



What is a safer drug Consumption facility?

A safer drug consumption facility (SDCF) is a supervised healthcare setting where people can use drugs that they bring themselves. They are clean and hygienic places with trained health professionals which reduces the risk of fatal overdoses or infectious diseases.

They give compassionate help to reduce the danger and harm of high-risk drug use. They also help people to get other help that they need, like drugs treatment, other healthcare and housing.

There are two safer drug consumption facilities in the British Isles – one in Glasgow and one in Dublin – and hundreds elsewhere in the world. They have been shown to reduce the number of overdoses, the amount of drug litter and other harms in the areas where they are situated.

Why is this being considered for Edinburgh?

Like in other parts of Scotland drug use causes a lot of harm in Edinburgh: about a hundred people a year die here from overdoses and people are admitted to hospital a thousand times a year because of drug use.

Where in Edinburgh would an SDCF be located and why?

This hasn't been agreed, but two parts of the Old Town are being looked at – one is around Spittal Street and the other is around the Cowgate/Holyrood Road. We have looked at other places but none of them were as likely to help.

The Old Town is where the most public injecting happens – there have been lots of drug related deaths in public places there (such as public toilets, car parks, alleyways) recently. There are always many needles discarded there and a lot of ambulance call outs for overdoses. It is also the place that most people who might use an SDCF think it would do the most good.

What else is being done to help?

Edinburgh already has a system of treatment, support, rehabilitation and law enforcement. This includes injecting equipment provision, easy to access drugs treatment, a local residential rehabilitation service and a huge and vibrant recovery community.

What would an SDCF in Edinburgh look like? How would the service run?

An Edinburgh SDCF would be similar to the Thistle in Glasgow or the one in Dublin.

The people who were running the SDCF would offer to develop a formal agreement with the people living around the location, agreeing how they would do things like:

help to keep the streets clear of drug litter; prevent antisocial behaviour around the facility and how they would work and communicate with the neighbours.

Do SDCFs encourage drug use?

No – like offering sterile injecting equipment (needle exchange), they help people who are already using drugs and who are at risk. People bring their own drugs to use and the SDCF just offers a safer place for them. They can often be the first place where people go for help, but they are never meant to be the only help we offer.

Are SDCFs legal?

As with the Thistle in Glasgow, the people developing the service would ask the Lord Advocate for Scotland to publish a statement saying that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute the users of the facility for possession of illegal drugs. People would be able to use drugs they bring on site, but would not be permitted to share or sell drugs there.

There could never be a police exclusion zone around the facility, but Police Scotland would not use the facility to target people using it.

What are the expected benefits?

SDCFs let people who would otherwise be using drugs in public places (like stairs, toilets or car parks) have more safety and privacy. They have trained staff who are able to:

- respond to overdoses
- promote use of clean equipment and safer injecting
- support people to use healthcare and social services
- help people find treatment and recovery.

There are now more than 100 facilities worldwide. Evidence from them (including the one in Dublin) shows that they reduce the amount of drug related litter in public spaces nearby. They also save money by reducing the ill-health of people who use them and so the cost to other health services.

How would the SDCF be funded?

Edinburgh would ask the Scottish Government to fund it like they have the Thistle Project in Glasgow. It would not be at the expense of the local drug and alcohol services – in recent years, there has been more funding for drug and alcohol services. Now, for instance, we can offer same day drugs treatment and more residential rehabilitation. None of this would be reduced to pay for the SDCF.

Where can I get more information?

The work so far is on [the Council](#) and [Edinburgh Alcohol and Drug Partnership](#) websites.

How will the decision about an Edinburgh SDCF be made?

Lots of people would need to agree it, including the Lord Advocate (to agree not to prosecute), the NHS (to run it safely) and the Scottish Government (to fund it). Councillors will also have to agree to having it in the city.

How can I get involved in the consultation?

There are several ways to give your views: the main ones are:

- An online consultation, which will be open from 1 April to the 1 July 2026. The link for this is www.edinburgh.gov.uk/SDCFconsultation

If you would like to see an easy read version of the consultation, you can find it at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/SDCFeasyread

- Drop-in sessions – these will be events where people can ask questions about the SDCF and say what they think. They will be held at:

Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, EH8 8BG on:
Thursday 14 May, 1-5 pm
Thursday 28 May, 5-8 pm

Grassmarket Centre, 86 Candlemaker Row, EH1 2QA on:
Tuesday 9 June, 1-5pm
Tuesday 16 June, 5-8pm

- There will also be separate meetings for:
 - people who use drugs
 - people in recovery from drug use
 - loved ones of people who use or have used drugs
 - professionals
 - local community groups.

All of these will be confidential and safe.