April 2016-March 2017	59
April 2017-March 2018	127
April 2018-March 2019	240
April 2019-March 2020	180
April 2020-March 2021	256
April 2021-March 2022	420
April 2022-March 2023	199
April 2023-March 2024	225

This shows a slight increase in the number of reports of naloxone being used to reverse an overdose compared to the previous year.

PHA are aware of the large gaps in the reporting of naloxone usage and the significant challenges that there are in gaining a full dataset in relation to naloxone distribution. It is reasonable to assume that the THN packs were used to reverse significantly more overdoses than have been reported to us within this reporting period.

Moving forward PHA will be working with THN suppliers to ensure that all reports are submitted through the Neo360, Harm Reduction Information System to ensure this figure is as accurate as possible. Given the nature of the programme, the dependency on peer-to-peer distribution and usage of naloxone it will always be difficult to track and record every THN pack dispensed. However, the current level of reporting needs to be improved across THN suppliers within Low Threshold Services and Community Addiction Teams.

Other reasons for resupply are shown in the table below.

Table 4: Other reported reasons given for Naloxone resupply within the reporting period

Reason for Resupply	Number of Reports
Confiscated	2
Expired	67
Kit lost	42
Service user not carrying naloxone and has expressed an intention to use opiates	404
Stolen	3
Information not provided/unknown/other reason	6
TOTAL	524

5.3 THN User Profile

The age and gender profile of the 1063 reported users of the THN programme within this reporting period is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Gender breakdown of clients supplied (Initial and Resupply) with Naloxone in reporting period (n=1063)

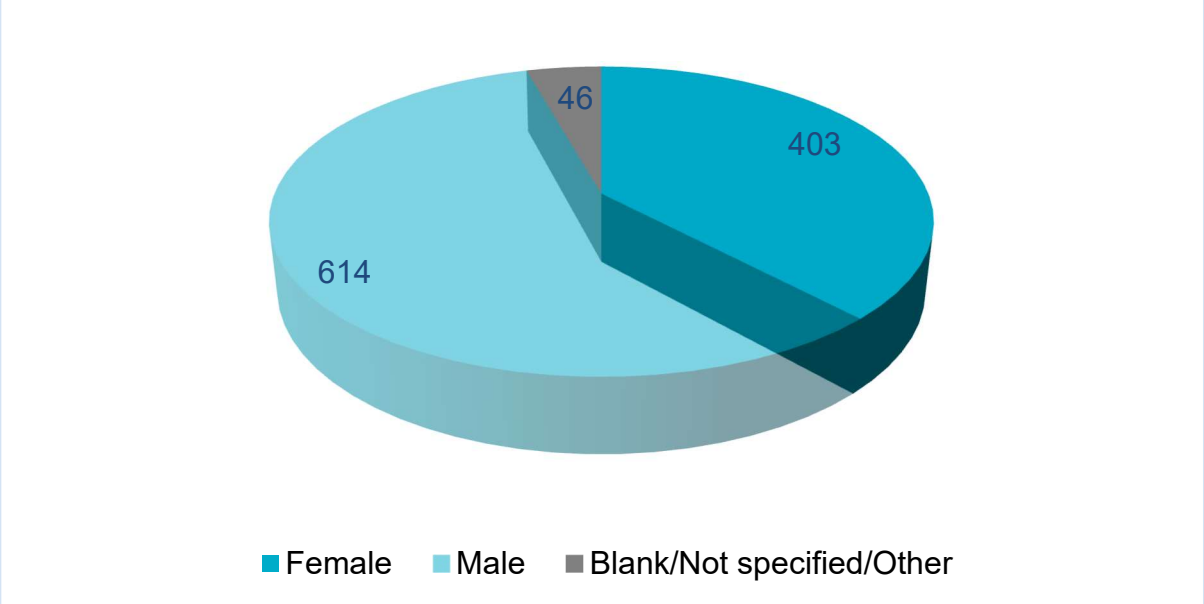
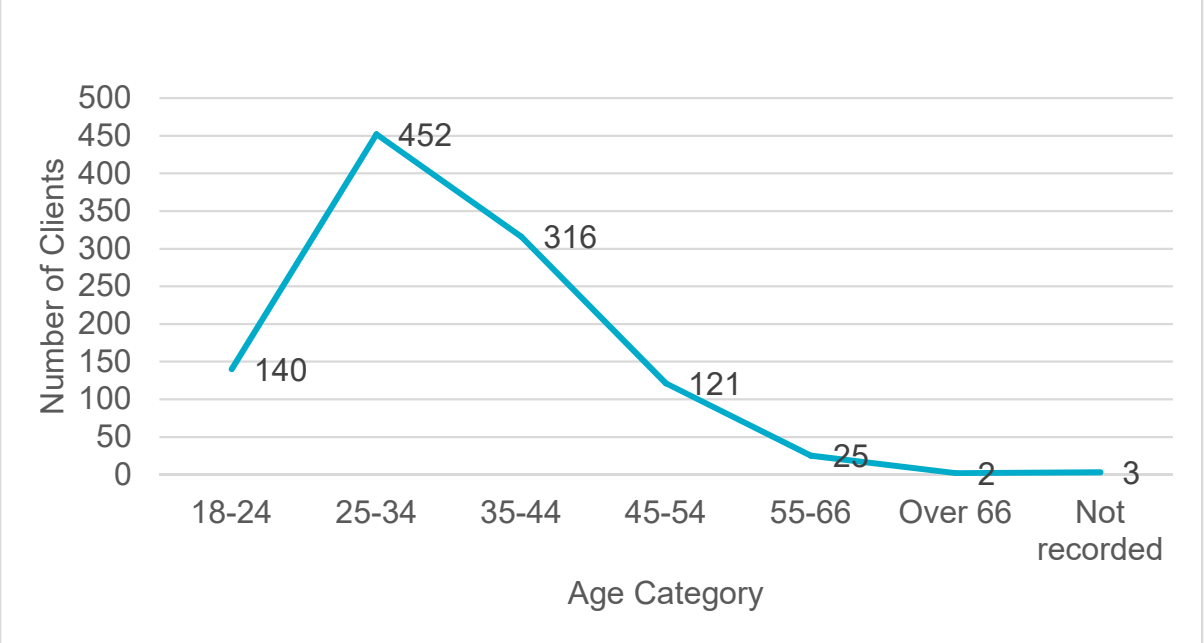
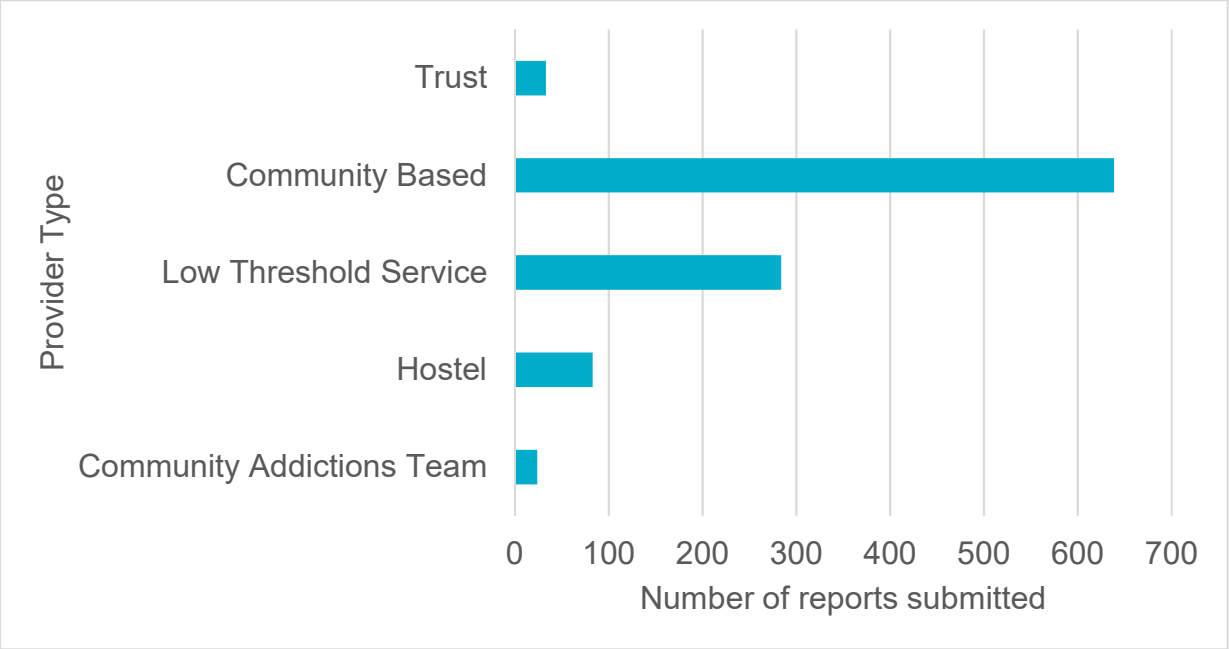


Figure 2: Recorded age of clients supplied (Initial and Resupply) with Naloxone in reporting period (n=1063)



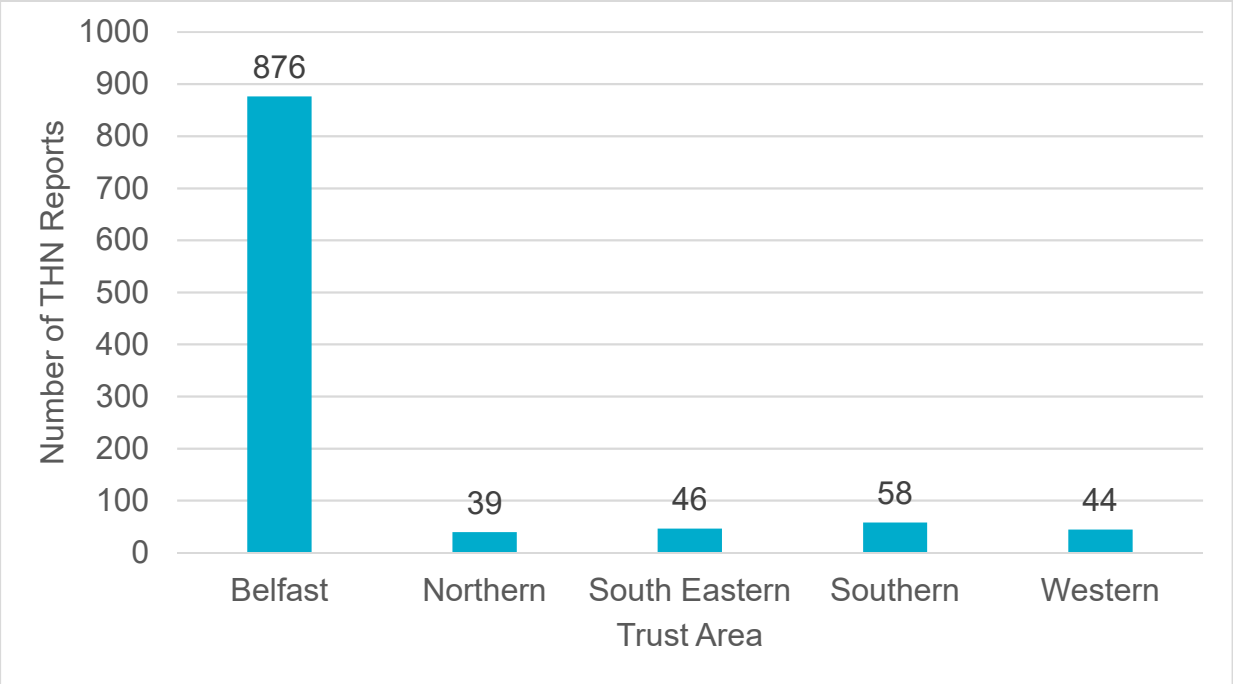
5.4 Reports submitted on THN packs dispensed per provider type

Figure 3: Number of THN reports submitted per provider type



5.5 Reports submitted on THN packs dispensed by Trust area

Figure 4: Number of THN Reports submitted by Health and Social Care Trust area.



Section 6 Naloxone Training Review

A total of 241 people received relevant opioid overdose training through the PHA funded training services, delivered by Extern in 2023-24.

PHA commission 2 training courses in relation to Naloxone as follows:

1) Naloxone Administration: This is a public course targeting those who have contact with people at risk of opioid overdose.

2) Train the Trainers Naloxone: This is a course for PHA commissioned Naloxone suppliers only. This includes naloxone administration and how to complete a brief intervention when supplying Naloxone.

In 2023-2024, 194 people completed the Naloxone Administration course and 47 people successfully completed the Training the Trainers course;

A further 314 people were also provided with an initial supply of naloxone for the first time in 2023-24 and all of these people were also provided with training in the administration of naloxone.

Therefore, in total, in 2023-24, 538 people were trained to administer naloxone.

Section 7 Conclusion/Future plans

This report shows that the distribution of Naloxone continues to increase year on year across Northern Ireland and that the need remains high for the THN programme as a lifesaving intervention.

PHA has worked to resolve the issue with data collection in relation to the THN programme and all sites have now started to record through the Neo360 Harm Reduction Information System for Northern Ireland from 1st April 2024.

Expanding the distribution of Naloxone remains a priority and Community Pharmacies commissioned as Needle and Syringe Exchange Services will also commence the THN programme, as well as dispensing naloxone in an immediate emergency, in the coming months. PHA are also working to expand the offering of both nasal and injectable naloxone forms.

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