

29 July 2019

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

By post and by email to: public.enquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk

Dear Secretary of State

Glasgow Safer Drug Consumption Facility

As front-line UK clinical specialists who treat patients living with blood borne viruses, we wish to express our strong support for the development and implementation of a Safer Drug Consumption Facility (SDCF) in Glasgow. We originally wrote to your predecessor, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP on 26 March 2019 (and resent by email on 13 June 2019) but have yet to receive a reply other than automated email acknowledgement.

We are deeply concerned about the ongoing outbreak of recently acquired HIV infection in people who inject drugs in Glasgow. Since 2015, over 130 new HIV cases have been identified in this population, with the majority having a history of injecting drugs in public spaces. This has been a highly localised outbreak focused on Glasgow city centre and therefore an exceptional local intervention is warranted.

Following a comprehensive public health assessment, a proposal to introduce a SDCF co-located with a heroin-assisted treatment programme under the medical supervision of trained staff was developed. This proposal has been universally supported by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government. As medical professionals, we are confident in addressing the legal and ethical issues, in partnership with other key stakeholders.

As clinicians, we have direct experience of managing people who suffer the adverse health consequences of injecting drugs and believe that SDCFs will reduce drug related deaths, increase the reach of HIV and hepatitis C testing and treatment services and, through proven reductions in injecting risk behaviour, contribute to reduced blood borne virus transmission. We feel that this approach is entirely consistent with the spirit of the 2017 Drug Strategy supporting people dependent on drugs to progress to treatment and recovery. Ultimately, an SDCF will help us to save lives.

More widely, SDCFs have been operational since the eighties and there are more than 90 sites worldwide. There is a substantial body of international evidence that demonstrates the positive impact these sites have on improving the health and recovery of individuals and on

reducing the negative impact of public injecting on the wider community. The evidence demonstrates that SDCFs:

- Reduce public injecting and discarded needles
- Reduce the sharing of needles and other injecting equipment
- Improve uptake of addictions care and treatment
- Do not increase rates of crime and anti-social behaviour in the local area
- Result in cost savings overall, owing to reduced ill-health and healthcare usage.

Since we originally wrote in March 2019, the number of annual drug-related deaths in Scotland has risen to 1,187 which is the highest level since records began 23 years ago. This figure highlights the importance of recognising differing circumstances across the home nations. At Westminster, the problem drug use in Scotland inquiry is being conducted by the Scottish Affairs Committee. We therefore believe that it is an opportune moment to announce a change that will enable a localised pilot of a Safer Drug Consumption Facility in Glasgow to be implemented as a matter of urgency. In the longer term, this could be secured by either devolving law in relation to this aspect of drug policy to the Scottish Government or by amendment of the Misuse of Drugs 1971.

The British HIV Association (BHIVA) is willing to take a lead role on behalf of the other UK specialist societies who are signatories to this letter and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide further detail or discuss matters further. Please be kind enough to send your response to the Chair of BHIVA, Professor Chloe Orkin, at: bhiva@bhiva.org.

With kind regards

Yours sincerely

Professor Chloe Orkin
Chair, British HIV Association (BHIVA)

Dr Olwen Williams OBE
President, British Association for Sexual
Health and HIV (BASHH)