



**SDF'S ANNUAL**

# **#STOPTHEDEATHS CONFERENCE 2025**

**PRIORITISING PEOPLE - FROM POLITICS TO PRACTICE**



**DAY 1: 27 AUGUST 2025 // DAY 2: 28 AUGUST 2025  
RADISSON BLU HOTEL, GLASGOW // 10AM - 4PM**



**STOP THE  
DEATHS**



SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM'S ANNUAL



STOP THE  
DEATHS  
CONFERENCE



**"BRINGING LIVING  
EXPERIENCE VOICES  
INTO THE HEART OF  
THE CONFERENCE IS  
NOT A SIDE SESSION -  
IT'S THE PURPOSE OF  
THE EVENT."**



# **WELCOME TO #STOPTHEDEATHS CONFERENCE 2025**

Scottish Drugs Forum's annual #StopTheDeaths conference unites lived and living experience, families, policymakers, and frontline workers to confront Scotland's drug death crisis.

Shaped by Advocates for Change – a gathering of people with lived and living experience – this two-day event challenges stigma, shares solutions, and demands urgent, rights-based action to save lives.

## **ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE: GROUNDING THE CONFERENCE IN LIVING EXPERIENCE**

Taking place ahead of the main conference, Advocates for Change brings together people with lived and living experience of drug use to reflect, connect, and lead. The insights and priorities shaped through this gathering will inform the content and structure of the #StopTheDeaths 2025 Conference. This approach reflects SDF's commitment to participatory policymaking and to centring the voices of those most affected in the response to drug-related harm in Scotland.

**Together, we can #StopTheDeaths.**



# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## DAY #1 - WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST

### Developing evidence-based policy and strategy:

Delegates will be joined by people with living experience, people developing policy and elected representatives to discuss recent developments in the way policies are produced.

#### SESSION 1 - OPENING SESSION

- 10.00 Welcome and introduction  
KIRSTEN HORSBURGH - CEO - SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM
- 10.15 Conference Opening: Pre-Recorded Video Message  
NEIL GRAY, CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
- 10.25 Update on Scotland's National Drugs Mission  
MAGGIE PAGE, DRUG STRATEGY UNIT - SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT
- 10.40 Statement from Advocates for Change Event; Introduction and panel session  
JASON WALLACE, SDF AND LIVING EXPERIENCE ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE
- 11.25 Call to Action  
FAMILIES CAMPAIGN FOR CHANGE
- 11.30 NETWORKING BREAK

#### SESSION 2 - AMPLIFYING VOICES: SHAPING MEDIA NARRATIVES

- 12.00 Chair's introduction  
LEO JEFFREYS, EURONPUD
- 12.05 Media disinformation and working in adverse environments  
PÉTER SÁROSI, DRUGREPORTER
- 12.35 Framing Addiction: Media Representations & the Impact on Societal Perceptions in Glasgow  
THOMAS DELANEY, YOUTHWISE
- 12.45 Living Experience Magazine and peer-led media for Scotland  
HANNAH WESTWATER, BILLY MCKAY AND PEER EDITORIAL BOARD, BUZZ MAGAZINE
- 13.00 PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A
- 13.15 LUNCH



# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## DAY #1 - WEDNESDAY 27 AUGUST

### SESSION 3 - SHAPING THE FUTURE: ADVANCING DRUG POLICY IN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

Chair's introduction

14.15 AILEEN O'GORMAN, UNIVERSITY OF WEST OF SCOTLAND

Irish Drugs Policy and the Citizen's Assembly

14.20 TONY DUFFIN, PROGRESSIFY (IRELAND)

14.40 Q&A

The People's Panel on Reducing Drug Harm and Deaths in Scotland

14.45 ALI STODDART, SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT & PEOPLE'S PANEL MEMBER EMMA MCDONALD

15.05 Q&A

15.10 NETWORKING BREAK

### SESSION 4 - PARTY POLITICAL PANEL DISCUSSION

Chair's introduction

15.25 AILEEN O'GORMAN, UNIVERSITY OF WEST OF SCOTLAND

15.30 Political Panel Discussion

- Audrey Nicoll MSP (Scottish National Party)
- Paul Sweeney MSP (Scottish Labour)
- Patrick Harvie MSP (Scottish Green Party)
- Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP (Scottish Liberal Democrats)
- Douglas Ross MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party)

15.55 EVENT CLOSE – JASON WALLACE, SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM



# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## DAY #2 - THURSDAY 28 AUGUST

### Developing evidence-based services:

Delegates will be joined by people developing and delivering innovative practice as well as people with living experience engaged with these services to discuss progress made and future service provision.

#### SESSION 1 - DRIVING CHANGE IN SAFER CONSUMPTION - PRACTICE, EXPERIENCE AND IMPACT

- Welcome and introduction  
10.00 KIRSTEN HORSBURGH - CEO - SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM
- Chairs Introduction  
10.05 COUNCILLOR ALLAN CASEY, GLASGOW CITY COUNCIL
- Safer Consumption in Dublin  
10.10 EDDIE MULLINS & GEOFF CORCORAN, MERCHANTS QUAY IRELAND
- Safer Consumption in Glasgow  
10.25 LYNN MCDONALD & DAN DALY, THE THISTLE
- What Outcomes Can We Expect and Measure?  
10.40 PROFESSOR SHARON HUTCHISON, GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY
- Developments in Northern Ireland  
10.50 IAN 'BUFF' CAMERON, EXTERN
- 11.05 PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A
- 11.20 NETWORKING BREAK
- The Irish Experience  
11.50 **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: SENATOR LYNN RUANE, SEANAD ÉIREANN - IRISH PARLIAMENT**
- 12.10 Q&A

#### SESSION 2 - IMPROVING ACCESS AND QUALITY IN DRUG TREATMENT

- Chair's introduction  
12.15 TRINA RITCHIE, NHS GGC
- Refection & Recommendations for Long-acting Injectable Buprenorphine treatment in Scotland  
12.20 KATY MACLEOD & SAM STEWART, SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM
- Benzodiazepine Prescribing in Fife  
12.35 KELLY RENFREW & SUSIE DUFF, NHS FIFE
- 12.50 PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A



# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

## DAY #2 - THURSDAY 28 AUGUST

13.05 LUNCH

Ministerial update on the National Mission and Post-2026

14.05 **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MAREE TODD, MINISTER FOR DRUGS & ALCOHOL POLICY AND SPORT – SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT**

### SESSION 3 - STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE

Chair's introduction

14.15 TOM BENNETT, SCOTTISH RECOVERY CONSORTIUM

Reforming UK Drug Policy: Decriminalisation and Advocacy

14.20 NIAMH EASTWOOD, RELEASE

Advancing Advocacy in Scotland

14.35 JED BRADY, REACH ADVOCACY

14.50 PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A

15.05 NETWORKING BREAK

### SESSION 4 – CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

Chair's introduction

15.30 WEZ STEELE, SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM

15.35 **Conference Reflections**

- **Andy McAuley**, Glasgow Caledonian University
- **Chelsea Cameron**, Activist & Campaigner
- **Trish Tracey**, Turning Point Scotland
- **Derek Watt**, Scottish Recovery Consortium

Call to Action

15.55 KIRSTEN HORSBURGH, CEO - SCOTTISH DRUGS FORUM

16.00 EVENT CLOSE



# WE HAVE EXHIBITION STANDS FROM:

We're delighted to welcome a diverse range of organisations showcasing their work at the conference exhibition stands. This is a valuable opportunity to connect, share insights, and learn from one another.



BECAUSE PEOPLE MATTER



## MERCHANDISE



A small selection of #StopTheDeaths merchandise will be available, with both cash and contactless payments accepted, so you can show your support beyond the conference. We will also have Sheila Vakharia's book, 'The Harm Reduction Gap' for sale.

## THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT

Thanks to Camurus and Ethypharm for supporting the provision of free tickets to those with experience.



## QUIET ROOM FACILITATED BY



We are extremely grateful to Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol & Drugs for providing a Quiet Room throughout both days. This calm, welcoming space is available to anyone who would like a break from the crowd or a moment of reflection.

We know that discussions around overdose can sometimes bring up strong emotions — a natural and understandable response. The Quiet Room will be supported by staff who are there to offer you support, give you space, or simply have a chat if you need one.



## NEW BUZZ MAGAZINE

Meet Buzz magazine: an independent magazine, developed and led by people with living experience of drug use in Scotland.

Media coverage of drug-related issues is often stigmatising and sensationalised, and even more often ignores the voices of the people whose day-to-day lives are behind the headlines.

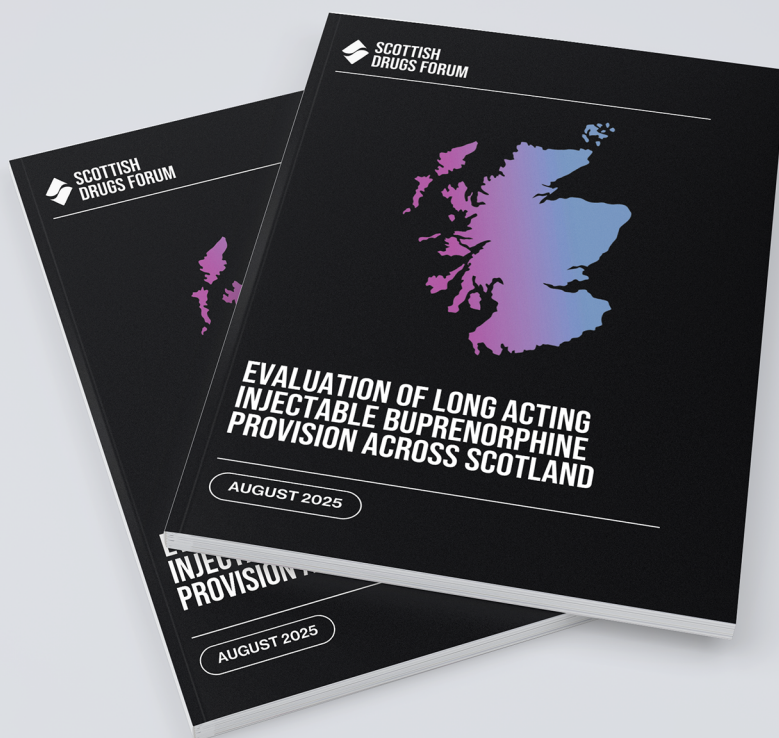
Buzz pushes back against that. It puts vital harm reduction tips and resources into the hands of people who need it, and gives people with living experience a chance to tell their stories.

Buzz is facilitated by Scottish Drugs Forum, but the project is independent. Editorial decisions, messaging and conclusions – or lack thereof – come entirely from the peer editorial board and the wider community.

TO VIEW ONLINE - [www.buzz.scot](http://www.buzz.scot)

## EVALUATION OF LONG-ACTING INJECTABLE BUPRENORPHINE (LAIB) PROVISION ACROSS SCOTLAND.

To access the full report or its executive summary visit [www.sdf.org.uk](http://www.sdf.org.uk) or use the QR code below.





# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to our incredible line-up of speakers and panelists.

## THANKS TO OUR CHAIRS

We'd like to thank our conference chairs for their commitment to fostering engaging discussions and creating an inclusive atmosphere. Your support has been key to the smooth running of the programme and the overall success of the conference.

- Leo Jefferys, EuroNPUD
- Aileen O'Gorman, University of West of Scotland
- Councillor Allan Casey, Glasgow City
- Trina Ritchie, NHS GGC
- Tom Bennett, Scottish Recovery Consortium
- Wez Steele, Scottish Drugs Forum

## THANKS TO OUR CONFERENCE LISTENERS

A massive thank you to everyone who joins us as a 'Conference Listener' - your contribution is central to shaping a meaningful and impactful experience for all attendees. By sharing your insights, you will help to drive forward vital conversations around drug policy, harm reduction and support for people affected by substance use across Scotland.

- Andy McAuley, Glasgow Caledonian University
- Chelsea Cameron, Activist and Campaigner
- Trish Tracey, Turning Point Scotland
- Derek Watt, Scottish Recovery Consortium



# #STOPTHEDEATHS 2025: REALISING RIGHTS

Drug deaths are not inevitable. Rights are not optional.

This year, the #StopTheDeaths initiative is rooted in making rights a reality. We are calling on everyone – policymakers, service providers, advocates, and communities – to stand with people who are affected by substance use and support them in realising their rights.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Read and share the 'Charter of Rights'. Make it part of your practice, your advocacy and your conversations.
- Join the movement. Amplify lived and living experience and commit to rights-based change.
- Challenge injustice. Whether in policy, media, or service delivery, stand up for the rights of people who use drugs.

Together, We Can Realise Rights  
This initiative is not just about preventing deaths, it's about affirming life. It's about recognising that people who use drugs are not problems to be solved, but people with rights to be respected. Drug deaths are not inevitable. Rights are not optional.

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ARE NOT  
INEVITABLE.**

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2025**

**REALISING  
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