



North Yorkshire and York

Press Release

Drug overdose? – dial 999 - shout up to prevent drug deaths

Across North Yorkshire and York it has been agreed that emergency health services will respond to drug overdose calls for help without routinely notifying the police.

A campaign is being launched between 20 August and 24 August 2012 to raise awareness of the agreed procedure.

The campaign is being led by local Substance Misuse Partnerships and North Yorkshire Police, and includes support from a number of other local organisations, including NHS North Yorkshire and York, Yorkshire Ambulance Service, Local Authorities and drug treatment services.

Following a number of drug-related overdose deaths, the campaign is seeking to raise awareness among drug users and members of the public that there is an agreed local drug overdose protocol which states the police will only attend in exceptional circumstances including:

- if the overdose is fatal
- if there is a perceived risk to the ambulance crew or paramedics
- if the ambulance crew or paramedics are having difficulty gaining entry to a property
- if there are any child protection issues involved.

It is acknowledged that concerns among drug users might have arisen in the past because prior to the protocol being agreed in 2007, the ambulance service would often call the police to drug overdose incidents. However, the change in procedure means that officers will only be contacted in suspicious circumstances.

Drug users usually overdose unintentionally while in the company of other users, friends or family members and require urgent medical attention. The prospect of police involvement can make people reluctant to call for help and any delay in contacting the ambulance service can have fatal consequences.

Detective Inspector Allan Harder, of North Yorkshire Police, said: "Time is a crucial factor in overdose cases and any delay in calling for medical assistance can mean the difference between life and death.

"Our main concern is that people receive the care that they need as quickly as possible. Therefore I would like to reassure drug users and their friends and families that the police will only attend if the incident is deemed suspicious or ambulance crews require our support.

There have been deaths through drug overdoses across North Yorkshire that might have been prevented had an ambulance been called earlier. By promoting this 999 protocol, we hope that people will do the responsible thing and call an ambulance if they think someone may be experiencing an overdose - It might save their life."