

## **Drug-Related Deaths Survey – Initial Analysis**

The purpose of the survey was two-fold:

- to gather a rich strand of qualitative evidence of what the problem is in terms of exploring the high rates of drug-related deaths in Dundee, and to gain insight on what can be done about reducing these deaths; and
- to engage a wider audience in the work of the Dundee Drugs Commission.

A survey was created via Survey Monkey<sup>1</sup> and was open from 14<sup>th</sup> July until 7<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The survey was accessible via hard copies, a web link and via social media. Survey responses were anonymous; however, respondents were given the option to leave an email address to receive monthly updates throughout the duration of the commission. The survey consisted of demographic questions and one key open-ended question:

### ***'What has to be done in Dundee (and across Scotland/elsewhere) to radically reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths?'***

In total, **1075** people started the survey.

- However, **127** responses were excluded as the key open-ended question was either not answered or the respondent noted that they had nothing to say regarding the key question.
- This left a total of **948** responses to the survey.
- **21** respondents did not answer the key survey question but did request to be kept in touch with a regular e-newsletter through the duration of the Commission.

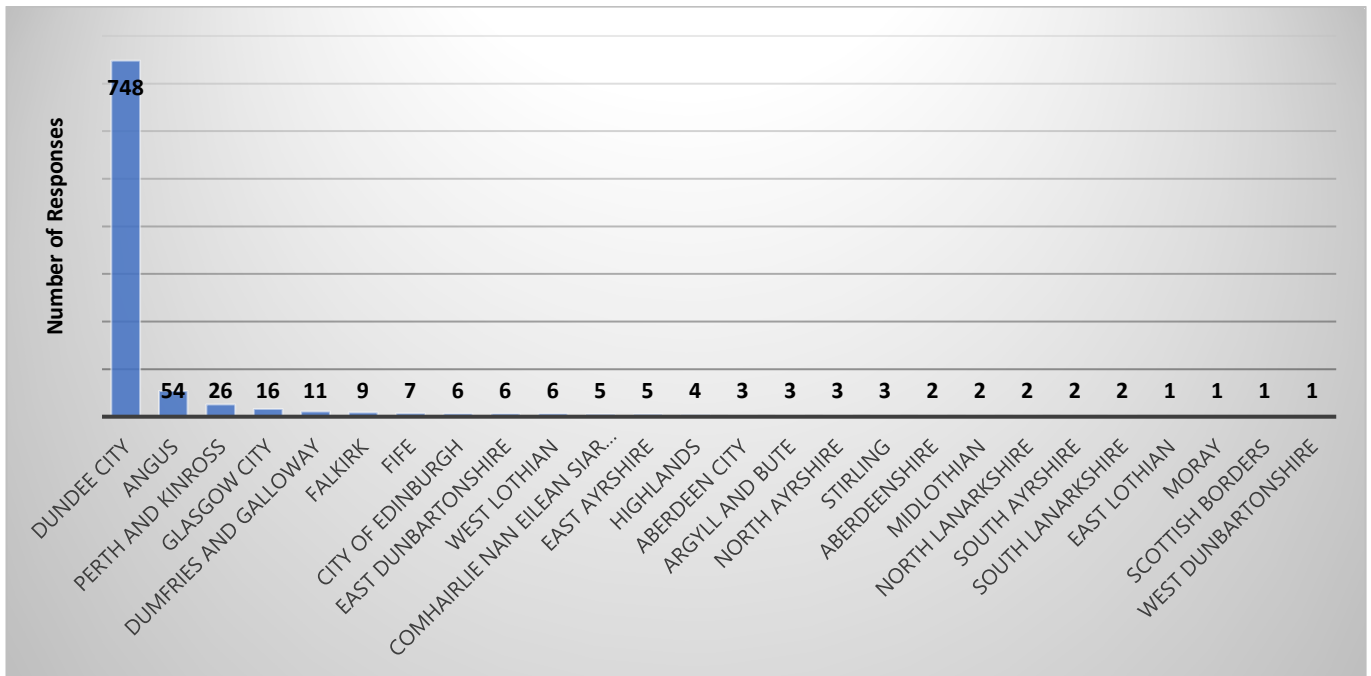
This left a final total of **927** responses to the key survey question - which have been included in this initial analysis.

## **Respondents demographic**

- Most responses were received from people in Scotland (99.2%, n=940).
- There were five responses from people in other areas of the UK, one respondent in Canada and one in Australia.
- Of those from Scotland, respondents predominantly identified Dundee (78.9%, n=748) as the local authority in which they worked or lived.
- The graph below shows a breakdown of respondent's local authority area (Scottish responses only).

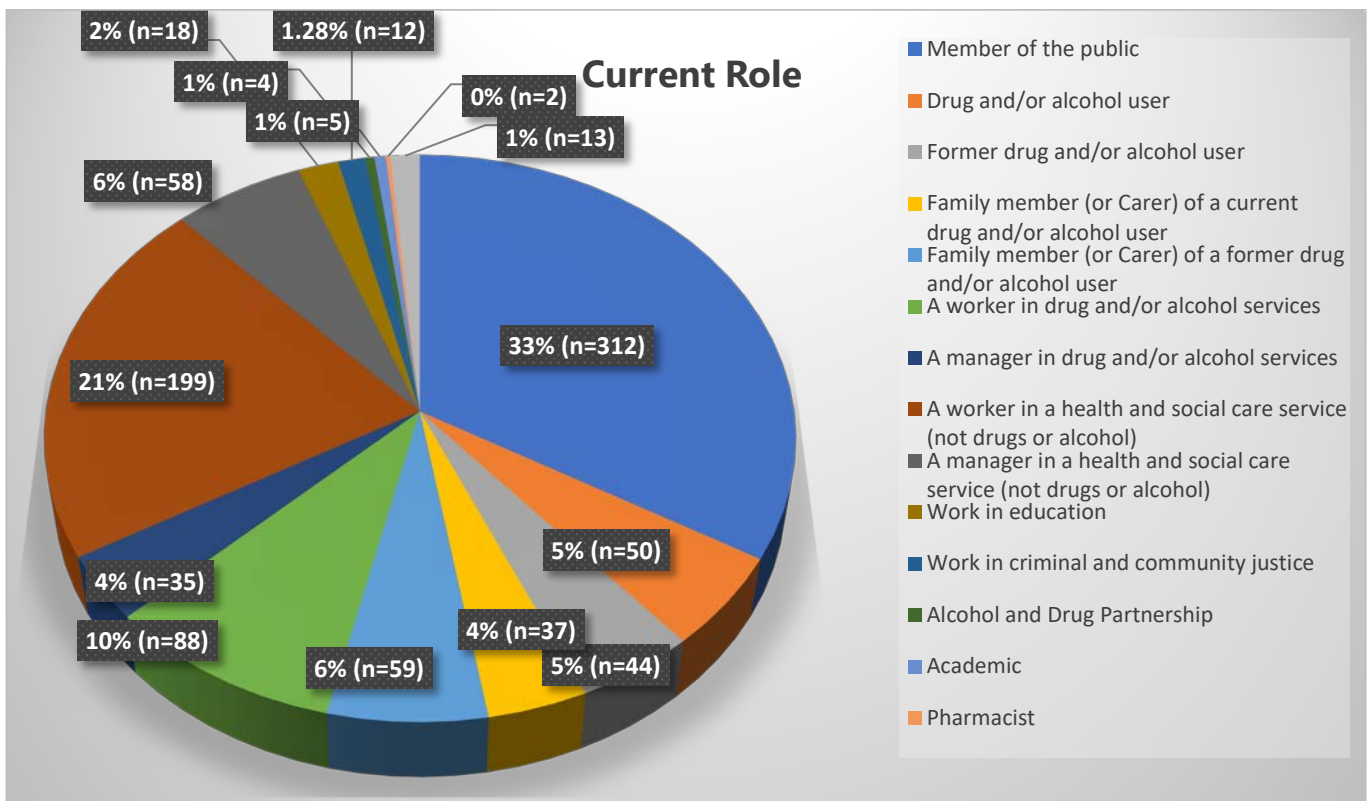
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<sup>1</sup> SurveyMonkey is an online survey development software which provides customisable surveys. For more details visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/>



## Respondents current role/category

Respondents were asked to state which category best described them from a pre-defined list. An 'other' category was included with the ability to add a description. A third of respondents described themselves as members of the public (**33%**; n=312). This was followed by responses of those who work in a health and social care service (not alcohol or drugs) (**21%**; n=199). A total of 96 (**10%**) of respondents described themselves as a family member (or carer) of a current or former alcohol and /or drug user. A total of 94 (**10%**) of respondents described themselves as a current or former drug and /or alcohol user. A full breakdown of respondents' roles can be seen in the chart below.



## Key Themes

Respondents were then asked what has to be done in Dundee (and across Scotland/elsewhere) to radically reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths. In total, 927 responses were received, with a total of fifteen (15) key themes identified by the research team. A key theme was identified if 5% or more of respondents mentioned the theme. The information collected from respondents provides rich and novel data on what has to be done in Dundee (and across Scotland/elsewhere) to radically reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths.

The key themes identified in the initial analysis of survey responses are as follows and are presented from the highest level of responses first and descending thereafter.

### 1. Opiate Replacement Therapy (ORT)

ORT was stated by **153 (16.5%)** of respondents, with Methadone a frequent topic. Greater support for people receiving ORT was stated by respondents as a way to reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths. Furthermore, the effectiveness of Methadone in helping people to recovery was also questioned.

### 2. Education:

**152 (16.4%)** of respondents mentioned education in their comments in relation to what must be done in Dundee (and across Scotland/elsewhere) to radically reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths. Respondents emphasised that there should be a focus on drugs and alcohol education at an early stage. Respondents also indicated that children and young people should not only be provided with information on the dangers of drugs and alcohol, but social and life skills should be taught to increase options and reduce risk. It was also suggested that education should involve former drug and/or alcohol users and/or family/carers. Education amongst the general public was also highlighted.

### 3. Rehab/ Detox

**131 (14.1%)** of respondents mentioned rehab / detox. A recurring theme in terms of reducing the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths was Dundee having its own accessible rehab where individuals can safely detox with professional support.

### 4. Mental Health

Mental health was mentioned by **95 (10.2%)** of respondents. A key preventative factor appears to be greater access to mental health support, with respondents stating that mental health support is difficult to access for those with a substance use issue. An increase in mental health support provision overall was also noted, whereas greater awareness of dual diagnosis<sup>2</sup> was suggested as a way to reduce the

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<sup>2</sup> Dual diagnosis is when a person has co-occurring substance use and mental health issues.

deaths. Improving the mental health of children to enable them to develop the resilience to cope with life's challenges was also mentioned.

## 5. Access to Treatment

Access to treatment was a theme noted by **93 (10.0%)** of respondents. Reducing the waiting lists and improving access was suggested as a measure to reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths. Opening times of services was also noted regarding accessing treatment, with increased opening times, e.g. weekend/s out of hours, another approach suggested.

## 6. Treatment

**82 (8.8%)** of respondents mentioned treatment in their comments in relation to what must be done in Dundee (and across Scotland/elsewhere) to radically reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths. Respondents emphasised that there should be a better range of treatment options to help people. Respondents also indicated that treatment should be holistic.

## 7. Drug dealers / Dealing

Drug dealers / dealing was mentioned by **81 (8.7%)** of respondents. An approach suggested to reduce the drug deaths is that police be more proactive in terms of investigating drug dealers. Moreover, punishment should be greater for drug dealers, with several respondents suggesting providing harsher sentencing to those convicted of drug dealing a way forward.

## 8. Families/carers

Families / carers was mentioned by **80 (8.6%)** of respondents. A preventative measure could be increasing support for families / carers affected by a loved one's substance use. More information available to families was also highlighted for them to support the affected person. Increasing access to Naloxone for families / carers was also mentioned as an approach to reduce the drug deaths.

## 9. Decriminalisation / Legalisation of Drugs

Decriminalisation/legalisation of drugs was also mentioned by **80 (8.6%)** of respondents. Portugal's decriminalising of the use of all drugs in 2001 was mentioned by several as an example of a strategy to reduce the deaths. An approach also suggested to reduce the drug deaths rate in Dundee could be for the authorities to legalise drugs, with drugs to be regulated.

## 10. Safe Injecting site

Safe injection sites, or spaces where people can inject drugs, was noted by **70 (7.6%)** of respondents. A recurring theme was providing a safe injecting site could be an approach to reduce the drug deaths rate.

## 11. Stigma

**53 (5.7%)** of respondents suggested that one way in reducing the drug deaths rate in Dundee (and across Scotland/ elsewhere) would be to reduce stigma attached to drug and/or alcohol use. Some respondents indicated that media portrayal of the issue has a role to play in stigmatisation of this group and that the media can be utilised to reduce stigma and have a more supportive role in this area. Respondents also felt that it was important to provide more information, awareness and education to members of the public to reduce stigma. Furthermore, there were a significant number of these respondents who felt that attitudes of staff in drug and/or alcohol services were negative towards drug user treatment population. It was identified that if stigma was reduced that it may be more likely that drug and/or alcohol users access treatment.

## 12. Employment

Employment was noted in **52 (5.6%)** of the responses with a recurring theme being increasing opportunities to gain employment could be an opportunity to reduce drug deaths rate – specifically to give people skills, a sense of purpose and meaningful activities. Employment was viewed by respondents as a possible preventative activity to decrease the onset of drug use. Providing more employment opportunities for people in recovery was also highlighted.

## 13. Partnership working

A total of **52 (5.6%)** respondents also felt that reducing the drug deaths rate in Dundee requires greater partnership working between services. Furthermore, it was noted that better communication between the various services and agencies encountering drug users (such as health, social work, NHS, third sector, housing and the police), could potentially help to reduce the drug-related deaths. Furthermore, improved and greater partnership working between services and agencies to ensure that those at risk of overdose are identified and supported at the time of crisis was also suggested.

## 14. Naloxone

Naloxone is a drug that can reverse the effects of opioids and prevent death if used within a short period following an opioid overdose. **49 (5.3%)** of respondents suggested that one way in reducing the drug deaths rate in Dundee (and across Scotland/ elsewhere) would be to increase training and access to Naloxone amongst those at risk, but also family members, police and introduce it in first aid kits. Respondents also felt that it was important to provide more information and education on Naloxone provision.

## 15. Therapeutic services

Therapeutic services were noted by **47 (5.1%)** of respondents. Increasing access to therapeutic services such as counselling and psychological support was suggested as one way to help reduce the increasing numbers of drug-related deaths.

## Other messages identified through the initial analysis

As noted above, key themes were identified when mentioned by 5% or more of respondents. Additionally, there were several other relevant themes – but mentioned by fewer respondents (i.e. below the 5% response rate). These messages are as follows:

- Social inequalities / deprivation (n=45, 4.9%)
- Misuse of prescription drugs (n=42, 4.5%)
- Police (n=41, 4.4%)
- Addressing the underlying causes of substance use (e.g. trauma, Adverse Childhood Experiences (n=40, 4.3%)
- Housing (n=36, 3.9%)
- Early intervention (n=27, 2.9%)
- Lived experience (n=27, 2.9%)
- Availability of drugs (n=26, 2.8%)
- I.S.M.S (n=24, 2.6%)
- Prescribed Heroin (n=22, 2.4%)