



Drug related deaths in Scotland have risen to the highest levels seen since records began, according to a new report.

There were 613 drug-related deaths in Scotland last year an increase of 16% on the previous year, after following three years of decline.

The National Record of Scotland report revealed that the deaths were involving an “ageing” group of users with a previous history of drug use.

Of the 613 drug related deaths 74% were men. More than half of all of the deaths involved, or partially involved heroin or Methadone, the prescribed heroin substitute.

Older drug users aged between 35-44 years of age accounted for 213 of drug related deaths. The average age of people dying from drug related deaths in Scotland has increase to 40 years of age from 28 years of age back in 1996 when records began.

"Scotland still faces a huge challenge in tackling the damaging effects of long-term drug use among an ageing cohort of individuals in Scotland.

"This group of individuals often have long-term, chronic health problems as a result of sustained and, in many cases, increasingly chaotic drug-use issues. We are undertaking work to better understand the needs of particular sub-groups." said Paul Wheelhouse MSP, community safety and legal affairs minister, in the BBC article.

Calum Murray, the director of the Church of Scotland support group CrossReach, believes the rise in these drug related deaths is "related" to government cuts.

"It would appear to be related that less funding for treatment leads to more deaths. I am greatly saddened by these figures because behind every one of these statistics is a tragic back story for families who merit great sympathy and understanding." he told the BBC.

He believes that cuts to drug and alcohol support and rehabilitation has been made across Scotland due to austerity measures, which the government denies.

"These claims are simply not true - funding to Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships for drug treatment services has remained constant in recent years.

"Statistics published today confirm that many drug-related deaths are older drug users who often have long-term, chronic health problems as a result of sustained and increasingly chaotic drug use issues, pin-pointing a cause of death is never easy." said a government spokesperson.

Funding from the Scottish government for alcohol and drug treatment services has risen from £30.2m in 2012-2013 to £30.4m in the last three years.

Source: [BBC Scotland](#)