

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Tuesday, 17 January 2023

Assessing the Feasibility of an Edinburgh Drug Consumption Room – Update Report

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Policy and Sustainability Committee notes the planned approach to securing a feasibility study of an Edinburgh Drug Consumption Room and agrees to receive the study when completed.

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This paper updates on progress with the response to a councillor-initiated proposal that the council “work with partners in health and criminal justice to provide a report to the Policy & Sustainability Committee in two cycles into the feasibility of supporting an official Overdose Prevention Centre trial in the City”.
- 2.2 As agreed, an external organisation is being commissioned to undertake a feasibility study under the direction of a steering group of local partners. It was hoped that the findings of the process would be available by March 2023. However, discussions with potential providers of the research indicate that a rigorous (and thus legally defensible) study will take longer. Based on their recommendations it is proposed to report in phases with an interim report expected to come to the Policy & Sustainability Committee in June and a final report, including recommendations, to a later meeting (depending on the committee’s schedule in 2023).

3. Background

- 3.1 At its 20 June 2022 meeting, the City of Edinburgh Council debated the prevention of Drug Deaths and agreed that it “*Calls on the Council to work with partners in health and criminal justice to provide a report to the Policy & Sustainability Committee in two cycles into the feasibility of supporting an official Overdose Prevention Centre trial in the City.*”
- 3.2 This call was welcomed and supported by the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership at its 6 September 2022 meeting. Edinburgh will not be able to proceed with a Drug Consumption Room until Glasgow’s more advanced process is completed and the legal issues are clearer. However, it would be possible and consistent with the ADP strategy to initiate a feasibility study.
- 3.3 The focus of such a study will be on identifying a model consistent with local need and facilities. It would also identify the costs entailed and possible sources of funding through Scottish Government, ADP and other routes. The study would define options for Edinburgh to consider once the legal status becomes clearer (through the work by Glasgow).

4. Main report

- 4.1 Since the last discussion at this committee, the ADP officers along with NHS Lothian Public health and other partners have developed a steering group, drafted an outline specification of the work required and published a Prior Information Notice (PIN) via Public Contracts Scotland to test market interest. Six notes of interest were received some with viable academic backgrounds and experience in the subject matter. This provides confidence that there will be some highly suitable applications upon finalisation of the brief and agreed procurement route.
- 4.2 However, initial discussion with potential providers on the proposed specification indicates that the expected timeline was unrealistic – ethics clearance and data sharing are expected to create delays in the process and these cannot be obviated with additional funding or more support from partners. All aspects of the work will be undertaken in parallel, but they are expected to be completed at different times – the researchers estimated that they hope to be able to report to this committee as follows:

Paper 1. Target: report to the P&S Committee 6 June 2023

1a) Desk based summary of the research/ knowledge base on DCRs and other innovative interventions to reduce drug related harm

- Aims and outcomes of DCRs – what harms can they address, what is the evidence-based impact of DCR; what common characteristics do they have (e.g. located in areas of dense drug related harm, low threshold, long opening hours, pathways to treatment etc)?
- Description/ models – a summary/ taxonomy of models of DCR and pen pictures of representative examples; the pros and cons and examples and an indication of the resources needed to deliver each.

1b) Needs assessment: Desk-based summary of the Edinburgh data on relevant drug related harms to identify neighbourhoods in the city which would potentially benefit from a DCR.

Paper 2. Target: report to the P&S Committee 6 June 2023 report to the P&S Committee in September 2023

2a) Consultation work looking at the local appetite for DCRs, and expert views on the models and locations with the potential to reduce harm. Key groups to be engaged will be stakeholder organisations and decision makers; relevant professionals; and, above all, potential user of a DCR and their families

2b) Summative (Based on all of the above):

- Recommendation of model(s) and neighbourhood(s) where which there is evidence of need for a DCR
- An estimate/ modelling of impact (how many people are expected to use the unit, how many OD's reversed, BBV transmissions prevented etc) and an indication of the less tangible benefits (anti-stigma impact of this compassionate approach etc).

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 As noted above and subject to the committee's approval, the next step is to secure a team to undertake the research.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of securing the feasibility study can be met from ADP funding.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Consultation with current and former drug users and their families will be an important component of the feasibility study.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 See links within the paper.

9. Appendices

None.