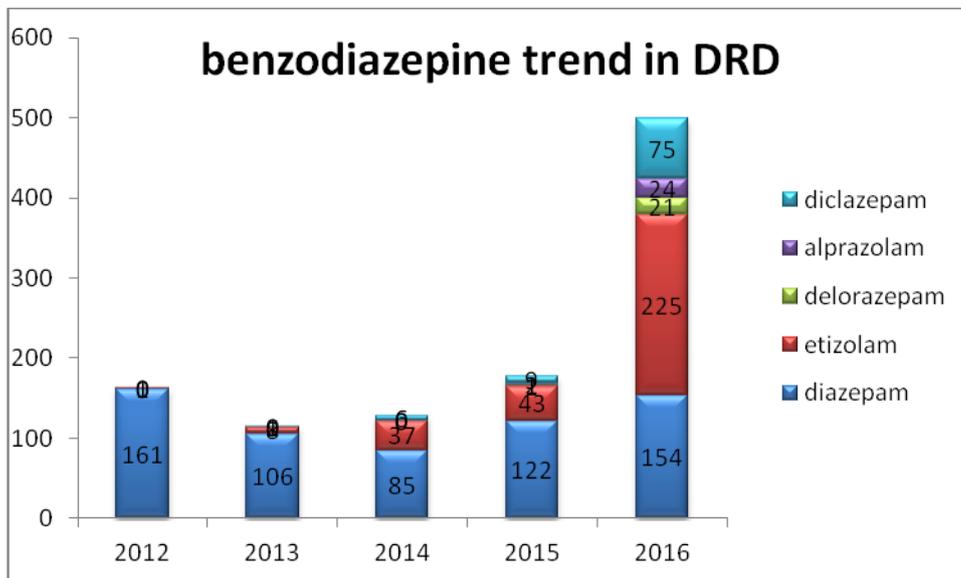


To: All Users of the Lothian urine and oral fluid Drugs of Abuse service at RIE

Date: 27th March 2018 – changes scheduled for 3rd April 2018

Subject: Changes to Benzodiazepine reporting in urine and oral fluid drug screens

The Drug Related Death 2016 Scotland report indicated a large increase in drug-related deaths (DRD). Novel non-prescription (street) benzodiazepines were implicated in 277 (28%) of these deaths. The incidence of Etizolam, diclazepam, delorazepam and alprazolam increased greatly compared to previous years, whereas there was no change in diazepam. There are recent reports of increasing use of alprazolam (Xanax) in Lothian.



The Lothian urine and oral fluid drugs of abuse service has not previously detected these new benzodiazepines. The current benzodiazepine group detects diazepam, temazepam, oxazepam and nitrazepam and also includes nordiazepam, which is a long-acting active metabolite of diazepam and chlordiazepoxide. The urine method also detects the clonazepam metabolite: 7-amino-clonazepam.

From Tuesday 3rd April we will report alprazolam, diclazepam, delorazepam and etizolam as positive when present in either the oral fluid or urine sample. This will be separate from the benzodiazepine group. The Benzodiazepine group reporting will not change and will be reported as positive or negative depending on whether the sample contains any of the prescription drugs mentioned above.

Initial findings indicate these are found in around 15% of samples: 10% are positive for alprazolam (Xanax), 4-5% are positive for etizolam, and around 1% for diclazepam or delorazepam. A significant number of samples are positive for more than one of these and also for “prescription” benzodiazepines. Etizolam and alprazolam are 6-10 times more potent than diazepam, are highly addictive and potentially dangerous when taken in combination with other drugs or alcohol, as indicated in the 2016 Drug-Related-Deaths report.

Paul Cawood