

OFFICIAL

Our Ref: IM-FOI-2022-0341
Date: 1st March 2022



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002

I refer to your recent request for information which has been handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

For ease of reference, your request is replicated below together with the response.

Under the freedom of information act I require proof that you are complying with legal responsibility for documenting the use of dihydrocodeine an unlicensed treatment for heroin addiction.

4.7.4.1 Dihydrocodeine - There is some limited evidence that dihydrocodeine has been used effectively for maintenance in opiate dependent individuals (Robertson et al 2007). Dihydrocodeine tablets are difficult to supervise, are short acting (so need frequent dosing) and can be easily diverted and used illicitly. There is also a developing evidence base regarding the role of dihydrocodeine in overdose deaths (Zamparutti 2011).

Doctors working within the criminal justice system use dihydrocodeine, especially in police custody and on occasion for prison admissions, as a useful agent to give short-term symptomatic relief because of relatively lower potency and lesser risk of accumulation toxicity. In prison, this is particularly when methadone cannot be initiated (e.g. late at night with limited clinical staff available). Patients in prison found to be suitable for ongoing OST are usually started on methadone as soon as possible (buprenorphine is currently much less used in the prison setting).

More exceptionally, dihydrocodeine is used for patients who have become dependent on prescribed dihydrocodeine and are unwilling to consider, or unable to tolerate, methadone or buprenorphine. There is no specific guidance in this situation, beyond the general guidance above.

Dihydrocodeine should only be prescribed by specialist, or suitably competent, clinicians, who have access to high-quality monitoring and support services. Such prescribing should comply with local off-label medicines procedures.

(Dihydrocodeine is unlicensed for the treatment of heroin addiction and is therefore off-label, NHS Grampian as not proved they are following their own policy, the clinicians are not specialist or suitably competent. Without any disrespect to Police custody staff they cannot give either high quality monitoring or give high quality support services, I require proof that you are complying with your own policies and the law and so, do I suspect do the police.)

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Having considered this request in terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, I must advise you that section 17 of the Act applies and the information sought is not held by Police Scotland.

Medical provision for prisoners is the responsibility of National Health Service (NHS) Scotland.

The management of all medication given to an individual whilst in police custody is the responsibility of the NHS Healthcare Professional.

As such, any decision relating to medication provided to persons in custody in the Grampian area will be made by NHS Grampian.

The NHS use their own IT system to record the medication provided to persons in custody. If you require any further information relating to the provision of medication to persons in police custody, please contact NHS Grampian.

Should you require any further assistance please contact Information Management quoting the reference number given.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which Police Scotland has dealt with your request, you are entitled, in the first instance, to request a review of our actions and decisions.

Your request must specify the matter which gives rise to your dissatisfaction and it must be submitted within 40 working days of receiving this response - either by email to foi@scotland.pnn.police.uk or by post to Information Management (Disclosure), Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH.

If you remain dissatisfied following the outcome of that review, you are thereafter entitled to apply to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner within six months for a decision. You can apply [online](#), by email to enquiries@itspublicknowledge.info or by post to Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9DS.

Should you wish to appeal against the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner's decision, there is an appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

As part of our commitment to demonstrate openness and transparency in respect of the information we hold, an anonymised version of this response will be posted to the Police Scotland Freedom of Information [Disclosure Log](#) in seven days' time.