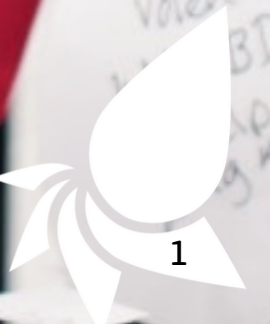


Communications Toolkit

Remember. Prevent. Act. Support

International Overdose Awareness Day

31 August 2026



Overview

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.

The campaign provides an opportunity throughout August and beyond to:

- Remember those who have died from overdose
- Raise awareness of overdose risks
- Promote harm reduction advice
- Increase access to naloxone and life-saving interventions
- Signpost people into local support services
- Encourage conversations about substance use without stigma

Theme: Remember. Prevent. Act. Support.



About This Toolkit

This toolkit has been developed for Turning Point services, local authorities and our partner organisations to use as much or as little as required to support your communications and activity to help spread awareness around overdose.

Included within this toolkit:

- ✓ Event guidance
- ✓ Key messages and facts
- ✓ Overdose prevention advice
- ✓ Harm reduction information
- ✓ Awareness materials and posters
- ✓ Social media content
- ✓ Referral information

[Download the full campaign communication toolkit](#)



Messages & Memories Card Event

This year, we're encouraging services to mark International Overdose Awareness Day (IOAD) by creating visible Messages & Memories displays.

Set up your display in a local community space to remember those lost to overdose, raise awareness of overdose prevention, and encourage conversations about the support available.

We've created resources, templates, guidance and promotional materials ready to use, making this a simple, low-cost activity with a big impact. Bring together colleagues, peer mentors, volunteers and people we support to help make it happen.

If you run art, wellbeing or creative groups, consider involving them in preparing the display materials as a meaningful pre-event activity.

The finished display can be showcased in waiting rooms, advice centres, community noticeboards, town centres, or any suitable local location, helping to engage communities, promote services and support overdose awareness.

 **[Download the full IOAD 2026 service guide and resources for more information](#)**

For any further advice or support contact: marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk



Messages & Memory Cards - Virtual Display

For those unable to access a service or public place to leave a message card, we have created an online form for individuals to anonymously leave a note.

These notes will be displayed on the Turning Point website and social media channels to remember those lost to overdose, raise awareness of overdose prevention, and encourage conversations about the support available.

Individuals can submit their note or message anonymously here:

 <https://t-p.news/overdose-message>

Alternatively, individuals are invited to leave comments on social media post to contribute to the display.

For any further advice or support contact:

marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk



Why This Matters

Drug-related deaths in England remain at historically high levels.

Key Statistics

- In England and Wales, 5,565 deaths related to drug poisoning were registered in 2024, the highest number on record and an increase from 5,448 in 2023.
- The rate of drug poisoning deaths has more than doubled since 2012.
- Almost half of all drug poisoning deaths registered in 2024 involved an opioid or opiate.
- Deaths involving cocaine continue to rise sharply.
- Men account for around two-thirds of drug poisoning deaths.
- People aged 40 to 49 experience some of the highest rates of drug-related deaths.
- Emerging synthetic opioids such as nitazenes are causing increasing concern.

Important message - overdose is not limited to heroin or opioids.

These figures demonstrate why overdose awareness, naloxone provision and harm reduction services continue to play an important role in reducing preventable deaths.



Understanding Overdose: Know the Difference, Save a Life

Overdose isn't just about opioids

Overdoses can happen with opioids, stimulants, alcohol, prescription medicines and mixed substances. Knowing the warning signs can help prevent serious harm and save lives.

Different substances affect the body in different ways. Some slow down breathing, heart rate and brain activity, while others overstimulate the heart, nervous system and brain. Both can lead to serious medical emergencies and, in some cases, death.

Opioid Overdose	Stimulant Overdose
Slows the body down	Speeds the body up
Slow or stopped breathing	Rapid heartbeat
Extreme drowsiness/unresponsiveness	Severe agitation, panic or paranoia
Blue or grey lips/skin	Overheating and sweating
Responds to Naloxone	Naloxone will not reverse a stimulant overdose

If you suspect an overdose

- ✓ Call 999 immediately
- ✓ Stay with the person
- ✓ Place them in the recovery position if unconscious but breathing
- ✓ Administer Naloxone if an opioid overdose is suspected

 Find out more: [Understanding Overdose: Risks, Signs and How to Prevent Drug and Alcohol-Related Harm](#)



Naloxone Saves Lives

What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a lifesaving medication that can quickly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

It can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, although it is a prescription-only medication, any person in the UK can carry and administer Naloxone for the purpose of saving a life.

Where can I get free naloxone?

To help reduce drug-related deaths we provide free overdose response naloxone kits to people at risk of an opioid overdose, their family and friends, and members of the public who could help prevent an overdose.

Access a naloxone kit, get trained and find out more:

- 🔗 Visit your [local Turning Point hub](#)
- 🔗 Ask your [local pharmacy](#).
- 🔗 Order one through our [Naloxone Click and Deliver service](#)
- 🔗 [Contact your local Turning Point service](#) to ask about individual and group naloxone training. We now also offer overdose training for Young People for nasal naloxone (see next page).



Drug Testing: A Vital Harm Reduction Tool in a Changing Drug Market

The illicit drug supply is increasingly unpredictable. Potent synthetic opioids, including nitazenes, are being detected in a wide range of substances, often without the knowledge of the person using them. These substances can be many times stronger than heroin and have been linked to a growing number of overdoses and drug-related deaths.

Drug Testing Saves Lives

Drug checking services help people understand what is actually in their substances, identify unexpected contaminants, and make more informed decisions about reducing risk. Drug testing can:

- ✓ Detect dangerous substances such as nitazenes and other synthetic opioids
- ✓ Identify unexpected ingredients and adulterants
- ✓ Support informed harm reduction decisions
- ✓ Provide early warning of emerging drug market trends
- ✓ Reduce the risk of overdose and drug-related harm

Local and National Drug Checking Services

WEDINOS provides anonymous drug testing and publishes alerts about emerging substances across the UK.

<https://wedinos.wales/>

Turning Point's Horizons Bristol and Hackney drug and alcohol services work in partnership with The Loop, delivering drug checking services and gathering vital information about changing drug trends to help keep communities safer. www.wearetheloop.org/

Other Turning Point Drug and Alcohol services can provide drug testing strips and advice on how to use them.

You can't tell what's in a drug by looking at it.

With synthetic opioids such as nitazenes appearing in unexpected substances, drug testing is an increasingly important harm reduction tool alongside carrying naloxone, avoiding mixing substances, and never using alone.

Young People's Overdose Prevention Support

Turning Point has developed a **Young Person's Nasal Naloxone (Nyoxid)** training programme.

The programme is the first of its kind aimed specifically at young people. It has been developed as there was a growing need for content relevant to young people as only adult naloxone training previously existed.

The training is centred around a set of cards designed to enable key workers or youth workers to provide flexible training in outreach settings, allowing for personalised one-on-one support for a young person.

After this training YPs should understand:

- what naloxone is
- what an overdose is
- to recognise the signs of an overdose
- have a good understanding of opioids
- know how to respond to an overdose and administer nasal naloxone
- know what to do after you have used naloxone.

We want to reach more young people and encourage them to Carry Naloxone at festivals, when they're clubbing or just whenever they are out and about!



Examples of the training cards

Young Person Resources

- [Access the Training Cards and Posters in the campaign toolkit](#)
- Watch the [YouTube training video](#)
- [Get support for young people](#)

Support Available From Turning Point

Free & Confidential Support for Alcohol and Drug Use

Turning Point provides free and confidential support for people affected by alcohol or drug use. We support people at any stage - whether they want to make small changes for their health and wellbeing, harm reduction advice, access to detox treatment or to stop drinking and/or using drugs.

How to refer into service

There are different ways people can access support:

- ✓ Self-referral
- ✓ Professional referral
- ✓ Friends and family referrals

➔ **Refer or find support: www.turning-point.co.uk/get-support**



Resources Available

Download the full campaign toolkit including:

- Service event guide
- Memory card designs ready to print
- Opioid overdose awareness toolkit leaflet
- NEW overdose awareness posters (A3 & A4 print ready)
- YP overdose kit with training cards, leaflets and posters
- Social media assets

Useful links and information to find out more:

- Discover 'Resources' blogs including:
 - Understanding Overdose
 - Substance Information Cards
 - BBV Testing: Why Knowing Your Status Matters
- Overdose Awareness & Prevention
- Find Your Local Service
- Get Support

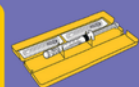


NEW Overdose Awareness Posters

HOW TO RESPOND TO AN OVERDOSE

Call 999
Ask for an ambulance - they will not inform the police.
Share location and that you think it is an overdose.
Listen to the call handler's instructions - they are there to help you.

Administer naloxone
Naloxone quickly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. It is safe to use even if you don't know what they have taken.



Recognise the 5 Signs of Overdose



Know How to Reduce the Risk

- Use with people you trust and avoid using alone
- Test your drugs before using
- Start with a test dose - a small amount to test the strength of your drug
- Avoid mixing with other substances
- Always carry naloxone



Carry Naloxone - contact your local service or order a kit online

www.turning-point.co.uk/overdose

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WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE IS OVERDOSING

Keep yourself safe
Move any objects that might cause injury.

Check for a response
Speak loudly to the person and shrug their shoulders.

Check their airways
Are they breathing normally?

Call 999
Ask for an ambulance.

- The police won't be called.
- Put the call on loud speaker.
- Tell the call handler as much as you can including your location & that you think it's an opioid overdose.
- Tell them if you have a naloxone kit.
- Listen to the call handler's instructions - they are there to help you.



Carry Naloxone - contact your local service or order a kit online

www.turning-point.co.uk/overdose

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What increases the risk of an opioid overdose?

Anyone using street drugs is at risk of having an overdose, but the risk can be increased by:

- Mixing with other drugs**
Especially alcohol and benzodiazepines.
- Using alone**
This means there is no-one around to call for help.
- Low tolerance**
After a period of time not using, or using less.
- Injecting**
This gives a whole hit, though overdose can still happen through smoking.
- Changes in purity**
Or if something unexpected is mixed with the drugs.
- A recent overdose**
As your body may not yet have fully recovered.
- Poor health**
Due to a lowered immune system.

Carry Naloxone - contact your local service or order a kit online

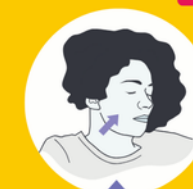
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5 Signs of an opioid overdose



Unresponsive



Pale or ashen skin



Snoring or rattling breath



Blue or grey lips or fingertips



Shallow or no breathing

If you or anyone else is unwell call 999 straight away



Carry Naloxone - contact your local service or order a kit online

www.turning-point.co.uk/overdose

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REDUCING THE RISK OF AN OVERDOSE

- Use with people you trust
- Start with a test dose - a small amount to test the strength of your drug
- Test your drugs before using with a test strip or by sending a sample to WEDINOS
- Avoiding mixing with other substances
- Always carry naloxone

If you or anyone else is unwell call 999 or seek medical help straight away

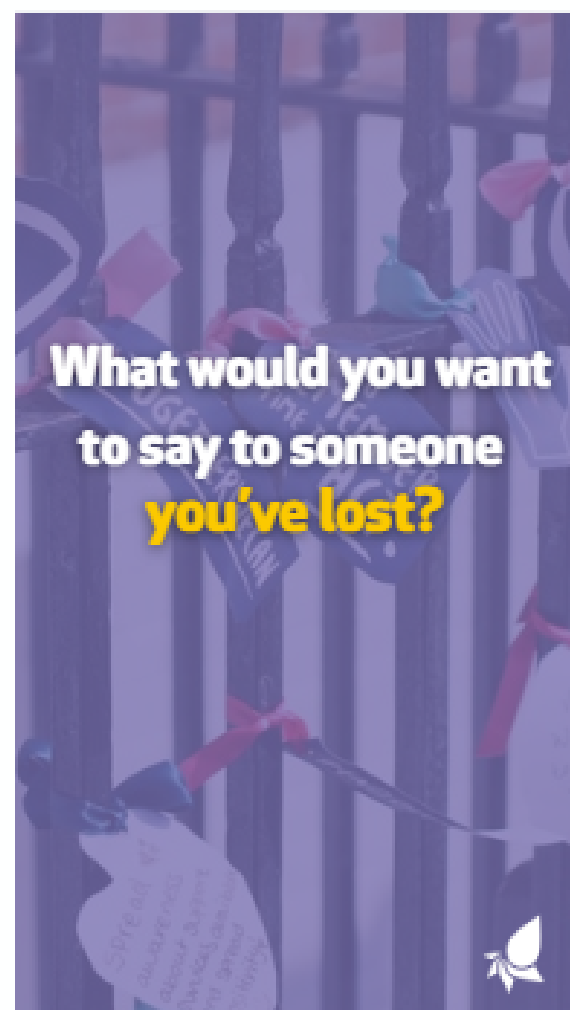
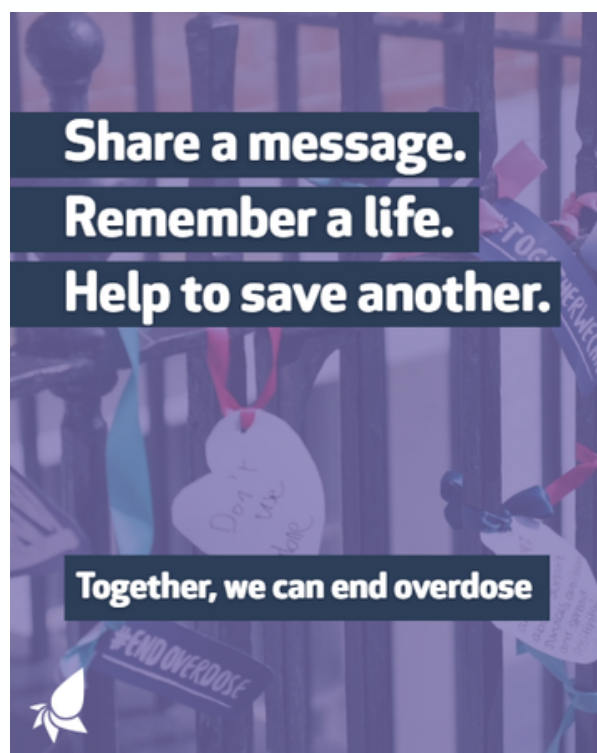


Carry Naloxone - contact your local service or order a kit online

www.turning-point.co.uk/overdose

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Social Media Assets



Throughout the campaign, we encourage services with social media accounts to share content which showcases events, promotes overdose awareness, and signposts to harm reduction advice. Across our national channels, we will be posting overdose prevention information and advice which we encourage you to repost and share to increase awareness.

For those unable to access a service to leave a message card, we have created an online form for individuals to anonymously leave a note. These notes will be shown on the website following IOAD. To encourage people to leave a message we have created some social media content, which can be downloaded here. Please adapt the caption to suit your social media page.

Suggested caption:

This International Overdose Awareness Day, we're creating a national collection of anonymous messages to honour lives lost and prevent future overdoses. Whether it's a message of remembrance, hope or support, your words can help spread awareness and save lives.

 Leave your message here: www.t-p.news/overdose-message

#IOAD2026 #EveryMessageMatters #EndOverdose

Contact Details

For any questions around the campaign or downloading resources, please contact: Sarah Butterworth, National Marketing Manager; sarah.butterworth@turning-point.co.uk or marketingandcommunications@turning-point.co.uk



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