

**Why have we developed this advice sheet?**

The evolving situation with COVID-19 has the potential to impact clients who use injecting equipment services and staff that deliver IEP. NHS Tayside hopes there is minimal disruption to delivery of IEP but is making contingency arrangements to ensure a level of service can be maintained in Dundee, Perth and Angus.

**Why is continued delivery of IEP and harm reduction advice important?**

People who inject drugs are deemed as vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and vulnerable to serious harm / premature death related to their injecting drug use. If we are unable to provide clean injecting equipment, there is an increased risk of transmission of Hepatitis C and HIV and bacterial infections.

If people who inject drugs are required to self-isolate due to COVID-19 there is an increased risk of overdose as they will be injecting alone. If they are infected with COVID-19, there may be an increased risk of overdose due to the respiratory depression effect of the virus. It is therefore vital that people are encouraged to have a supply of naloxone for use.

**What can I do?**

1. All IEP services should ensure that they have sufficient stock in the event of supply disruption. Services should also consider the number of large sharps bins they can hold (for returns), should there be an interruption in NHS collections. It is suggested that 4-6 weeks stock is held of essential items:
  - 1ml fixed/2ml/1ml/blue/green/orange
  - Alcohol wipes
  - Citric
  - Water for injecting
  - Personal sharps bins
2. Check NEO news regularly for updates on IEP services. We will use this to tell you about any closures of IEP sites or changes to advice for clients: [www.scotlandneo.co.uk/Secure/Login.aspx](http://www.scotlandneo.co.uk/Secure/Login.aspx)
3. Stay informed about current advice for COVID-19 and share it with colleagues and clients. All IEP services should provide advice for safer injecting, hand washing, naloxone supply and be aware of other sites that clients can access should there be any closures. NHS Inform is the main source of information for Scotland: [www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus](http://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus)  
Crew 2000 has produced useful advice for people who use drugs: [www.crew.scot/coronavirus-general-hygiene-tips/](http://www.crew.scot/coronavirus-general-hygiene-tips/)
4. Tell us about any issues as soon as they arise – if you experience a problem with stock or your service cannot be staffed, please let us know as soon as possible to see if we can support you in any way and to ensure we have up to date information for clients

**What advice should I give to clients?**

You should continue to provide clients with advice on safer injecting and stress the importance of hand-washing and good hygiene. If clients are homeless, consider allowing them to wash their hands if you have facilities to do so.

Advise clients about the dangers of injecting alone and encourage them to keep a supply of naloxone.

**Where can people get Naloxone?**

Naloxone is available at a number of services across Tayside including:

Dundee - Cairn Centre IEP

Perth - Drumhar Health Centre IEP

Angus – Angus Integrated Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (AIDARS)

Other drug services also have access to naloxone so clients can ask their drug workers.

**What should I tell people who need to self-isolate?**

Secondary distribution, or the collection of equipment on behalf of someone else, continues to be available at all IEP services.

- If self-isolation is required clients should nominate someone to collect their injecting equipment for them and take to their home
- They should be encouraged to take enough equipment to ensure the client has clean equipment for every injection for up to 14 days

**What about cleaning and re-use of equipment?**

Cleaning needles and syringes should be a last resort. Under ordinary circumstances we do not recommend cleaning of equipment however this may become necessary if people are self-isolating, there is a disruption to supply of stock or there is a significant curtailment on movement (e.g. people are only allowed in public places for specific reasons).

There is a recognised method for sterilising needles and syringes, which will reduce the risks of BBV transmission if they are to be reused or shared however, to properly disinfect injecting equipment, this process needs to be followed very carefully. The process involves the use of 3 sterile containers, 2 containing water and 1 containing bleach.

<b>Container 1 Water</b>	The syringe should be filled to the top by drawing up the water to fill the full barrel. This water should be squirted out (away from other paraphernalia) ideally down a sink or toilet.
<b>Container 2 Thin Bleach</b>	Then, the syringe should be filled to the top with thin bleach, by drawing and squirting out (away from other paraphernalia) ideally down a sink or toilet.
<b>Container 3 Water</b>	Then, the syringe should be filled to the top by drawing up clean water to fill the full syringe. This water should be squirted out (away from other paraphernalia) ideally down a sink or toilet.

If a person needs to use a previously used needle or syringe, it is likely they won't have access to other unused injecting paraphernalia (spoons, water, filters) so BBV transmission may still occur.

If re-use occurs, clients should be advised to have a test for blood borne viruses (Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and HIV).

A leaflet for clients can be found here: [www.sexualhealthtayside.org/professionals/resources/harm-reduction-resources/](http://www.sexualhealthtayside.org/professionals/resources/harm-reduction-resources/)

Printed copies can be obtained by emailing [bbvmcn.tayside@nhs.net](mailto:bbvmcn.tayside@nhs.net)

**What should I do if we run low on stock?**

If a service runs out of stock and is unable to obtain more through normal ordering processes, contact should be made with the Harm Reduction Centre at Cairn Centre, Dundee. The team will advise if stock can be re-distributed from other services.

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If you have any concerns or queries regarding IEP services please contact:

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