

"Tackling Drug Stigma is Everyone's Business" Drug Stigma Awareness Workshop

Greater Glasgow & Clyde
Drug **Stigma** Action Group

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 \(NRS\)](#)”

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.

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.

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 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](#)

Drug stigma discussion statements

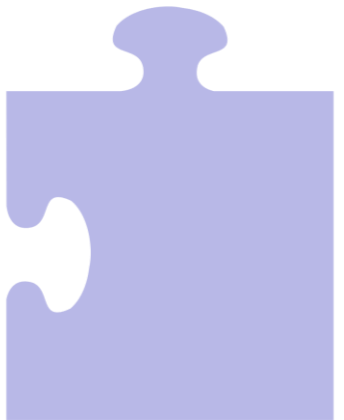
- A person who uses drugs will always use drugs.
- It's someone's choice to take drugs.
- People in recovery have equal access to services.
- Friends and family of someone who uses drugs often experience stigma.



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).



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.



People in recovery have equal access to services

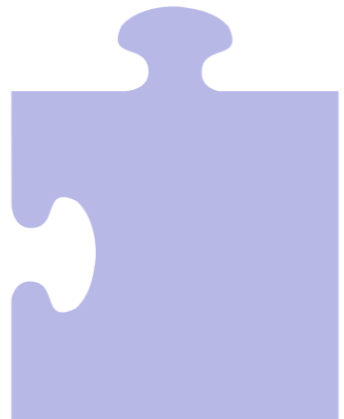
This statement suggests that once someone is in recovery they no longer experience stigma and they have equal access to opportunities, services, and social acceptance.

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



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*.



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.

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)'

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.

Next Steps



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.

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.