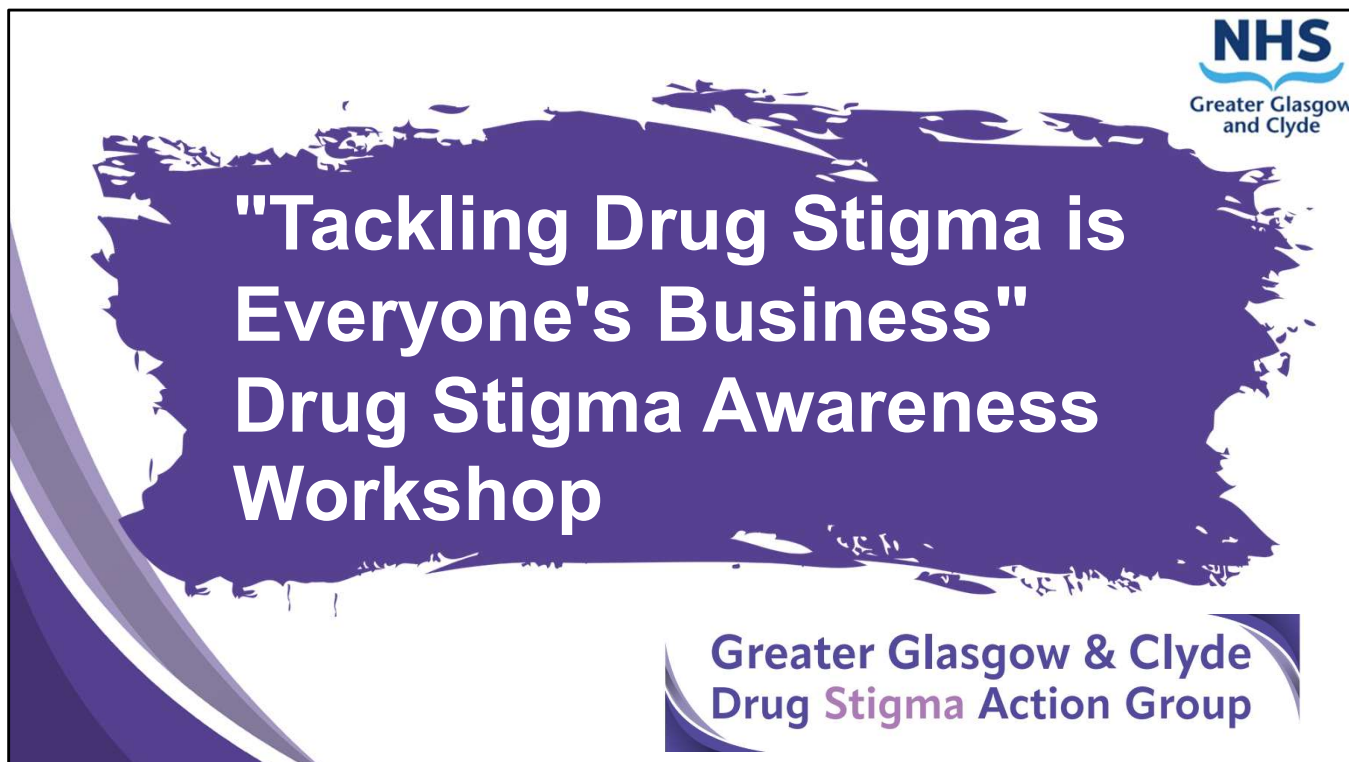




INTRODUCTION

Aim: Welcome and introduce participants to the workshop.

Welcome participants to the workshop, introduce who you are, your role and why you are delivering this workshop.

Inform participants of housekeeping.

Ensure participants understand that this is an awareness raising workshop to tackle drug stigma.

What do we know?

‘25% of people in Greater Glasgow and Clyde report taking either drugs or prescription medication they weren’t prescribed’

[2022-23 HWB Survey GGC - Final Report 2.pdf](#)

In 2024, 1017 people died of a drug related death in Scotland. [Drug-related deaths in Scotland, 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

For every person who uses drugs, on average, it impacts on 11 people in their family. We call this ‘the ripple effect’.

<https://www.sfad.org.uk/content/uploads/2023/08/Scottish-Families-ADRS-Resource.pdf>

‘In 2024, people living in the most deprived areas are 12 times more likely to die of a drug related death when compared to least deprived’ [Drug-related deaths in Scotland, 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Aim: Provide context of drug use and its impact across Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

These statistics highlight the potential prevalence and impact of stigma. Ask participants to hold their thoughts and questions, as there will be opportunities to discuss further at a later point in the workshop.

Many people in Greater Glasgow and Clyde are affected by drug use:

Stat 1: (Health & Wellbeing Survey 2022/23): “25% of people in Greater Glasgow and Clyde report taking either drugs or prescription medication they weren't prescribed.” [2022-23 HWB Survey GGC - Final Report 2.pdf](#)

This is 1 in 4 people that may be experiencing stigma related to their drug use.

Stat 2: “When one person uses drugs, on average, it impacts on 11 people in their family. We call this ‘the ripple effect.’”

For each one person highlighted in the previous statistic, a further 11 people

may experience stigma by association.

Stat 3: (National Records of Scotland): "In 2024, people living in the most deprived areas were 12 times more likely to die of a drug related death when compared to least deprived areas." ([Drug-related deaths in Scotland, 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#))

The impact of drug use is not experienced equally across society. There are strong links between poverty, trauma, mental health, substance use and experience of the criminal justice system - overlapping factors increase experience of drug related harm including stigma.

Stat 4: (National Records of Scotland): "In 2024, 1017 people died of a drug related death in Scotland" ([Drug-related deaths in Scotland, 2024 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#))

299 people in Greater Glasgow and Clyde died of a drug related death in 2024. Accessing services is the main protective factor against drug related harm and death. As stigma can be a barrier to accessing services, **Stigma kills.**

Why is it everyone's business to tackle drug stigma?

- Everyone knows someone.
- Stigma is a barrier to good health and quality of life.
- Stigma Kills.

WHY IS IT EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS TO TACKLE DRUG STIGMA?

Aim: Highlight the importance of the participants role in tackling stigma

People who use drugs, people in recovery, families and communities experience stigma today. 'The Ripple effect' highlighted on the last slide shows the potential for everyone to know someone. This highlights the importance of participating in this workshop.

Stigmatising beliefs and attitudes stop people seeking help. It reduces human beings to labels, fuels isolation, damages health and it kills.

How do we create a safe space?

- We are respectful.
- We challenge the opinion but not the person.
- We maintain confidentiality.
- We participate where we can.

HOW DO WE CREATE A SAFE SPACE?

Aim: Create a positive learning environment for participants.

Everybody has different knowledge and life experiences, which are all valid, and it is important to reflect on these to allow us to create a safe space for our conversations today and start tackling drug stigma. Throughout the workshop you will take part in discussions and hear real life examples of drug stigma. Facilitators can signpost anyone with concerns to appropriate support following the workshop.

[NHSGGC Alcohol and Drugs Health Improvement](#)
[Mental Health Improvement - NHSGGC](#)

How can we create a safe space for our conversations today?

Take participants through the points on the slide, using the notes below:

- **We are respectful** – Some of the content in this workshop may feel emotive. Please be mindful of others' experiences. This is intended to be a safe space where people can explore stigma openly, make

mistakes, and learn from them.

- **We challenge the opinion but not the person** – People may disagree, but any challenge should be made respectfully.
- **We maintain confidentiality** – Please avoid sharing personal stories. If you do share, be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. While we ask everyone to keep discussions confidential, your safety is the priority.
- **We participate where we can** – This session is designed to encourage open discussion about stigma, rather than being a one-way conversation. Participation is encouraged but optional, please take part in ways that feel safe for you. This is a respectful learning space where people can explore ideas, get things wrong, and learn together.

What is the aim of today?

Aim:

Increase awareness of drug stigma and its impact.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Understand what stigma is
- Recognise drug stigma
- Understand the impact of drug stigma
- Know where to seek further information, support, and training on this subject.



WHAT IS THE AIM OF TODAY?

Aim: Provide an understanding of the aims and learning outcomes of the workshop.

This is an awareness workshop that aims to increase awareness of drug stigma and its impact.

By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Understand what drug stigma is.
- Recognise drug stigma.
- Understand the impact of drug stigma.
- Know where to seek further information, support and training on this subject.

The workshop is designed to start the conversation around drug stigma and provide information regarding opportunities to further your understanding of this topic. We will do this by exploring stigma definitions, having a group discussion, watching a video(s) and reflecting on what we have covered in the workshop.

What is Stigma?

“stigma, n. - figurative. A mark of disgrace or infamy; a sign of severe censure or condemnation, regarded as impressed on a person or thing; a ‘brand’. *Oxford English Dictionary*

"Stigma is the social process of devaluing a person by labelling them as different, then attributing negative values to those differences"

Glossary - Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Scotland's Alcohol & Drugs Strategic Plan 2026 – 2035 - [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

WHAT IS STIGMA?

Aim: Understand what stigma is.

Definition 1 (Oxford Dictionary): “stigma, n. – figurative. A mark of disgrace or infamy; a sign of severe censure or condemnation, regarded as impressed on a person or thing; a ‘brand’.

Definition 2 (Fast Track Cities): “Stigma is the social process of devaluing a person by labelling them as different, then attributing negative values to those differences.”

Background on stigma:

Stigma has been present in society as far back as ancient Greece. In these times it was a mark branded onto the skin that physically labelled someone as disgraced or of poor reputation. People still face similar labels today, although the mark may be less visible. Stigma is closely linked to prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.

Prejudice: a pre-judgement – a negative attitude, belief, or feeling about a person or group before you know anything about them as an individual.

Stigma: when a group is socially labelled as inferior or unacceptable.

Discrimination: when prejudice or stigma leads to unfair treatment or actions that

disadvantage a person or group.

Prejudice (attitudes) → leads to → Stigma (labels) → leads to → Discrimination (unfair treatment or actions)

Stigma and discrimination increase harm for individuals and communities.

Tackling stigma helps people feel a greater connection to society, more included and more likely to access support.

Drug stigma discussion statements

- A person who uses drugs will always use drugs.
- It's someone's choice to take drugs.
- People in recovery have equal access to services.
- Friends and family of someone who uses drugs often experience stigma.



DRUG STIGMA DISCUSSION

Aim: Introduce discussion activity.

Split participants into equal discussion groups, as appropriate.

Introduce statements and advise that there will be 20 minutes for discussion before feeding back to the wider group.

Following discussion:

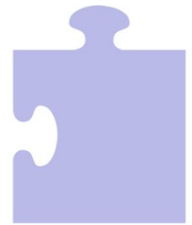
Encourage participants to feedback on key points raised through discussions.

Slides 8-11 provides key takeaway messages for each statement.

A person who uses drugs will always use drugs

This belief suggests that drug use is a fixed identity and that people are incapable of change.

This can perpetuate feelings of shame and worthlessness within a person (Self stigma).



A PERSON WHO USES DRUGS WILL ALWAYS USE DRUGS

Aim: Explore drug related stigma and its impact.

People may continue to use drugs, and this may cause harm, however placing judgement on a person prevents understanding of the reasons behind their use, within the context of their life.

When asked to think about a 'person who uses drugs', people often create very different mental pictures, based on their own knowledge, experiences and beliefs. Some may imagine someone injecting heroin and others may think of prescription medication use. All of these are valid interpretations, yet the stigma attached can differ significantly.

Stigma is one of the biggest barriers people who use drugs can face when accessing any form of treatment and care. That matters a lot because engaging in treatment and care is the biggest protective factor from drug overdose and death. There is a straight line between tackling stigma and helping to reduce drug related deaths.

Change is possible, but often complex and is personal to the individual – and our role is to support people in a compassionate and non-judgemental way.

It's someone's choice to take drugs

Drug use is complex and there are a number of factors that can influence this.

Blame is not constructive and creates a barrier to accessing support.



IT'S SOMEONE'S CHOICE TO TAKE DRUGS

Aim: Explore drug related stigma and its impact.

Drug use is complex and is more than a personal choice. Blaming individuals solely for drug use isolates them further, leaving them feeling unworthy of help and support.

While a person's first experience of using drugs may be a choice, that 'choice' is shaped, and often limited by wider life circumstances, such as curiosity, social influence, finding ways to cope, availability and environment. However, this is not equal for everyone as complex factors may shape what options are available for an individual.

While choice can play a role, focusing on it alone can frame problem drug use as an individual failing and can overlook the wider responsibilities of services, communities and government to support people affected by problem drug use.

See the person, not the label and not the drug.

People in recovery have equal access to services

This statement suggests that once someone is in recovery they no longer experience stigma and they have equal access to opportunities, services, and social acceptance.

The reality is that access is not equal, it is shaped by attitudes, systems, and structural barriers.



PEOPLE IN RECOVERY HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO SERVICES

Aim: Explore drug related stigma and its impact.

Stigma towards people with a history of drug use often persists even when they are in recovery. People in recovery may experience stigma which impacts on their access to employment, housing, healthcare, and many other services.

Past negative experiences, associations with past behaviour, trauma, fear of judgement and individual needs can all prevent someone seeking support, and may influence how someone is treated within a service. Equal access is about more than service availability - it includes equity, respect and feeling valued.

This highlights the need for stigma-free and trauma-informed support and services.

Friends and family of someone who uses drugs often experience stigma

- Many experience blame, judgement, and/or social exclusion simply because they are connected to someone who uses drugs.
- It takes, on average, 8 years for families to reach out for support for themselves*.



[Scottish-Families-ADRS-Resource.pdf*](#)

FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF SOMEONE WHO USES DRUGS OFTEN EXPERIENCE STIGMA

Aim: Explore drug related stigma and its impact.

Everyone knows someone. Many people across Greater Glasgow and Clyde are affected by drug use and are susceptible to experiencing stigma in relation to this. They are our family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and people who use our services. As a result of this, the chances are that we all know someone, or someone we know knows someone, who is impacted by drug use and potentially stigma.

“We know when one person uses drugs or alcohol, on average, it can impact on 11 people in their family. We call this ‘the ripple effect’. And yet it takes, on average, 8 years for families to reach out for support for themselves.” (Ref - <https://www.sfad.org.uk/content/uploads/2023/08/Scottish-Families-ADRS-Resource.pdf>)

Tackling stigma will not only reduce barriers for people using drugs to seek support but will also have a positive effect on their friends, families and communities.

Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use

- Whether a person is affected by drugs or not, should not affect how they are treated as an individual.
- They have a right to:
 - Life
 - Highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
 - Adequate standard of living
 - Private and family life
 - A healthy environment
 - Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment
 - Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention.

Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use in Scotland | WithYou.

CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR PEOPLE AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE USE

Aim: Provide overview of Charter of Rights

The Charter of Rights is a national document that sets out the human rights that belong to people who use drugs or alcohol, and their families. This charter clearly outlines rights and support mechanisms and seeks to reduce the stigma associated with substance use, encouraging a more compassionate and understanding approach from society and service providers. It was developed by The National Collaborative (which involved people with lived experience and service providers) and marked a major shift toward a public health and human-rights-based approach, and away from stigma and criminalisation. (SRC)

It aims to ensure people are:

- Treated with dignity and respect
- Aware of their rights
- Able to challenge poor practice
- Supported by services that understand their human rights obligations.

Across Greater Glasgow and Clyde (GGC) there are advocacy services to support people have their voices heard and their rights upheld, particularly when they may find it difficult to speak up for themselves.

Information for advocacy services across GGC can be found on the alcohol and drug health improvement webpage: [Tackling Drug Stigma - NHSGGC](#)

Video



1. Stigma Kills



2. 'Stigma is a barrier to good health and quality of life'



3. 'Everyone knows someone'



4. 'It's everyone's business to tackle stigma'



5. 'Words Matter: A Story about stigma (prisons)'

VIDEO RESOURCES

Aim: Highlight the experience of drug stigma and how to tackle this.

Video Playlist: [Tackling Drug Stigma is Everyone's Business](#)

Show participants appropriate film(s) for the session. Option of 5 films:

1. Stigma Kills – This film explores the experiences of individuals affected by drug stigma, highlight different forms of stigma as well as the impact these can have and opportunities to address and tackle stigma.
2. Stigma is a barrier to good health and quality of life – This film highlights the experiences of women affected by drug stigma, exploring what it feels like to experience stigma, how it can impact them and opportunities and suggestions for addressing and tackling it.
3. Everyone knows someone – This film shares how stigma affects families when a loved one uses drugs, the impact on their lives, and what can be done to challenge and tackle it.
4. It's everyone's business to tackle stigma – This film highlights how drugs stigma can affect professionals, the impact it can have, why tackling stigma is essential to support individuals to engage with services, and how professionals can help tackle stigma in practice.

5. Words Matter: A story about stigma (Prisons) - This film highlights how drug stigma can affect those living in prisons, the impact this can have and opportunities to address and tackle stigma for all within a prison environment.

Learning from Experience

- People should be treated with kindness and compassion, regardless of their drug use.
- It is important that we see the person, not the label and not the drug.
- Stigma is everyone's business.

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

Aim: Provide summary of learning from the video resources.

The video(s) provides real life examples of drug stigma, its impact and ways to tackle it. Reinforcing that people should be treated with kindness and compassion, regardless of their drug use. It is important that we see the person, not the label and not the drug. **Tackling stigma is everyone's business.**

Next Steps



NEXT STEPS

Aim: Provide summary of workshop content, next steps and further learning.

Workshop learning outcomes:

- Understand what stigma is.
- Recognise drug stigma.
- Understand the impact of drug stigma.
- Know where to seek further information, support and training on this subject.

Activities to achieve outcomes: Stigma definitions, groups discussions, and videos.

This session is intended to start a conversation about drug stigma, not to be the final step. Further learning is available through the wider Drug Stigma Toolkit developed by the GGC Stigma Action Group. This toolkit expands on today's learning and highlights further learning opportunities available.

Encourage time to reflect on the learning from this session and consider any next steps that may feel relevant. This could be starting a conversation with a colleague, friend or family member.

Tackling Drug Stigma is Everyone's Business



Please think about:

- One key reflection/takeaway from the workshop.
- One action you are going to take to tackle drug stigma.

TACKLING DRUG STIGMA IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Aim: Provide time for reflection and a call to action for participants.

Whilst tackling stigma can seem complex, no one needs to be an expert to act.

Think about the information shared today, as well as the discussions had throughout this workshop, and the impact that drug stigma can have on those who have experienced it.

Reflect on the following:

- One key reflection / takeaway from the workshop.
- One action you are going to take to tackle drug stigma.

Acknowledgements

This workshop was developed by the Drugs and Stigma Workshop Subgroup (Glasgow City Health Improvement Team, NHSGGC Alcohol and Drugs Health Improvement Team, Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership, Scottish Drugs Forum and West Dunbartonshire Alcohol and Drug Partnership) on behalf of the [Greater Glasgow and Clyde \(GGC\) Drug Stigma Action Group](#).

The [GGC Drug Stigma Action Group](#) is a multi-agency partnership bringing together statutory and third sector organisations to deliver a coordinated approach to tackling drug related stigma across Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

The [GGC Drug Stigma Action Group](#) would like to thank the lived and living experience reference groups across GGC who shared their perspectives and experience, which were essential to the development of this resource.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aim: to acknowledge those involved in the development of the workshop.

The workshop was developed by the Drugs and Stigma Workshop subgroup on behalf of the GGC Stigma Action Group (SAG). The SAG is a multi-agency partnership bringing together statutory and third sector organisations to deliver a co-ordinated approach to tackling drug stigma across GGC.