

Call to amend Misuse of Drugs Regulations to make it easier to pilot overdose prevention centres

In the United Kingdom, in 2020, there were 4,517 deaths related to illicit drug use; the highest rate of drug related deaths since records began. It is necessary to provide the full range of evidence-based drug treatment and harm reduction interventions to prevent these deaths.

Overdose prevention centres are healthcare facilities where people consume their own drugs under the supervision of trained staff who intervene in the event of an overdose. These sites are provided in at least 13 countries, but not the UK. International evidence demonstrates they reduce drug related deaths, encourage safer injecting practices to prevent infections and increase engagement with wider drug treatment and support services.

In December 2021, the Faculty of Public Health published an open letter calling for pilot overdose prevention centres in the UK. This call was supported by 84 leading organisations, including Royal Medical Colleges, public health bodies, drug service providers, academic and third sector organisations; and numerous individual signatories.

In response, the Government argued that there is no legal framework to run overdose prevention centres in the UK. Although there is no law which specifically bans such services, offences such as drug possession would be committed within them. Under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, some acts that would otherwise be controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 are already exempt from criminalisation, in order to enable services that reduce harms.

Over the past year, the Drug Science Enhanced Harm Reduction Working Group has been researching the feasibility of setting up pilot overdose prevention centres in the UK. This work has demonstrated there is a clear need for the services in areas with high levels of drug related harm, and cross-agency support for their introduction.

We call on the Government to amend the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 to make it easier to establish pilots of overdose prevention centres. This is an easy step that would not require primary legislation. It would help local agencies to build the evidence base and save lives.

Organisational signatories - 119

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland
Royal College of Anaesthetists
Royal College of General Practitioners
Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists
Royal College of Pathologists
Royal College of Physicians
Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Faculty for Homeless and Inclusion Health
Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine
Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine
Faculty of Public Health
Faculty of Public Health Drugs Special Interest Group
Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare
Association of Directors of Public Health
British Medical Association (BMA)
British Psychological Society
English Substance Use Commissioners Group
National HIV Nurses Association (NHIVNA)
Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH)
Conservative Drug Policy Reform Group (CDPRG)
Drug Policy Reform All-Party Parliamentary Group
Drugs, Alcohol & Justice All-Party Parliamentary Group
Labour Campaign for Drug Policy Reform
Green Party
1 Call Care C.I.C
Addiction Professionals
Alcohol & Drugs Action
Alcohol Focus Scotland
Alternat+ves
Arch Healthcare
Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology
B3 Brent Service User Council
Barod
Blackpool Council

Bristol City Council
Bristol Drugs Project (BDP)
British HIV Association (BHIVA)
British Journal of General Practice
British Viral Hepatitis Group
Build on Belief Ltd
Canadian Drug Policy Coalition
Capital 10X
Cardiff Rapid Access Prescribing Service
Celebrate recovery
Change Grow Live
College of Mental Health Pharmacy
Conviction
Correlation - European Harm Reduction Network
Cranstoun
Crew 2000 Scotland
Criminal Justice Alliance
Drug Policy Interdisciplinary Network
Drug Science
Drugtrain
DrugWise
Ekklesia (thinktank)
European Network of People who Use Drugs (EuroNPUD)
Figure 8 Consultancy Service Ltd
Forward Trust
Foundations
Fundacja Global Public Health Network
Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association
Global platform for Drug Consumption Rooms
Harbour Housing
Harm Reduction International
Health Poverty Action
Humankind
Inclusion
INQUEST
International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)
International Network of Drug Consumption Rooms
Kaleidoscope Project
Kinbee Ltd
Knowledge•Action•Change
Law Enforcement Action Partnership UK

London Borough of Hackney
London Network of Nurses and Midwives Homelessness Group
Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
National AIDS Trust
National Needle Exchange Forum
NHS Grampian
No Limits
Pathway
Pecan
Pharmacy Declares
Prisoners' Advice Service
Probation Institute
Project 6
Release
Renaissance UK Ltd
Restorative Thinking
Revolving Doors
Risk & Resilience
School and Public Health Nurses Association
Scottish Drugs Forum
Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs
Scottish Specialist Pharmacists in Substance use Management (SSPiSM)
Shekinah
Single Homeless Project
Students for Sensible Drug Policy UK
SUIT (Service User Involvement Team)
The Central Club Podcast
The Connection at St Martin's
The Corbett Network
The Hepatitis C Trust
The Loop
The Museum of Drugs
The Queen's Nursing Institute
The Wallich
Transform Drug Policy Foundation
Transform Justice
Turning Point
UCL Collaborative Centre for Inclusion Health
UCL Institute of Epidemiology & Healthcare
University of Bristol Tobacco and Alcohol Research Group
Voices Action Change

Volteface

We Are With You

Individual signatories – 436 / 34 Members Parliament

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Allan Dorans MP

Alyn Smith MP

Caroline Lucas MP

Christine Jardine MP

Colette Stevenson MSP

Crispin Blunt MP, Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform

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Gillian Mackay MSP

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Paul Sweeney MSP

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Rachael Maskell MP

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Caroline Russell AM (Member of the London Assembly)
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Cllr Helen Calderbank MBACP
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