

NHS Western Isles has gathered local stories from loved ones to raise awareness of the difficulties faced and how Naloxone can make a difference. It is important to raise awareness of the availability of this medication to ensure Naloxone reaches those who need it.

Lived experience of a loved one – story one

When I met John

When I met *John through friends he seemed like a very popular, easy-going guy. At first in our relationship things were great but after a while he was nipping out of the house more often, sometimes late at night, but wasn't really gone for long periods and there was always a vague reason for it, just heading to a friend's to collect a game; nipping to get cigarettes from the shop; told *James I would help him with something but won't be long. I just got used to it.

After we got married I didn't see this as anything out of the ordinary but I was noticing that John was quite often moody and his friends were calling round to the house more often, but they weren't really coming into the house they were just standing at the front door having quiet conversations. A few times John had come home from friends' houses and would fall asleep sitting up on the couch and have a funny smell on him. When it started happening more and more often I asked him what was going on and if he was taking anything (I suspected marijuana). At first he denied it and told me I was being stupid, but eventually he admitted he was smoking heroin. I had never been around drugs before or anyone that had taken drugs so I guess I didn't fully appreciate the seriousness of this admission although some things made a bit more sense; the wages disappearing quicker; the mood changes and the falling asleep in the evenings sitting up on the couch mid-movie.

I was 18 and it wasn't really affecting me so things just carried on. After about 6 months I started noticing marks and bruises on John's arms. We were arguing more and money had become a problem. Two wages were going before the month was up and he couldn't explain on what. John admitted that he wasn't smoking heroin anymore, he was injecting it but it was fine, he knew what he was doing. A few of his friends were doing it with him, as smoking it wasn't working for him anymore. His friends started calling round more often. They would quite often be in the bedroom with the computer, so I just left them to it.

After a while, I fell pregnant and we decided to move to another area. John's brother lived there so he would help us get sorted. Things spiralled when we moved. John didn't find another job. He started shoplifting. His new friends would be at our flat till all hours and the drug use was now

happening in front of me. My midwife spoke to me about John's drug use. I even had to have an HIV test because I stood on a used needle that was on my carpet and I realized that if things didn't change that my child was going to be at risk.

On one occasion I had been out getting shopping and when I went home there was John plus two of his friends passed out. I was shoving John to wake him up and eventually he realized I was there and he got himself together enough and said he would get them to go. I was putting away the stuff I had bought and I could hear him arguing with someone, and when I went back through to the living room I realised that one of his friend's was really not okay. He was making a weird noise when he was breathing and he was a really weird colour. I could tell by their reactions this was not good, they were shaking him and shouting, and then when they dragged him from the couch and onto the floor and he didn't react to it I completely panicked and used my mobile to phone for an ambulance. John got really angry at me when he realized I was on the phone to 999, for not giving them time to get him out the flat and into the hall because he said that if he died in the flat it was going to cause alot more of a problem.

I remember thinking at that point that this guy is actually dying. I was pregnant and panicking and this guy was dying. I will never forget how relieved I was when the ambulance guys turned up. I was ushered out the room and when they took him out on the trolley I could see his eyes were open and he was obviously breathing, but I swear I didn't sleep that night and I can still remember seeing him like that.

That incident gave me a wakeup call and soon after John was given an ultimatum.

I wish I had known about Naloxone before, as I would have known what to do. It was just lucky that I had called for help, as I cannot honestly say what would have happened otherwise.

Last year, when Naloxone training was being offered, I decided to get in touch with the addictions service and ask if I could be trained. This was all done over the phone, and I had a Naloxone kit sent to me through the post.

John doesn't use drugs anymore, but knowing how little I knew about overdoses, and the panic of seeing someone who could have died has never gone away. Having Naloxone in my handbag has helped me to talk to other people about my experience and show them how easy it is for family and friends to get Naloxone. I think talking about it will help, as no one wants someone they love to be taken by an Overdose.

*[*Names have been changed to protect identity]*