

# The Thistle

## Glasgow's Safer Drug Consumption Facility

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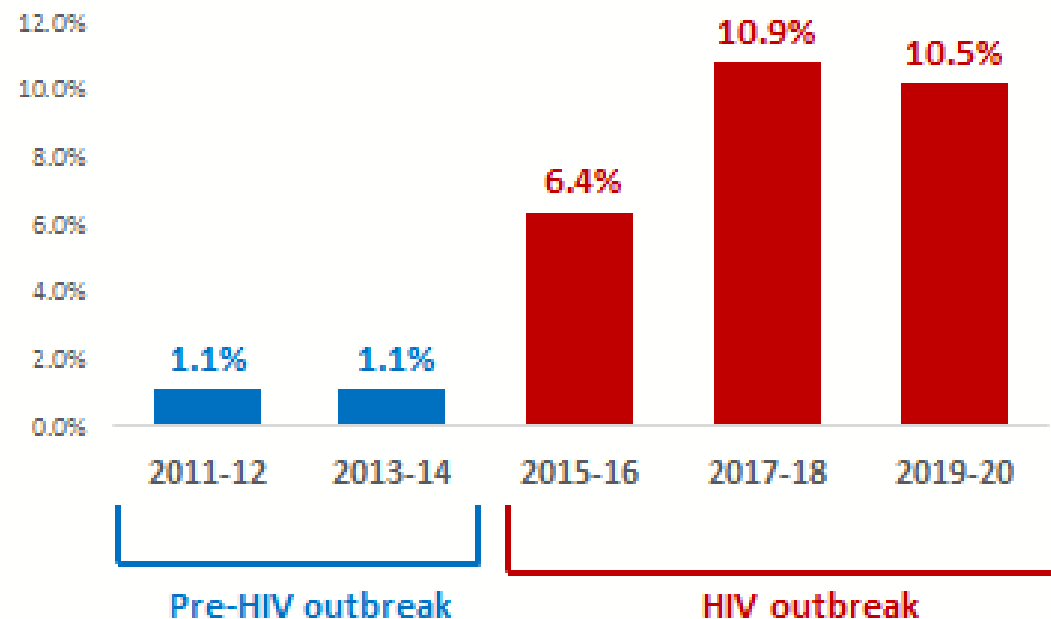
Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership  
Glasgow City Alcohol and Drug Partnership

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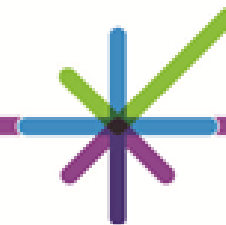
# Background

## Rise in HIV prevalence in the population of PWID in Glasgow City



- 10-fold rise in prevalence of HIV infection among PWID observed in Glasgow city between 2013 and 2017
- Plateauing in prevalence of HIV infection among PWID between 2017 and 2019 (i.e. pre-COVID)

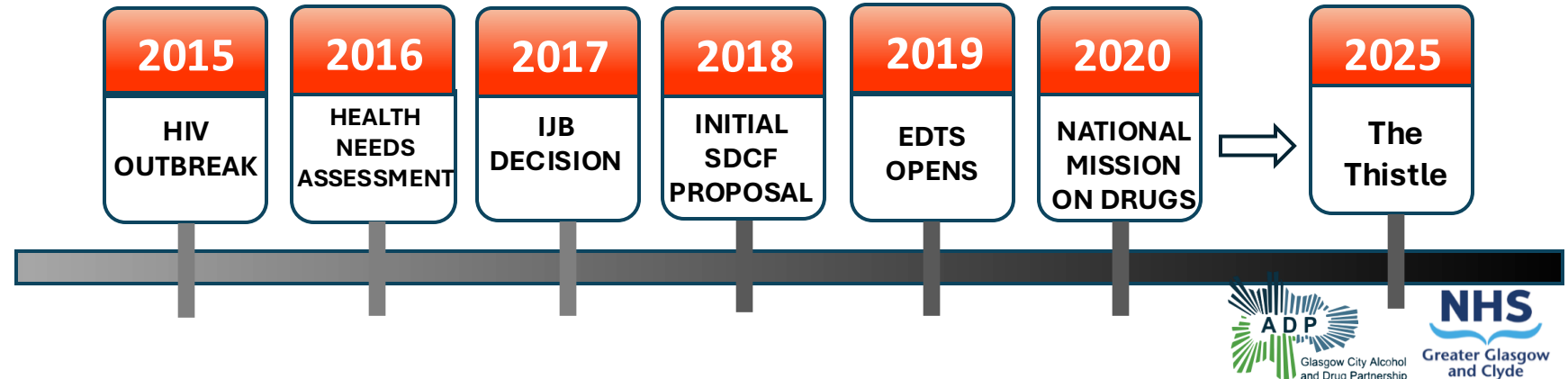
Source: Needle Exchange Surveillance Initiative



# Setting the Scene - Glasgow

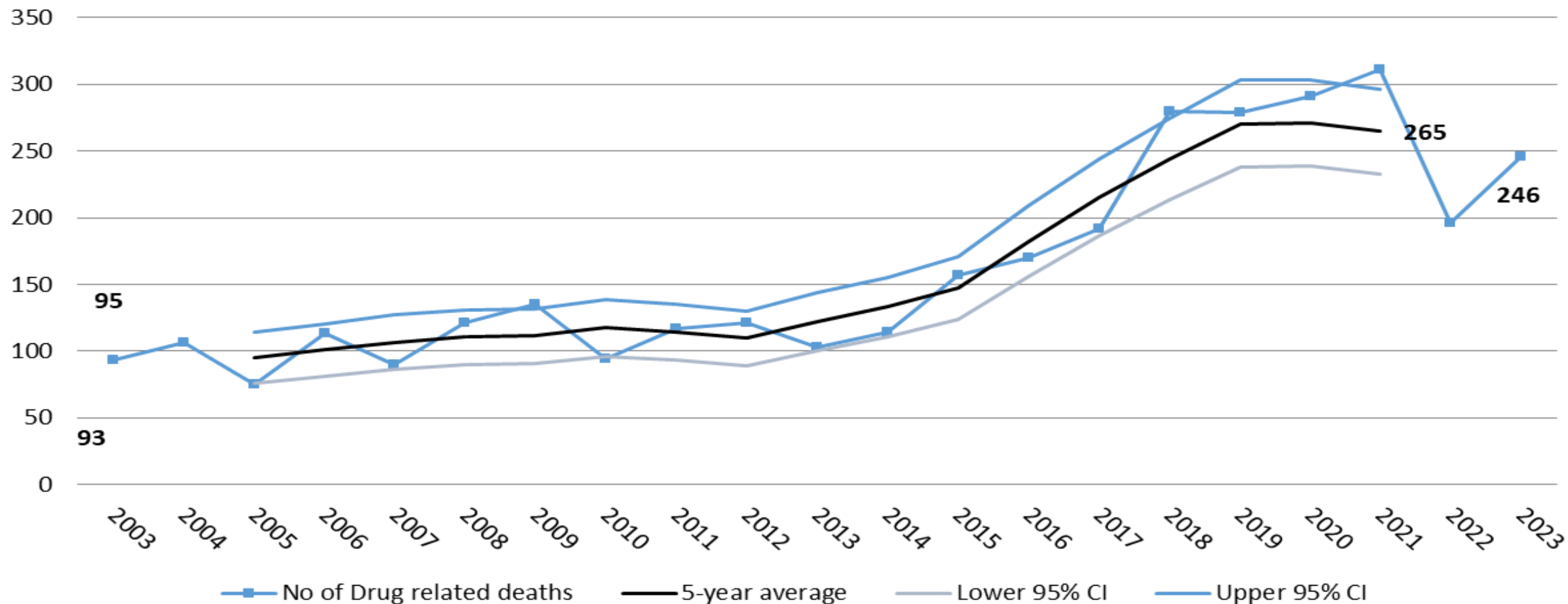


- Injecting 'away from home' increasing.
- Cocaine injecting > increased prevalence.
- Public Health Issues:
  - Discarded needles and paraphernalia
  - Bodily fluids



# DRD Trends in Glasgow City

**Drug-related deaths in Glasgow City 2003-2023**



# The Legal Framework

What has changed?

September 2023 - New Lord Advocate offered the possibility of a  
***Statement of Prosecution Policy (SoPP)***

No change to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

- Location near public injecting sites
- Co-located with other relevant services
- Community Engagement
- Independent Evaluation

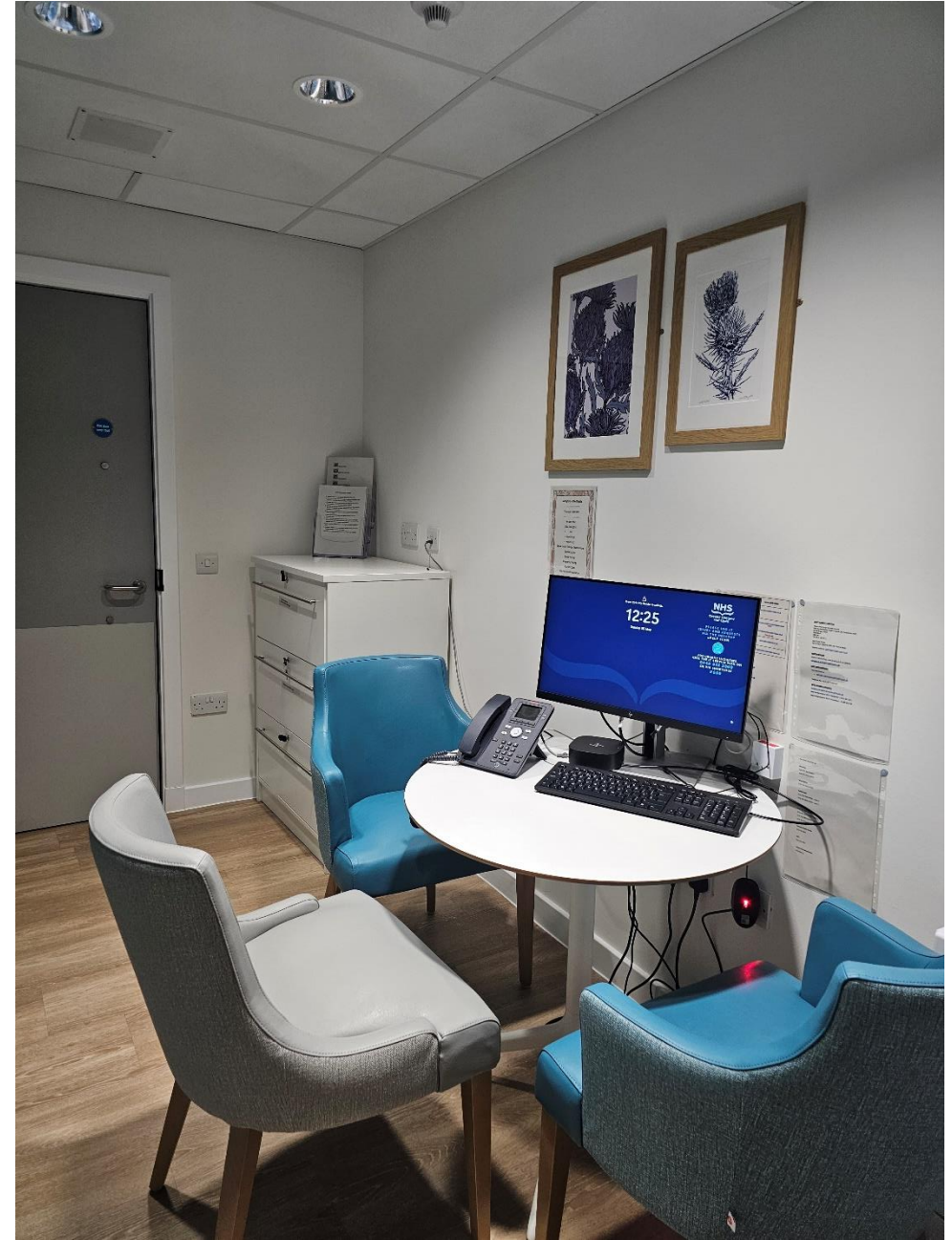
# The Thistle

- A three-year pilot which opened on 13/01/2025; operating between the hours of 9am-9pm, 365 days a year situated within Hunter Street Health and Care Centre.
- Service co-located with Drug Treatment, Blood-Borne Virus, Sexual Reproductive Health, Housing Support and GP services.
- A fully integrated staff team, of all grades and disciplines including Medical, Nursing, Social Work, Harm Reduction Workers and Psychology roles.
- Outreach Model
- Ability for people to access the service confidentially.
- An application to run a drug-checking service pilot in Glasgow has been submitted to the UK Government Home Office.
- Previous proposal for an inhalation room removed.







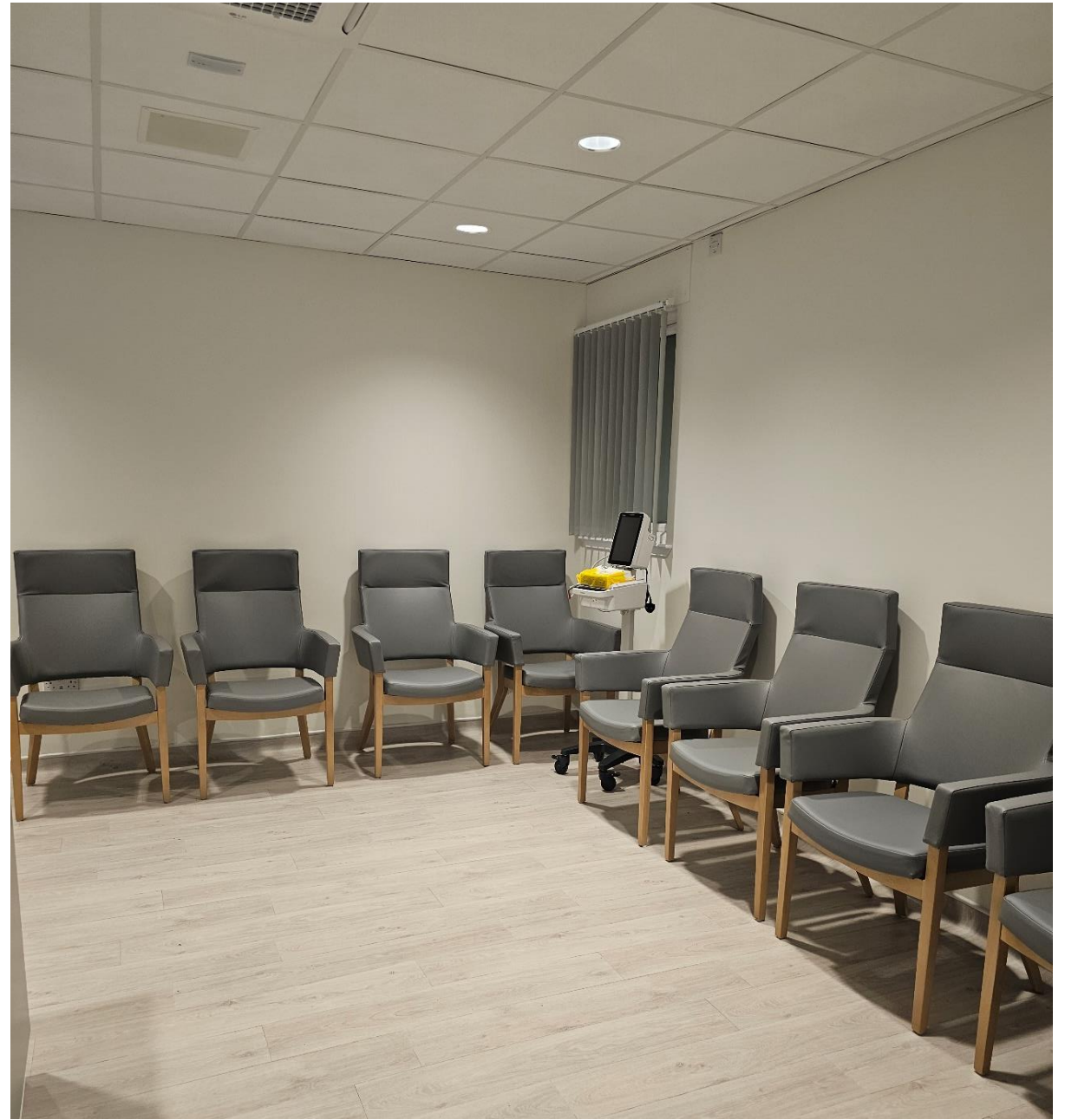




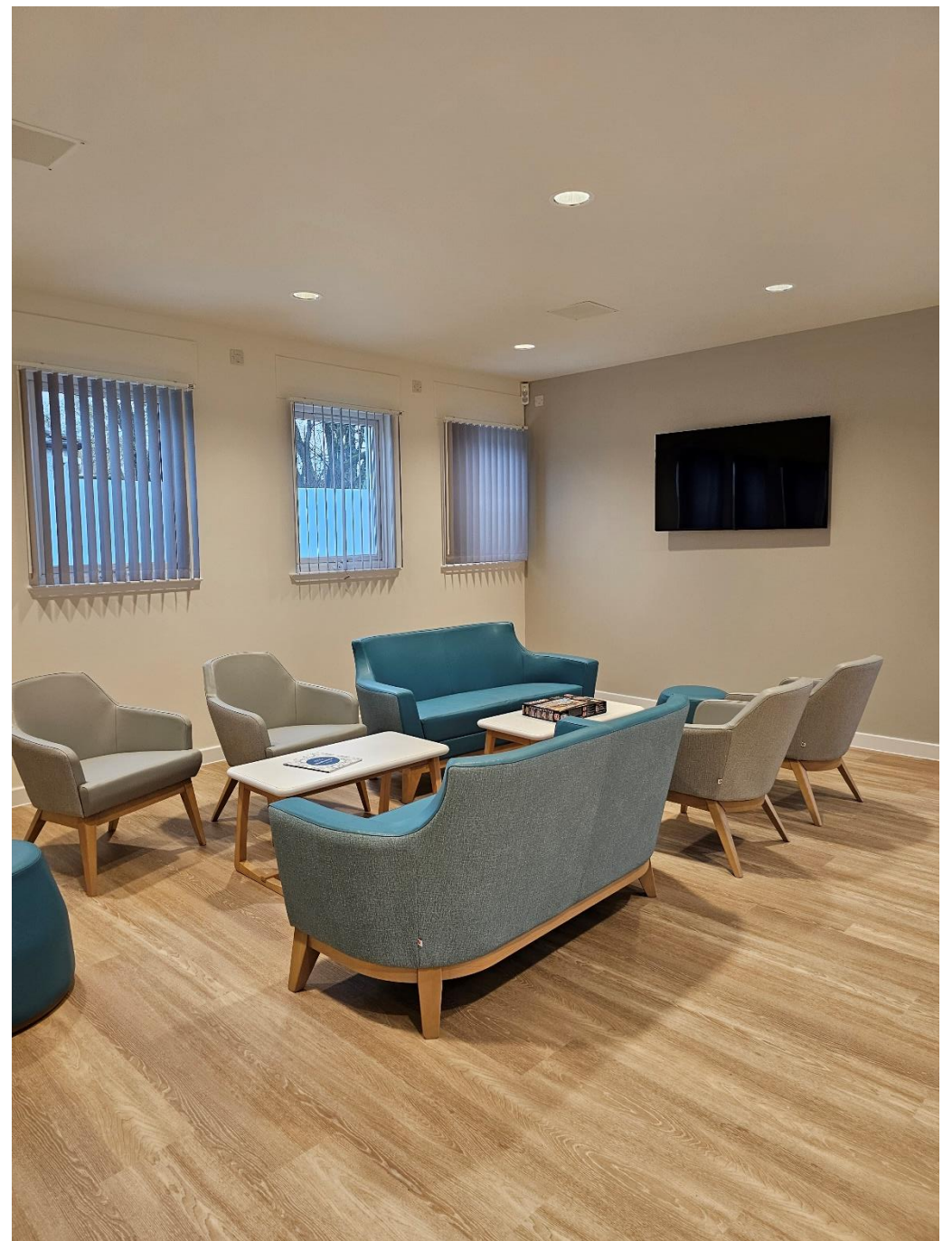






















Total Unique  
Clients AD1

377

Distinct Male  
Clients CD1

305

Distinct Female  
Clients CD1

72

Distinct Trans  
Clients CD1

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Times Accessed

5,299

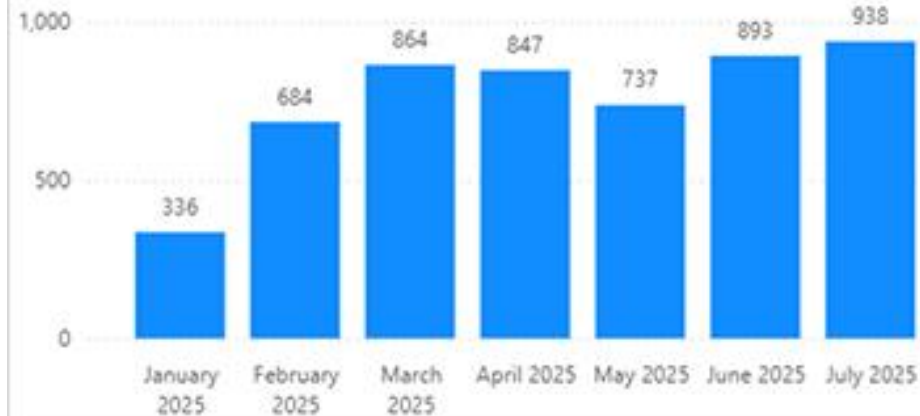
Injecting Episodes  
(Booth Accessed)

3,554

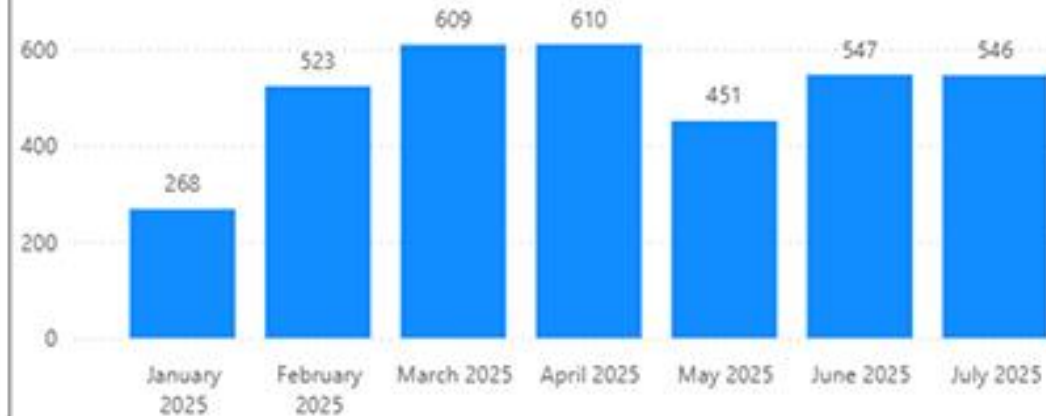
Total Emergencies

48

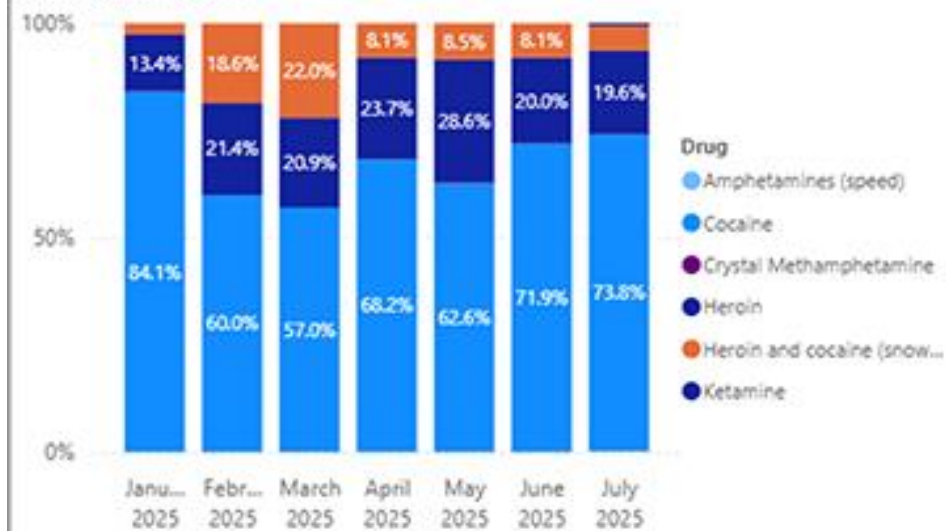
Service Accessed



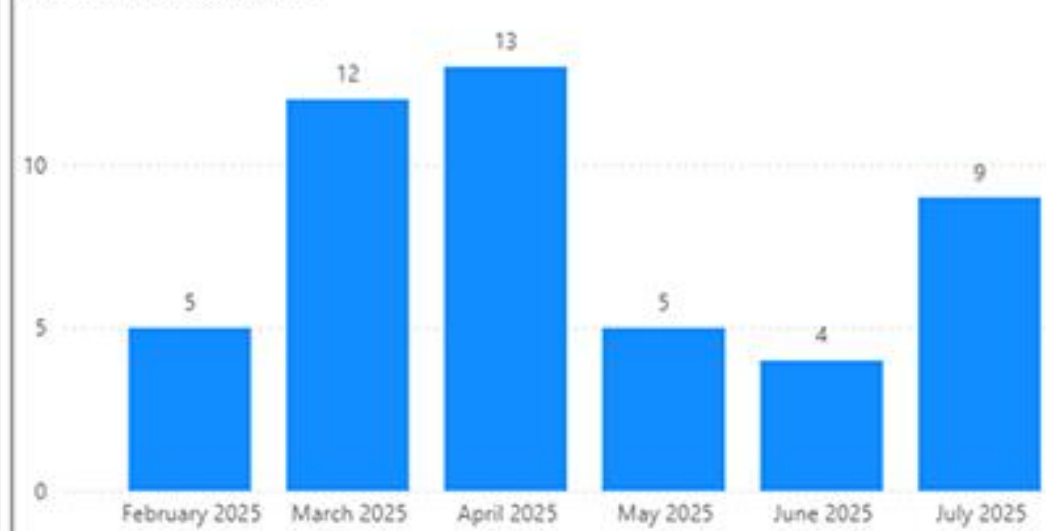
Injecting Episodes



Substance Used



Medical Emergencies





# Learning

- Living Experience Involvement – Service User Forum / Reference Groups
- Access for Women
- Trauma Informed Approaches
- Changing Drug Trends – Drugs / Method of Use / Hours
- Need for an Inhalation Space + Drug Checking Service
- Limitations of Legal Framework – Sharing / Tourniquets
- Community Engagement – Forum / Messaging
- Police Liaison
- International Collaboration

## The Thistle

EXCLUSIVE



Our kids have to get streetwise, people are doing drugs right outside home

EXCLUSIVE



'Drug bins normalise needles on our streets' say furious Calton residents

EXCLUSIVE



Council hits back over fears Thistle Centre has increased dumped needles

EXCLUSIVE



Council clear up drug den near The Thistle safer drug consumption room

EXCLUSIVE



Residents to pay to clean-up 'significant increase in needles' near drug room



'There's no hope' says Glasgow drug addict over The Thistle safer consumption room

# UK's first legal 'shooting gallery' for drug addicts to take heroin and cocaine under medical supervision opens its doors

By [EMILY JANE DAVIES](#)

07:53 13 Jan 2025, updated 08:11 13 Jan 2025



## BIN THE MONEY Fury as Glasgow city council shell out 'shocking' £5K for needle bins outside controversial fix room

[Graham Mann](#), Crime Reporter

Published: 22:06, 11 Aug 2025 | Updated: 22:06, 11 Aug 2025





MARISSA MACWHIRTER

## Why are some people painting Calton as a needle-infested hell hole?

5TH JULY ANNIE WELLS EAST END THE THISTLE HEALTH POLITICS GLASGOW SCOTLAND



By Marissa MacWhirter  
Columnist  
marissamagg1

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Fungus is Not from Toe  
the Main Enemy of Fun  
Stop Fungus



What's it really like inside UK's first drug consumption room?

news.stv.tv



Global drug policy experts visit The Thistle -  
Scottish Drugs Forum

sdf.org.uk



Nurses taking 'person-centred' approach to drug use at new facility | Nursing Times

nursingtimes.net



Alarms, overdoses and saving lives: 48 hours in UK's first drug injection room

bbc.com



Inside the UK's first drug consumption room – podcast

theguardian.com

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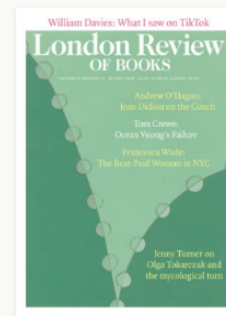
THE PAPER SUBJECTS BLOG PODCASTS & VIDEOS EVENTS SHOP NEWSLETTERS

Vol. 47 No. 11 · 26 June 2025

## 'Bang! I was out' Dani Garavelli on the case for drug consumption rooms



3868 words



On a sunny afternoon last month Ryan arrived at the Thistle, a one-story, single-story building in the east end of Glasgow. The

Dani Garavelli

02 July 2025  
Wednesday

# Public Engagement

Community Engagement Forum

Service Open Visits

HSCP SDCF Webpage-  
[www.glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf](http://www.glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf)

The Thistle – Service Point of View Video:  
[The Thistle - Safer Drug Consumption Room](#)

Glasgow City HSCP Service Video:  
[Safer Drug Consumption Facility](#)



## The Thistle

**Glasgow City's Safer Drug Consumption Facility**

The Safer Drug Consumption Room in Glasgow is called The Thistle. It is based at Hunter Street Health and Care Centre and open 365 days a year from 9am to 9pm.

**What is a Safer Drug Consumption Facility?**

The Thistle is a safe, clean, warm and welcoming service where you can inject your drugs. If you choose, the staff will also help you access other recovery and support services you need. Our staff team includes people with lived experience.

**Will I be stopped by the police if I try to use this service?**

You will not be stopped for solely trying to access The Thistle. You will only be stopped if you are engaged in activity that would provide Police Scotland with reasonable cause to stop you and/or search you. The Hunter Street Health and Care Centre is home to many services, so entering the building will not necessarily identify anyone as using The Thistle services.

**Confidentiality**

This is a confidential service. For more information, visit:  
[glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf-service-user-information](http://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf-service-user-information)

**Why should I use the service?**

If you inject drugs, The Thistle will be a safer option for you.

- you will have access to vein finders
- you will have access to wound care
- you will have access to advice from a range of health and social care staff
- staff will be able to respond if you overdose or have any other problems
- you will have access to our clothes store and shower facilities
- the lounge has tea and coffee, Wifi and staff available to support with any issues you may have
- there is a patio where you can smoke tobacco.

**What are the rules of the service?**

Those attending the service:

- must be over the age of 18
- can only inject the drugs they bring onto the site
- cannot consume alcohol
- cannot share or sell drugs on site, and
- cannot help others to make up or inject drugs

At present we are not able to offer smoking or inhalation facilities for consuming drugs or provide tourniquets.



Watch our video of **The Thistle** to see how the service works.

For more information, visit:  
[glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf](http://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf)





# References

1. 'Taking away the chaos: the health needs of people who inject drugs in public spaces in Glasgow city centre': [nhsggc\\_health\\_needs\\_drug\\_injectors\\_full.pdf](#)
2. National Mission on Drug – Scottish Government: [National mission on drugs - Alcohol and drugs - gov.scot](#)
3. Lord Advocate Statement of Prosecution: [Safer Drug Consumption Room Statement of Prosecution Policy 8 January 2025.pdf](#)