

Cranstoun deputation request to Edinburgh Council Policy & Sustainability Committee

March 12th 2024

Spokesperson: Luke O'Neill, Ant Lehane

The following deputation is written on behalf of Cranstoun, a UK-based charity founded over 50 years ago. We deliver services across five areas including drug and alcohol support, criminal justice, domestic abuse, homelessness & children and young people's services. In addition to our service delivery, we develop innovative approaches to address areas of social injustice, and regularly advise on regional, national and international matters of policy.

The following deputation relates to the recent publication of the Feasibility Study commissioned by Edinburgh Council which **recommends the implementation** of overdose prevention centres and drug checking facilities. We support both reports, however this deputation will primarily focus on the overdose prevention centre element.

The following consists of four points that we believe would be advantageous for Edinburgh Council to consider at this time.

1. **Considerations for a social model OPC**

The soon-to-opened overdose prevention centre in Glasgow will be delivered as a fully medicalised model. Whilst this has clear benefits, it is less cost effective than other global models that are proven to work, namely Amsterdam and Barcelona, and can be delivered at a fraction of the cost.

Cranstoun proposes the adaptation of a social model, which ensures people can consume substances just as safely as a medicalised model but offers a broader care offer to meet the holistic needs of the individuals using the service. This would also enable a comparative analysis against the model in Glasgow and will be more sustainable given the significant cost difference.

Suggested Council Action: Support a social model OPC

2. **Suggestion for minimising time-delays and legal hurdles**

The confirmed OPC in Glasgow required **legislative** guidance by means of a prosecution policy from the Lord Advocate, requested by the Scottish Government. Whilst there is significant support for the Edinburgh OPC at Council, there are still various steps prior to implementation. Consideration must be given as to how the scheme could be accelerated to ensure minimal delays, at the earliest appropriate moment.

A pre-emptive request could be put forward by Council, whilst the public consultation is open. This could also contain a broader additional request to ensure that localities which want an OPC can implement one quickly. This is particularly important given the escalating synthetic opioids in Scotland and across the UK. The legal guidance provided by the Lord Advocate was predicated on not arresting people intending on using the Glasgow facility, who are carrying controlled substances, because it is 'not in the public interest'. It is very

likely that the same would be said for people using a similar facility in Edinburgh, or across Scotland.

Whilst safety is paramount, the length of time being taken to open each OPC is an enormous hurdle in the face of rising drug deaths in the city. The need to respond to an adapting drug market is essential.

Suggested Council Action: Request necessary guidance as early as possible

3. Financial considerations – request to government.

Edinburgh receives the least Scottish Government funding per head of population of any of Scotland's 32 councils. It is widely noted that budgets are stretched due to inflation, the pandemic and cost of living crisis, and it is important that other existing services are not cut to compensate for an (for multiple) OPC.

Edinburgh Council could consider a formal request for the funding of a (or multiple) OPC facility to come from central Government.

Innovative measures in delivery – without sacrificing safetyoversight – should be explored. A cost-benefit analysis comparing Glasgow and Edinburgh's models will assist in development of best practice, which is also sustainable.

Suggested action: request financial support from central government.