Glasgow City's Safer Drug Consumption Facility

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership is planning to establish a Safer Drug Consumption Facility (SDCF) in Glasgow City Centre.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Safer Drug Consumption Facility (SDCF)?

Safer drug consumption facilities (SDCFs) are supervised and controlled healthcare settings where people can consume drugs, obtained elsewhere, in the presence of trained health professionals, in clean and hygienic environments reducing the risk of overdose and infectious diseases whilst offering support and access to healthcare services.

They offer a compassionate, person-centred service which focuses on reducing the harms associated with injecting drug use and helps people access appropriate services to meet their needs. By doing so, they are able to reach an extremely vulnerable group who often do not engage with our existing services.

Safer Drug Consumption Facilities are also known as Supervised Drug Consumptions Rooms / Facilities (SDCR or SDCF), Safe / Supervised Injection Facilities (SIF), Safer Consumption Rooms (SCR), Overdose Prevention Sites (OPS), Drug Consumption Rooms (DCR) and Medically Supervised Injecting Rooms (MISR).

Why are these services being proposed for Glasgow?

Following an outbreak of HIV in people who inject drugs in public places, a health needs assessment 'Taking Away the Chaos' was undertaken in Glasgow city centre. This found there are approximately 400 to 500 people injecting drugs in public places in Glasgow city centre on a regular basis. Injecting in public spaces increases the risk of infection and other drug related harms, and also causes a risk to the public from discarded injecting equipment and needles.

The report made a number of recommendations, including the introduction of a SDCF which a large body of high-quality research suggests will help reduce the health and social consequences of public injecting in the city centre. These potential benefits are described in more detail below (See 'What are the expected benefits of these services?')

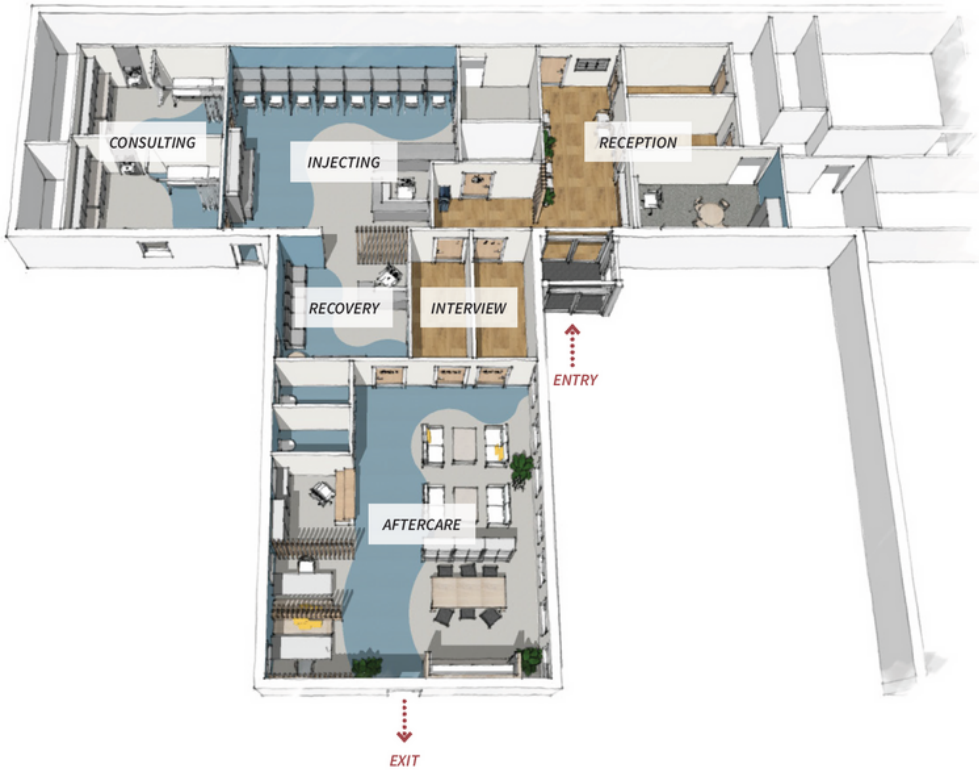
Glasgow city centre is the focus of the proposal since local evidence tells us that this area has a high concentration of people who inject drugs in public places, especially in the south-eastern area. Locating the facility in the area where public injecting is already taking place will maximise uptake by the target population.

What will the Glasgow SDCF look like?

This is an official service, staffed by health professionals, with close links to other health and social care services. The exterior of the building will look like any other Health and Social Care premises.

The facility will have a reception and waiting area, a separate private injecting area with individual booths, a recovery area with trained staff and an aftercare area where service users can interact with staff and representatives from a variety of support organisations.

Draft design of the Glasgow City SDCF



How will the service run?

The SDCF will be open 7 days a week, 365 days a year from 9am to 9pm.

All service users will be expected to register with the service before receiving support from the HSCP multidisciplinary team and key partners.

Service users will bring and prepare and inject their own drugs for use on site and cannot share drugs with others in the facility.

Do SDCFs encourage drug use?

SDCFs do not encourage drug use, but promote harm reduction, safer drug use and reduce drug related health issues and fatal overdoses. They support people to make and maintain contact with other services to help with treatment and recovery.

What is the legal status of these services?

Lord Advocate for Scotland announced that they would be prepared to publish a statement of prosecution policy to the effect that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute users of such a facility for possession of illegal drugs in an SDCF. Service users will be able to use drugs they bring on site, but will not be permitted to share or sell drugs within this facility.

What are the expected benefits of this service?

There are now more than 100 of these facilities worldwide, including Europe, Canada, and Australia. Evidence from these facilities suggest SDCFs can improve the health and recovery of those who use the facility and reduce the negative impact that public injecting has on local communities and businesses.

SDCFs have trained staff who are able to respond to overdoses, promote the use of clean equipment and safer injecting techniques, and provide links to healthcare and social services where needed. SDCFs provide cost savings by reducing the level of ill-health experienced by those who use these services, and so reduce the cost to wider health services, they reduce the amount of drug related litter in public spaces which requires cleaning up, and they reduce the impact on criminal justice and social work services.

The proposed SDCF will undergo an evaluation to understand if these established benefits are achieved for its service users, the nearby community and wider society.

How will these services help people to stop using drugs?

The Glasgow SDCF is targeted at people who have a long history of injecting drug use. The SDCF will provide opportunities to engage with this group, provide support for both health and social issues, and encourage engagement with treatment services.

SDCF will also offer on-site access to:

- Recovery-oriented services
- Other health services, such as GPs, wound care, testing and treatment for blood-borne viruses like HIV and sexual health advice
- Advice, support and independent advocacy on housing, welfare rights and other issues
- Alcohol and drug recovery services and wider health and social care services throughout the city.

How will a SDCF benefit me and my community?

SDCFs reduce public injecting, discarded needles and equipment, and public health risks associated with public injecting. Therefore SDCFs are a positive feature in the community where they are located. There is evidence to suggest that they do not increase crime or anti-social behaviour in the local area. The SDCF will be monitored and evaluated to demonstrate the impact it has on the local area and those who use the service.

Can we afford these services?

Research shows SDCFs reduce drug-related harm, including overdose and death, and infectious disease transmission. They produce an overall cost saving since they reduce the impact of ill health on NHS services, cleaning of public injecting spaces and Police and court time in handling issues which arise from injecting in public spaces.

Local calculations have found that the costs of acute hospital admissions among people who inject drugs in public places are extremely high – as are the costs of treating injecting-related infections, such as hepatitis C and HIV.

Funding for the SDCF has not been the result of diverting investment from other services.

Further information:

More information on public injecting and the proposed services can be found at:

Taking Away the Chaos: nhsggc_health_needs_drug_injectors_full.pdf

Sources:

Changes in public order after the opening of a medically supervised safer injecting facility for illicit injection drug users - PMC (nih.gov)

Hedrich, D. (2004). European report on drug consumption rooms. Lisbon: EMCDDA

Reducing Opioid-Related Deaths in the UK, ACMD

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