



## **A call to pilot Overdose Prevention Centres (Supervised Injecting Facilities) in the UK**

As public health and healthcare professionals, we the signatories can no longer accept the UK's record number of drug-related deaths without implementing all available evidence-based interventions to save lives and protect health.

Urgent action is needed to tackle the spiralling rates of drug deaths across the UK. Last year there were 4,561 deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales, whilst in Scotland there were 1,339 drug related deaths; the highest rates we have seen since records began. [1-2]

We welcome Dame Carol Black's recent independent report on drug treatment, recovery, and prevention, which concluded that despite the best efforts of health and care professionals, current services are unable to deliver results to match the scale of the challenge we face.

Whilst the Government has recently issued a new 10-year strategy to tackle harms from drug use in England, these plans fail to go far enough in implementing a full public health approach as they do not include setting up Overdose Prevention Centres (OPCs).

Drug deaths are avoidable, and it is unacceptable that we see evidence-based actions to prevent harm such as OPCs go unutilised in the UK. OPCs are healthcare facilities where individuals consume their own drugs supervised by trained staff who can intervene if they overdose.

Available evidence demonstrates that OPCs are effective in preventing drug deaths [3-5], with reviews highlighting that there has never been a fatal overdose reported in the over 130 sites available globally. [6] Evidence reviews also highlight the benefits of OPCs in facilitating patient referrals to treatment services and the adoption of safer injecting practices to reduce blood borne virus transmission. [7-8]

In addition to the substantial body of evidence demonstrating that OPCs reduce drug deaths and related harms, we also see no evidence linking OPCs to increased drug use, criminal activity, or associated policing problems. [7]

Indeed, the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee on drug policy, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce, and the Independent Working Group on Drug Consumption rooms have all recognised the clear evidence in support of Overdose Prevention Centres as an effective public health intervention. [9-12]

With numbers of drug deaths consistently rising for the past seven years, it is clear that current strategies to tackle this crisis are failing to deliver for populations across the UK. Unless the Government follows the evidence to take further action, we are likely to see these rates of preventable deaths continue to rise.

With evidence supporting the effectiveness of OPCs as a harm reduction measure, we call on Government to take steps towards funding pilots on their implementation to save lives and reduce harm

## **Organisational signatories**

Faculty of Public Health  
Faculty of Public Health Drugs Special Interest Group  
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges  
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland  
Royal College of Emergency Medicine  
Royal College of General Practitioners  
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists  
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health  
Royal College of Pathologists  
Royal College of Physicians  
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Glasgow  
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh  
Royal College of Psychiatrists  
Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine  
Faculty of Occupational Medicine  
Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine  
Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health  
Alcohol and Drug Service  
All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform  
Anawim  
Association of Directors of Public Health  
BMA Board of Science  
Bristol Drug Project  
British HIV Association  
British Journal of General Practice  
British Psychological Society  
British Viral Hepatitis Group  
Change Grow Live  
College of Mental Health Pharmacy  
Conservative Drug Policy Reform Group  
Conviction  
Corbett Network  
Correlation  
Cranstoun  
Crew 2000 Scotland  
Delphi Medical  
Drug Science  
Drugtrain  
DrugWise  
English Substance Use Commissioners Group  
European Network of People who use Drugs  
Faculty of Homelessness and Inclusion  
Forward Trust  
Foundations  
Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association  
Harm Reduction International  
Health Poverty Action  
Hepatitis C Trust  
Humankind  
Independent Person Limited

International Doctors for Healthier Drug Policies  
International Drug Policy Consortium  
Kaleidoscope  
Law Enforcement Action Partnership  
Leaders Unlocked  
London Network of Nurses and Midwives Homelessness Group  
National AIDS Trust  
National Needle Exchange Forum  
Pathway  
Prisoners' Advice Service  
Project 6  
Radical Recruit CIC  
Recovery Connectors Group, College of Lived Experience Recovery Organisations (CLERO)  
Release  
Renaissance UK Ltd  
Restorative Thinking  
Revolving Doors  
Royal Pharmaceutical Society  
Single Homeless Project  
Streetlight  
The Loop  
The Love Tank CIC  
The Wallich  
Transform Drug Policy Foundation  
Transform Justice  
UCL Collaborative Centre for Inclusion Health  
UCL Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care  
We are with you

### **Individual Signatories**

Adam Holland, Faculty of Public Health Drugs Special Interest Group  
Adam Whitehouse, DDAS  
Akbar Jaya, Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS  
Alex Stevens, University of Kent  
Alice Wiseman, Director of Public Health (Gateshead)  
Alison Munro, University of Dundee  
Amanda Wood, Delphi Medical  
Andi, Emergency Care Assistant  
Andrea Mohan, University of Dundee  
Andrew Bennett, Public Health Practitioner  
Andrew McAuley, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Andy Dunbobbin, North Wales PCC  
Andy Moss, GDAS Kaleidoscope  
Ben Corken, Change Grow Live  
Ben Holden, EDP Drug & Alcohol Service  
Bonnie Venter, University of Bristol  
Brian Reed, Anyones Child  
Carole Hunter, Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce  
Cassandra Powers, Health Education England (Wessex)  
Catriona Matheson, Scottish Drug Deaths Task Force

Charlie Lloyd, University of York  
Chris Rintoul, Cranstoun  
Ciaran Kennedy, Health Education England (Midlands)  
Colin Barclay, Bristol Drugs Project  
Colin, Delphi Medical  
Conor Francis Macis, University of Bristol  
Cristina Temenos, University of Manchester  
Dan Lewer, UCL  
Daniel Stewart, South West Public Health Training Programme  
Danielle Rhydderch, NHS (Consultant Psychiatrist)  
David Nutt, Imperial College London  
Deborah Hussey, Turning Point  
Denise Brooks, BCH  
Derek Ward, University of Birmingham  
Dr Aileen O'Gorman, University of West of Scotland  
Dr Arif Rajpura, Blackpool Council  
Dr Ellie Messham, HEIW  
Dr Judith Yates, IDHDP  
Dr Julie Harris, Ulster University  
Dr Michael Pascoe, Cardiff University  
Elizabeth Smout, UK Health Security Agency  
Ellie Shaw, University of Exeter  
Emily Davis, Blackpool Council  
Emily Tweed, University of Glasgow  
Emma Thornber, Delphi Medical  
Fiona Measham, University of Liverpool, The Loop  
Fran Bury, Faculty of Public Health  
Frederick Rich, Apple (Technician)  
Gillian Shorter, Queen's University Belfast  
Graeme Henderson, University of Bristol  
Graham Parsons  
Hannah Sheridan, Blackpool Teaching Hospitals  
Harry Sumnall, Liverpool John Moores University  
Heidi Flynn, Blackpool Council  
Ian Hamilton, University of York  
Iona Lyell, North West England (Public Health Registrar)  
James Nicholls, University of Stirling  
Jason Kew, Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit  
Jenny Scott, University of Bath  
Jessica Badger, London Assembly  
Joanna Kesten, University of Bristol  
Joanne Neale, King's College London  
John Coggon, University of Bristol  
John Middleton, Immediate past-President FPH  
Joseph Heskin, Chelsea and Westminster NHS Foundation Trust  
Joshua Torrance, University of Bristol  
Karen Duke, Middlesex University  
Kate Halliday, Addiction Professionals  
Katie Burke, Delphi Medical  
Kelly Gorrie, FCMS  
Ken Stringer, Public Health Programme lead

Lindsey Brooke Porter, University of Bristol  
Louis de Bernard, University of Oxford  
Louis Wild, Delphi Medical  
Louise Hansford, MPFT  
Louise Marryat, University of Dundee  
Lynda Watson, LSCFT  
Magdalena Harris, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine  
Mandy Hollis, Bristol Drugs Project Ltd  
Mark Monaghan, University of Birmingham  
Martine Bell, Delphi Medical  
Matthew Hickman, University of Bristol  
Megan Jones, Cranstoun  
Nadine Dougall, Edinburgh Napier University  
Natalie Portwood, Delphi Medical  
Nick Glynn, Open Society Foundations  
Nicola Ainsworth, East of England Registrar  
Nicole Vitellone, University of Liverpool  
Olivia Maynard, University of Bristol  
Paul Gourlay, NHS (Highland)  
Peter Furlong, Change Grow Live  
Peter Krykant, Cranstoun  
Peter Sheath, Delphi Medical  
Polly Radcliffe, National Addiction Centre  
Prianka Padmanathan, University of Bristol  
Rhiannon O'Donnell, Bristol Drugs Project  
Rick Lines, Swansea University  
Rick Muir, Police Foundation  
Robyn Harris, Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Trust  
Rose Humphries, Anyone's Child  
Ross Coomber, University of Liverpool  
Ross Keat, University of Manchester  
Roy Robertson, University of Edinburgh  
Saket Priyadarshi, NHS Glasgow  
Simon Greasley, Hoyland Medical Centre  
Stephen Willott, General Practitioner  
Susan O'Looney, Liverpool County Council  
Tessa Parkes, University of Stirling  
Tim Rhodes, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine  
Tom Scott-Gatty, Devon Partnership NHS Trust  
Trevor McCarthy, Independent Consultant  
Tuukka Tammi, Finish Institute for Health and Welfare  
Val Curran, UCL  
Viv Picard, BDP

## References

1. Office for National Statistics. Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2020 registrations. ONS; 2021 [Cited 2021 November 23].
2. National Records of Scotland. Drug-related Deaths in Scotland in 2020. NRS; 2021 [Cited 2021 November 23].

3. Marshall BDL, Milloy MJ, Wood E, et al. Reduction in overdose mortality after the opening of North America's first medically supervised safer injecting facility: a retrospective population-based study. *Lancet* 2011;377(9775);1429-37. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)62353-7.
4. Irvine MA, Kuo M, Buxton JA, et al. Modelling the combined impact of interventions in averting deaths during a synthetic-opioid overdose epidemic. *Addiction* 2019;114(9);1602-13. doi:10.1111/add.14664.
5. Kennedy MC, Hayashi K, Milloy MJ, et al. Supervised injection facility use and all-cause mortality among people who inject drugs in Vancouver, Canada: a cohort study. *PLOS Medicine* 2019;16(11). doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1002964.
6. Caulkins JP, Pardo B, Kilmer B. Supervised consumption sites: a nuanced assessment of the causal evidence. *Addiction* 2019;114(12);2109-15. doi:10.1111/add.14747.
7. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. Drug consumption rooms: an overview of provision and evidence. EMCDDA; 2018 [Cited 2021 November 23]. Available from: [https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/2734/POD\\_Drug%20consumption%20rooms\\_oms.pdf](https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/2734/POD_Drug%20consumption%20rooms_oms.pdf).
8. Scottish Government. Safer Drug Consumption Facilities – Evidence Paper. Scottish Government; 2021 [Cited 2021 November 23]. Available from: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/safer-drug-consumption-facilities-evidence-paper/documents>.
9. House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee on Drugs policy. Drugs Policy – First Report of Session 2019. House of Commons; 2019 [Cited 2021 November 23]. Available from: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmhealth/143/143.pdf>.
10. Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. Reducing Opioid-Related Deaths in the UK. UK Government; 2016 [Cited 2021 November 23]. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/576560/ACMD-Drug-Related-Deaths-Report-161212.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576560/ACMD-Drug-Related-Deaths-Report-161212.pdf).
11. Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce. Report on Drug Law Reform; 2021 [Cited: 2021 November 23]. Available from: <https://drugdeathstaskforce.scot/media/1248/drug-law-reform-report-sept-6th-21.pdf>.
12. Independent Working Group on Drug Consumption Rooms. The Report of the Independent Working Group on Drug Consumption Rooms. Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 2006 [Cited 2021 November 23]. Available from: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/9781859354711.pdf>