

IOAD 2026 — Service Activity Guide

Messages & Memories Card Installation

This guide tells you everything you need to run the IOAD 2026 Messages & Memories card activity at your service. Please read it fully before you start.

Campaign date/s W/c 24th August 2026	Your prep deadline Week of 25 August
Central contact and send photos to marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk	

1. What Is This Campaign?

International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) is observed on 31 August every year. It is the world's largest annual campaign to raise awareness of overdose, reduce the stigma attached to drug-related deaths, and acknowledge the grief of those who have lost someone.

This year we hope to bring visibility and public engagement to our campaign by hosting installations around the country of message/memory cards marking the day.

You will be provided with a selection of small cards with space for people to write a message of remembrance, another message about reducing overdoses or anything the person feels moved to write.

These cards will be hung up in a high footfall part of your service or better yet in a public area where you can engage the community around overdose.

The result is a visible, community-led memorial in service waiting rooms, advice centres, community noticeboards, town centres, or wherever feels right for your community

2. How to choose a location

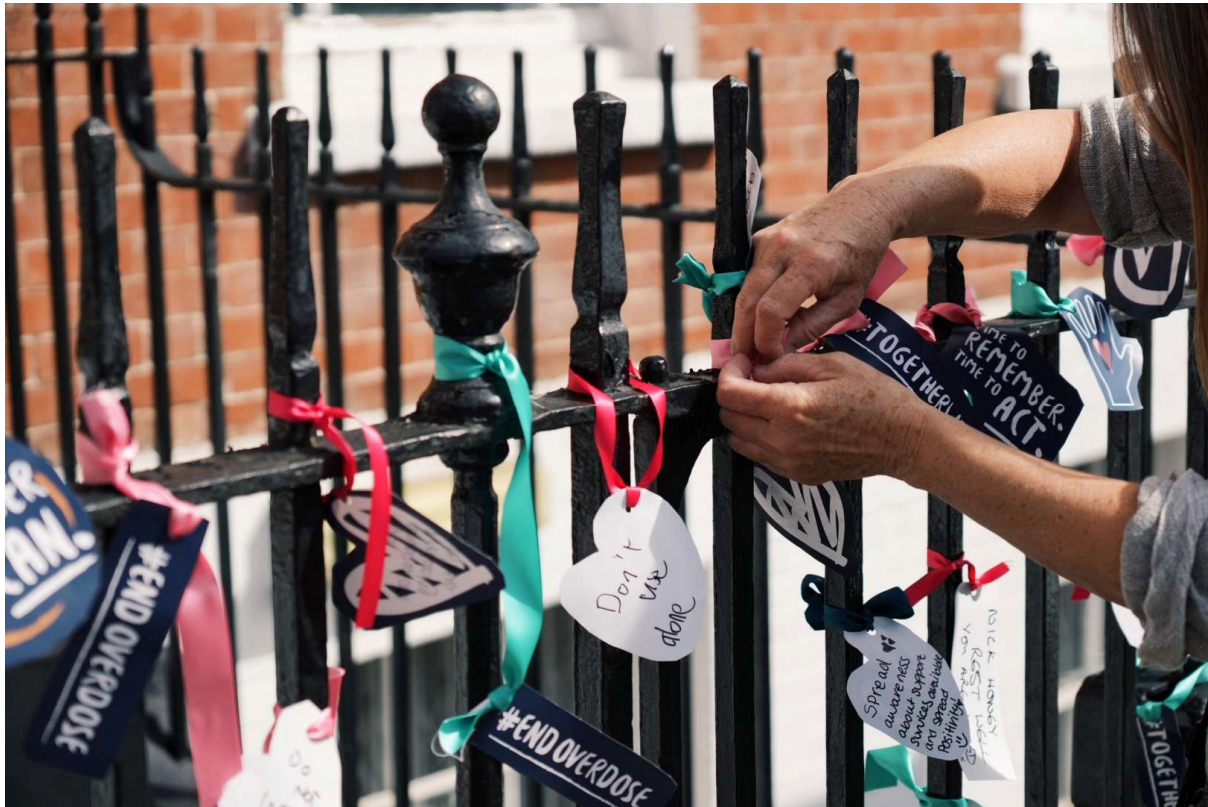
When thinking about the location for your display remember we want to engage as many people as possible to raise awareness around overdoses.

Every service will be different, but this could be outside the front of your building, in a public park, outside the local council building or a train station just as examples.

What will make this campaign easier is if there is something that makes it easy to display the cards. The cards will need to be attached by tying a ribbon to some sort of supportive structure.

This could be a tree which you could attach a string to, railings that we can tie the cards straight onto or anything else that you could easily attach a card to with a piece of ribbon.

The picture shows an example of cards both attached to string and to railings.



3. Overview of how to make this happen

To take part in this campaign you will need to:

- Select an appropriate location – with contingency plan for wet weather
- Assign staff to man the stall throughout the day
- Print the A2 card sheets, cut out the cards, punch holes and buy pens and ribbon before the day
- Promote the event to public and stakeholders before the day making sure to directly invite key figures
- Assign someone to set up the stall, make sure it looks great and brief staff
- Run the event!
- Photograph the cards/other snaps of the day and send them in so we can display them online

2. What You Need to Buy

Please source the following before the week of 24th August. Most items are available from a local stationery shop, supermarket, or online retailer.

Item	Quantity	Notes
A2 print of the card sheet	Depends on how many people you will see	Use a local print shop - office printers cannot print A2. Ask for 200gsm+ uncoated or silk paper.
Scissors or craft knife and cutting mat	≥ 1 set	For cutting cards along the marked guides. A guillotine gives cleaner cuts.
Hole punch	≥ 1	To punch a hole in the top of each card for the string.
5/6mm red ribbon	Lots!	Thin garden twine or baker's twine works well. Avoid elastic. Here's a link to good ribbon - https://shorturl.at/DkMUH
Pens (dark ink, fine or medium point)	5–10	Ballpoint or felt-tip. Avoid markers that bleed through. Test on the card stock first.
Consent forms (if photographing people)	10–20	See Section 5. Print from the template provided separately.

3. Step-by-Step Activity Guide

Before the activity (week of 17th August)

1. Send the print file to a local print shop and collect your A2 sheet.
2. Cut out all cards along the printed cut lines.
3. Punch a hole in the top corner or top centre of each card (where marked).
4. Choose your display location and get any necessary permission from the venue or landlord.
5. Fix your string or twine across the display area at a comfortable height.
6. Brief your team - see safeguarding guidance in Section 4.

On the day (W/c 24th August, or the days leading up to it)

7. Set up a table or area with blank cards, pens, and a brief explanation of what IOAD is. Please also have space to display any information about your local service
8. Invite people to take a card and write a message or memory. This can be a name, a sentence, a drawing - anything personal to them.
9. Help people attach their card to the string using a peg, clip, or by tying it.
10. Be present and available to support anyone who might find the event challenging- see Section 4.
11. Photograph the display - see consent guidance in Section 5 before doing this.
12. Post on social media - see Section 6.
13. Send your photos to marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk

4. Safeguarding & Emotional Support

Important - please read before running the activity:

Writing/thinking about overdose losses can surface strong emotions. Some participants may be actively grieving. Some may have their own experience of overdose or substance use. Your team must be prepared to respond with compassion and without judgment.

Before the activity

- Make sure at least one trained staff member or volunteer is present throughout.
- Brief your whole team on what to do if someone becomes distressed.
- Ensure your service's safeguarding policy and lone-working policy are followed as normal.
- Have crisis support information readily available.

If someone becomes distressed

14. Stay calm and non-judgmental. Do not try to stop them from expressing emotion.
15. Move to a quieter space if appropriate and if the person wants to.
16. Listen. You do not need to have answers. Being present is enough.
17. Ask if they would like to speak to someone - offer your service's support or referral pathway.
18. Do not leave someone alone if you are concerned for their safety.
19. Follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures if there is a risk of harm.
20. Have details about how to access Turning Points Family and Friends Service & mental health support in your area.

5. Photography & Consent

We want services to share photos of their displays — this is a key part of amplifying the campaign. However, it must be done carefully to protect people's privacy.

Photographing people

- Never photograph an identifiable person without their explicit consent.
- Use the consent form provided. Keep signed copies on file.
- Be especially careful with service users - make sure they understand the image may appear on public social media.
- Never photograph under 18 without consent from a parent or guardian.
- We also need a consent form if you are photographing a handwritten message that clearly identifies the person.

7. Quick Checklist

Three weeks before (by 10 August)

- Send print file to local print shop and confirm collection date
- Order or source string, pegs, pens, hole punch, and fixings
- Confirm display location and get any necessary permission
- Brief all staff and volunteers on safeguarding guidance

Two weeks before 17 August)

- Collect A2 print from print shop
- Cut out cards and punch holes
- Set up string and display structure at your chosen location
- Prepare pen and card station
- Print any consent forms needed
- Staff and volunteers briefed and present

On the day of your event

- Make crisis support numbers accessible
- Invite people to write and hang cards
- Photograph display following consent guidance
- Post on social media and collaborate and tag our central social media channels

After the campaign

- Please send any feedback or numbers to: marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk