Reducing Medicines Waste in NHS Fife

Background
- Unused medicines waste costs NHS Fife approximately £3 million annually.
- 50% of this is avoidable and the public are often unaware that returned medicines cannot be reused or recycled.

Aims
- To increase awareness of the scale of medicines waste in NHS Fife.
- Decrease costs by reducing inappropriate ordering of medicines.
- Promotion of “Wasted medicines, means wasted £millions. Only order the medicines you need”.

Method
Formation of a multi-disciplinary group to lead the campaign.
The publicity campaign, launched in September 2012, was supported by local MSPs with an 8 tonne skip to show the quantity of medicines returned every 8 weeks in NHS Fife.
Publicity included:
- bus advertising
- railway station posters
- posters/leaflets distributed to:
  - GP practices
  - community pharmacies
  - hospital pharmacies
  - council offices and buildings
  - MSP offices
- radio interviews
- articles in local newspapers; NHS Fife publications/websites
- promotion at local NHS events and on NHS vehicles.

Results/Outcomes
- Historically NHS Fife’s monthly item growth is greater than the Scottish average.
- In the 6 months following the campaign the item growth in NHS Fife was below the Scottish average, equating to a saving of approximately £215,000.
- A public survey showed many knew about the campaign, and had seen some form of publicity (see figure 1).
- 74% of respondents (from GP practices/community pharmacies survey) thought the campaign had increased public awareness of medicines waste in NHS Fife (see figure 2).

Conclusion
- The publicity campaign has resulted in savings by reducing ordering of medicines not required of approximately £215,000, thereby reducing other costs and waste.
- Increased public awareness of the issues resulting from inappropriate ordering of medicines not required.