

Introducing a Safer Drug Consumption Facility for Glasgow “The Thistle”

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership
Glasgow City Alcohol and Drug Partnership

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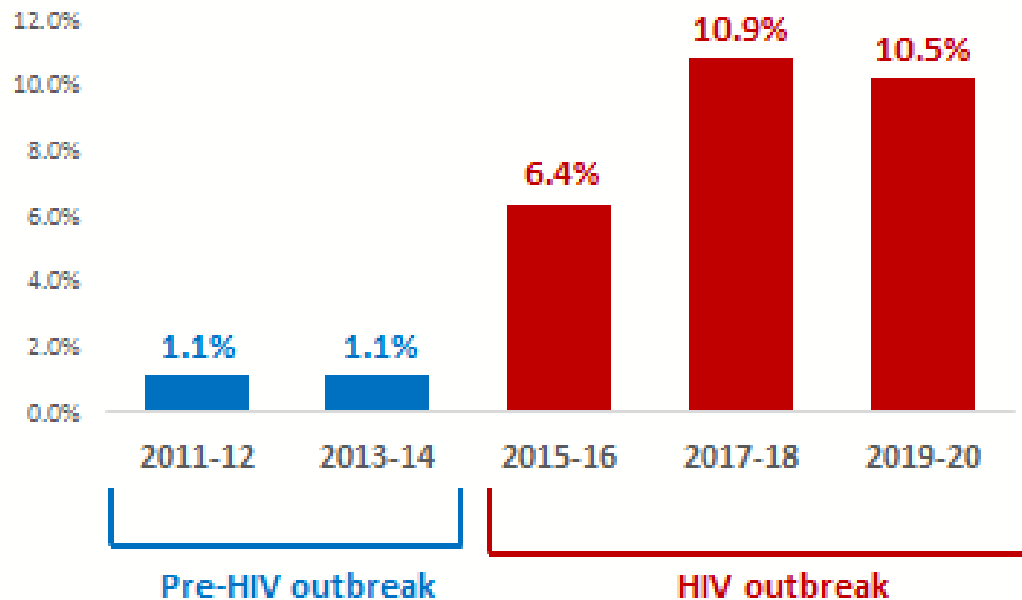
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Background

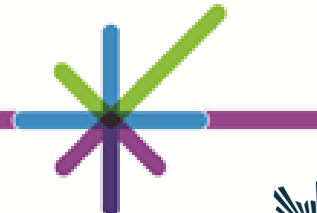
Rise in HIV prevalence in the population of PWID in Glasgow City



- 10-fold rise in prevalence of HIV infection among PWID observed in Glasgow city between 2013 and 2017
- Plateauing in prevalence of HIV infection among PWID between 2017 and 2019 (i.e. pre-COVID)

Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative

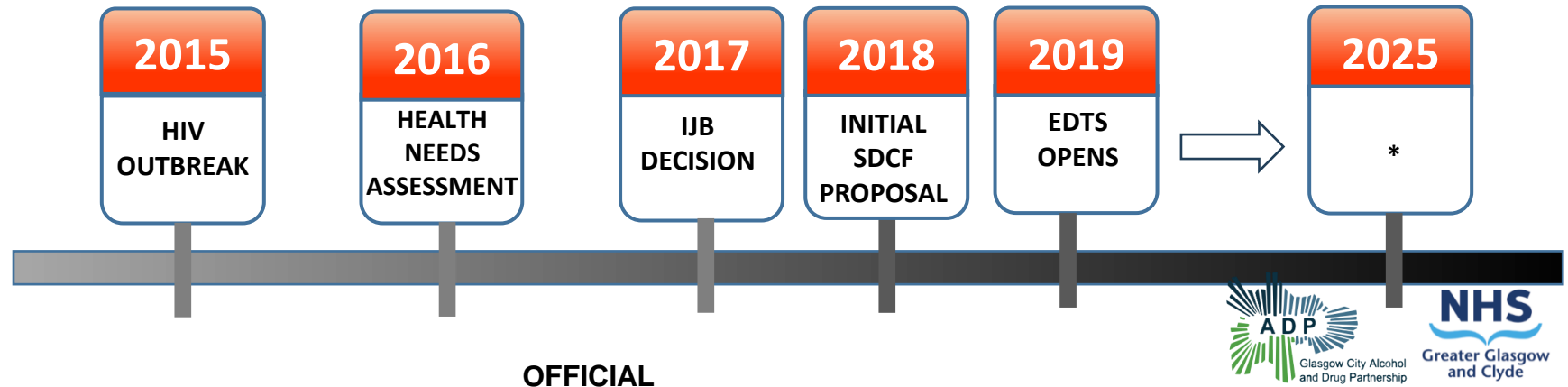
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Glasgow



- Injecting 'away from home' increasing.
- Cocaine injecting > increased prevalence.
- Public Health Issues:
 - Discarded needles and paraphernalia
 - Bodily fluids



Figures

- In Scotland in 2023 there were 1,172 drug-related deaths, an increase of 11.5% on the previous year.
- In NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHS GG&C) there were 355 drug-related deaths, an increase of 18.3% on 2022.
- In Glasgow City there were 246 drug-related deaths, an increase of 25.5% on 2022.
- Male (71.3%), Aged between 45-54 (35.5%; Median = 46).
- Opiates or Opioids continue to be present in 82% of all DRDs in NHS GG&C, with Heroin/Morphine implicated in 33%.
- The incidence of Cocaine deaths in 2023 has increased by 12% (29% in 2022 versus 41% in 2023). They are now found in two of every five deaths and are at the highest levels found in the last 5 years.
- In 2023 there was an increase in the incidence of benzodiazepines implicated (60%), which is due to street benzodiazepines (58%) such as Bromazolam (45%) and Etizolam (22%).
- In addition, deaths where an underlying health condition is also implied have also increased in 2023 meaning 2 in every 5 deaths had one present (44.2%).

The Legal Framework

What has changed?

- Statement of Prosecution Policy
 - No change to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

The Thistle:

- Near public injecting sites
- Co-located with other relevant services
- Community Engagement
- Independent Evaluation

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Lord Advocate – January 2025

“it would not be in the public interest to prosecute an individual attending the Facility for an offence in terms of section 5(2) of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971,

“References to “Facility” within this statement of prosecution policy mean the footprint of the drugs consumption wing of the premises only. The remainder of the premises, surrounding areas and co-located service, including the drug checking facility, are not included.

Any offence detected outside the Facility will be dealt with in the normal course, as will all other instances of suspected criminality arising within the Facility. Where an offence is reported to the Procurator Fiscal, prosecutors will consider what action if any is in the public interest, in accordance with the Prosecution Code.”

[Safer Drug Consumption Room Statement of Prosecution Policy 8 January 2025.pdf](#)



The Legal Framework

- NHS and Glasgow City Council Legal Opinions
- King's Counsel Legal Opinions
- National Working Group with the Crown Office, Police Scotland and Scottish Government

- Standard Operating Procedures
- Policies and Rules of Service
- Staff Induction, Training and Oversight

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What is a SDCF?

A hygienic environment where illicit drugs - purchased off the premises - can be consumed under clinical supervision.

The aims of SDCFs are to:

- Reduce drug-related overdose deaths
- Reduce the transmission of blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C
- Reduce injection-related wounds and infections
- Reach people who inject drugs and who might otherwise not engage with any type of service
- Benefit the surrounding community by reducing drug-related litter and visibility of public drug use
- Gain valuable insight into trends and patterns in drug use
- Engage with people who use drugs and connect them with addiction treatment services.

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Background

Drug consumption rooms have been operating in Europe since 1986, when the first one was established in Bern, Switzerland.

Today, more than 140 legally sanctioned drug consumption rooms, operate in 11 European countries, as well as in Australia, Canada, Mexico and the USA.



Vancouver



Sydney

Benefits of a SDCF?

Evidence elsewhere tells us that SDCFs;

Service Users

- Engage people who use drugs within the vicinity
- Reduce drug-related health harms
- Reduce infectious disease transmission
- Reduced risk of fatal overdose
- Increase access to treatment, care and support services
- Reduce stigma

Communities and Society

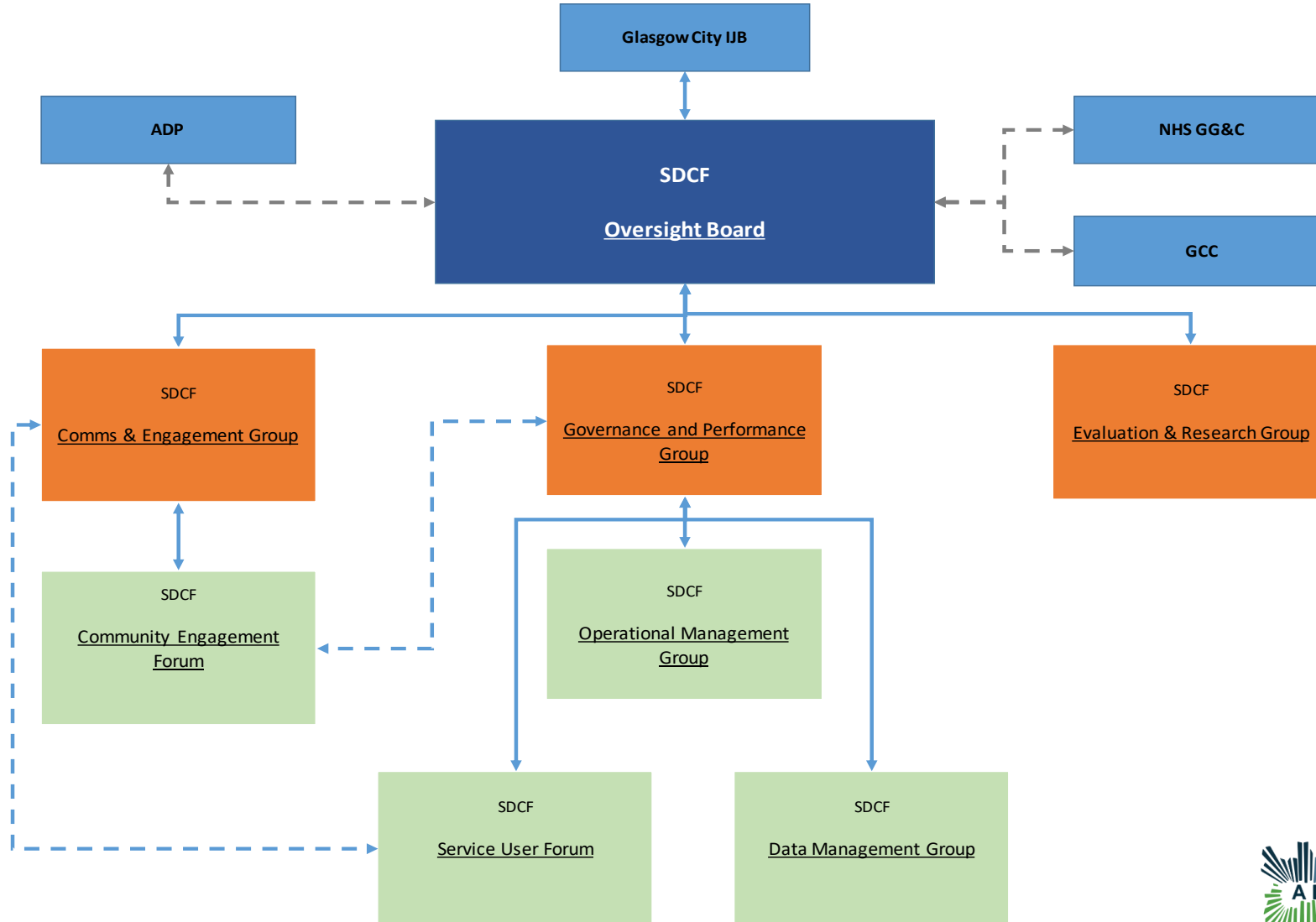
- Reduce drug related litter and visible drug use
- Improve social amenity
- Are cost-effective- e.g. reductions in acute service usage
- Don't have a "honeypot" effect
- No increase in crime within the vicinity

The Thistle's Implementation

- Opened: 13/01/2025; operating between the hours of 9am-9pm, 365 days a year.
- Situated within Hunter Street Health and Care Centre.
- Service co-located with Drug Treatment, Blood-Borne Virus, Sexual Reproductive Health and GP services.
- A fully integrated team, of all grades and disciplines including Medical Staff, Nursing Staff, Social Work Staff, Harm Reduction Workers and Psychology.
- Ability for individuals to access the service confidentially.
- Previous proposal for an inhalation room removed.
- Currently developing a Drug Checking Service with the Scottish Government, for the ability to test drugs prior to injecting.

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Governance



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Existing EDTS Environment

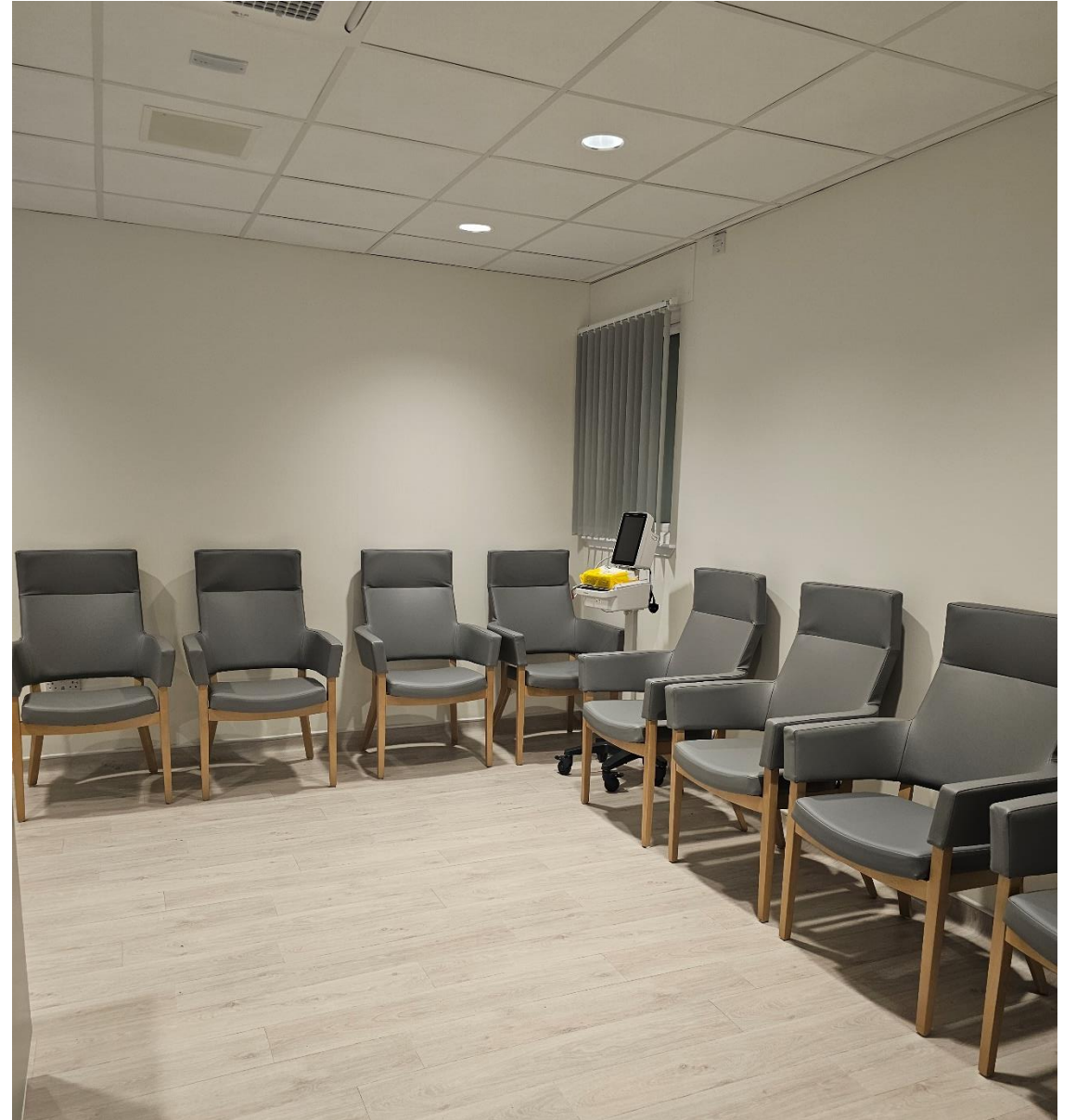




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Danger
Fragile roof

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+ Shower Facilities, Laundry Facilities and a Clothing Store +

Initial Service Figures

13/01/2025 > 17/03/2025:

- Unique Service Users: 168
- Service Registrations: 1435
- Medical Emergencies: 17

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Further Information

HSCP SDCF Webpage- www.glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf

The Thistle – Service Point of View Video:
[The Thistle - Safer Drug Consumption Room](#)

Glasgow City HSCP Service Video:
[Safer Drug Consumption Facility](#)

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The Thistle Glasgow City's Safer Drug Consumption Facility

The Safer Drug Consumption Room in Glasgow is called The Thistle. It is based at Hunter Street Health and Care Centre and open 365 days a year from 9am to 9pm.

What is a Safer Drug Consumption Facility?
The Thistle is a safe, clean, warm and welcoming service where you can inject your drugs. If you choose, the staff will also help you access other recovery and support services you need. Our staff team includes people with lived experience.

Will I be stopped by the police if I try to use this service?
You will not be stopped for solely trying to access The Thistle. You will only be stopped if you are engaged in activity that would provide Police Scotland with reasonable cause to stop you and/or search you. The Hunter Street Health and Care Centre is home to many services, so entering the building will not necessarily identify anyone as using The Thistle services.

Confidentiality
This is a confidential service. For more information, visit: glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf-service-user-information

<p>Why should I use the service? If you inject drugs, The Thistle will be a safer option for you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• you will have access to vein finders• you will have access to wound care• you will have access to advice from a range of health and social care staff• staff will be able to respond if you overdose or have any other problems• you will have access to our clothes store and shower facilities• the lounge has tea and coffee, Wifi and staff available to support with any issues you may have• there is a patio where you can smoke tobacco.	<p>What are the rules of the service? Those attending the service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• must be over the age of 18• can only inject the drugs they bring onto the site• cannot consume alcohol• cannot share or sell drugs on site, and• cannot help others to make up or inject drugs <p>At present we are not able to offer smoking or inhalation facilities for consuming drugs or provide tourniquets.</p>
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Watch our video of **The Thistle** to see how the service works.

For more information, visit: glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf

Thank You

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www.glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf

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