

partnership matters briefing



September/October 2025



Pat Togher, Chief Officer

Welcome to Glasgow City HSCP's 'Partnership Matters' briefing, to keep you more up to date with some of what's happening across our HSCP with partners. [Current and past briefings](#) continue to be available on our HSCP's website, and they can be accessed from work and personal devices. We hope that you find our briefing useful. Any comments or suggestions for future topics are welcome, and they can be shared by contacting us at GCHSCP_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk.

The Thistle: supporting people, saving lives

Nine months ago, Glasgow made history by opening the UK's first safer drug consumption facility (SDCF) — known as **The Thistle** — at the Hunter Street Health and Care Centre. Since then, the service has seen a huge amount of interest from the media, local communities, and professionals across the city.

The Thistle was set up by Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to provide a safe, supervised space for people who use drugs. But it's much more than that. It's a place where people can get help with urgent health needs, access basic essentials like clean clothes and a shower, and speak to staff about support options — all in a non-judgemental environment.

What's Happening at The Thistle?

Since opening in January this year:

- **Over 460 people** have registered to use the service.
- There have been **more than 7,000 visits**, with **over 4,700 injections** carried out safely — meaning no shared or reused needles, and no discarded needles on the street.
- Most people are injecting **cocaine**, but **heroin**, **ketamine**, and other substances are also used.
- There have been **60 medical emergencies**, all safely managed on-site. Only **12 ambulances** were called, and just **8 people** needed hospital care.

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Connecting People to Support

Since January, The Thistle has made **over 340 referrals** to other services:

- **46%** were for housing and accommodation.
- **13.3%** were for addiction care and treatment services.
- Just over **10%** were for the Blood Borne Virus Team.
- Around **4%** were for sexual and reproductive health.

Thanks to strong partnerships with other HSCP services and third sector organisations, regular clinics are now running on-site — including sexual health, Blood Borne Virus, and physical health clinics. These referrals show the complex needs of the people using the service, and the importance of having joined-up support.

People coming to The Thistle are often focused on urgent needs — a roof over their head, clean clothes, and help with their health and drug use. Staff at The Thistle do all they can to support people to engage with teams that can support presenting need.

Encouragingly, more people have accessed treatment and care for their drug use than expected at this stage. Some have connected with recovery communities — a promising sign that The Thistle can be a gateway to wider recovery services in Glasgow.

Some service users were keen to give feedback to us, with one commenting “I used the service for the first time today. It was really good. The staff were really nice. I felt safe and clean as I wasn’t using outside in dirty lanes”. Another said, “I want to thank all the staff who give up their time to work with us, you have no idea how many lives you are changing”. And lastly, a service user commented “They’re amazing staff. If it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t be clothed. I wouldn’t be washed. I wouldn’t have people to speak to. I get a wee bit of peace here.”

Kelda Gaffney, our HSCP’s Depute Chief Officer, Operations and Governance and Chief Social Work Officer, said: “The Thistle is making a real difference. It’s not only reducing harm for people but it’s also helping people take meaningful steps towards better health, stability, and recovery. I’m proud that we are leading the way for Scotland and of the difference the service is making in our city.”

Staying Connected

Our HSCP hosts a dedicated web area for the SDCF, which includes monthly updates and figures: glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sdcf. The service also engages regularly with local forums and responds to public concerns, making sure accurate information is available to everyone.



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Celebrating suicide prevention work across Glasgow

Following Suicide Prevention Week in September 2025, our Glasgow City Suicide Prevention Partnership (GCSPP) is proud to highlight the inspiring, year-round work of local organisations and partners dedicated to supporting mental health, strengthening resilience, and preventing suicide across the city.

Training and capacity building

Building skills within community organisations is key to ensuring more people can respond compassionately and effectively to those in distress.

Mental Health Network Greater Glasgow

Staff and volunteers recently completed ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), equipping them with practical tools and confidence to support individuals in crisis. One participant shared: “The week after attending the training, I used my new skills. It boosted my confidence and enabled me to help someone having suicidal thoughts.”

The NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (NHSGGC) Mental Health Improvement Team has also launched a comprehensive list of [Suicide Prevention Resources and Supports](#), providing staff with access to online learning, helplines, and key materials to enhance suicide prevention knowledge.

Peer support and recovery

Peer-led spaces play a vital role in suicide prevention by creating safe, relatable environments where people can talk openly and find hope.

Yomo – Speak Easy Group

Speak Easy is a weekly peer-led recovery group offering a non-judgmental space to discuss mental health and suicidal thoughts. Participants report feeling less isolated and more connected.

The Restart Project (NHSGGC)

A nurse-led community recovery service offering creative, educational, and wellbeing activities such as art, photography, and cooking. One participant said: “Restart has been a lifeline for me... I now volunteer for a group, which was unimaginable before. I feel more in control of my mental health and hopeful about the future.”

Bereavement support

Supporting those affected by suicide is vital for healing and prevention.

A Place Called Here – Mick’s Highland Way

This 150-mile awareness walk honours the memory of Mick and raises awareness around suicide bereavement. During Suicide Prevention Week, the group hosted awareness events at Parkhead Hub and a nature walk with their support group. Their journey could be followed at #MicksHighlandWay.



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Policy and strategy

Strong policy frameworks ensure suicide prevention remains a shared, sustained priority across Glasgow.

Children's Residential Services – Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Health Improvement teams have supported Children's Residential Services to develop tailored Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy templates. Staff also received Suicide Contagion training, helping them support young people more effectively.

University of Strathclyde Suicide Prevention Strategy

Launched in June 2025, the university's five-year strategy aims to build a suicide-safer community through capacity building, communication, safety and support, and continuous improvement. It's guided by the principles of time, space and compassion and co-produced with staff and students. Strathclyde is the first university in Scotland to appoint a full-time Suicide Prevention Project Coordinator.

Partnership working

Collaboration remains at the heart of suicide prevention.

Mental Health Network and Police Scotland

Network staff recently delivered safeTALK training to officers within Police Scotland Greater Glasgow, followed by open discussions about improving responses to people in distress.

Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Networks

Partnership networks across the North East, North West, and South of the city work year-round to support communities and prevent suicide. To get involved, contact:

Rebecca.mccrory@nhs.scot or marykate.russell@nhs.scot

Support for young people

Tailored support for children and young people remains a key focus across the city.

Kooth

Kooth offers free, safe, and anonymous online mental health support for young people aged 10 to 16, available without referral.

Togetherall

Togetherall is a 24/7 online peer-to-peer support community for those aged 16 to 23 with a Glasgow postcode, freely available until March 2026. Visit www.togetherall.com to learn more.

Young People's Compassionate Distress Response Service (CDRS)

CDRS provides a rapid, compassionate response for 16 to 25 year olds experiencing acute emotional distress. Phone 0141 406 0899, Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm.

For professionals, the [Children and Young People's Mental Health Support Guide](#) outlines local referral options for timely, appropriate support.



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Trevor Lakey, Chair of the Glasgow City Suicide Prevention Partnership said: “It’s heartening to see so many partners with ongoing involvement in this important area. Please take time to familiarise yourself with the resources available to help us all reduce suicide within our communities.”

Support and Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling, support is available:

- **Samaritans** – phone 116 123 (free, 24/7)
- **Breathing Space** – phone 0800 83 85 87
- **NHS 24** – phone 111 for urgent mental health support
- **Emergency Services** – phone 999 in crisis situations

Orchard Grove celebrates tenth anniversary

On 6 September, residents, their families, friends and staff all got together at our Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP)’s Orchard Grove residential care home to celebrate the home being operational for 10 years. We wanted to celebrate this achievement of providing a decade of the highest quality of personalised care by having a huge ‘Young at Heart’ party with all the people we consider family.

Evelyn Downie, Service Manager said: “We sent invites to everyone, residents’ families and our staff, who came along and joined us as we celebrated one another.

“In the lead up to the anniversary, we formed a resident’s choir called the ‘Orchard Groovers’. We currently have 18 members and counting.

“One of our staff, Lauren, is related to Ken McCluskey, lead singer from the Scottish band The Bluebells, who cares passionately about dementia awareness. We were absolutely delighted when he agreed to sing at our tenth anniversary party with our choir. This made it a real celebration to recognise the development of our HSCP’s services for older people.”

Former Operations Manager at Orchard Grove, Trisha O’Donnell, was the weekly Choir leader and prepared our residents, most of whom live with a type of dementia or brain injury.

Trish said: “We practiced the Bluebells song, ‘Young at Heart’, which became our theme. The choir brought people together who didn’t know one another, and friendships and connections were made. We would start our rehearsals with Geraldine Dempsey, our Activities Co-ordinator explaining the meaning of the song, which resonated with all of us and triggered fond memories of our younger selves. We had great laughs and would always treat ourselves to a dance at the end of our choir practice. Being part of the choir was one of the highlights of my time at Orchard Grove.”

One of our family members whose wife Maggie is very involved said: “Maggie talks about the choir all the time and all the people she has met and how much she enjoys it.”



On the day of the party, the choir sang between performances by our professional musicians. Kirk Strachan, a local talent who has supported Gerry Cinnamon and Sam Fender, got the party off to a great start, then our talented residents took to the stage.

Trisha continued: “Most of our singers have advanced dementia, but they loved being centre stage and sang their hearts out! They belted out ‘Young at Heart’ as Ken played guitar, and I led the choir in song. Our voices resonated through the house, and you could feel the hairs on your neck stand up. There were a few tears and lots of hugs as everyone said how proud they felt.”

Cathy Browne (one of our singers) commented: “It was rather overwhelming, it was so good.”

Robin Wallace, our HSCP’s Head of Older People Residential and Day Care Services, attended with his daughter who absolutely loved it. Robin said: “Being able to share in such an incredible celebration was an honour, and it was such a privilege to be able to listen to the stories and memories of both staff and residents. The Orchard Groovers choir was a treat and the staff pulled out all the stops to create a party atmosphere that will be spoken about for a long time.”

Next up was young Elvis impersonator, Evan King. Evan is 16 years old and just home from ‘Elvis’ week in Graceland. He wowed the audience with his voice and dance moves. His jailhouse rock rendition and performance was brilliant.

Geraldine Dempsey, Activities Co-ordinator said: “Everyone was up dancing, laughing, joining in and having the best time together. We had so many beautiful stories and moments to take from the day.”

Joe Coyle, a resident’s husband said: “I walked in and saw my wife all dressed up, so relaxed and smiling. It was like having my wife back.”

Another resident’s family member said: “Maggie just talks about the choir all the time. All the people she has met and how much she loves it.”

Jennifer Brown (daughter of a resident) was in the choir with her father and said: “It was brilliant, it was like seeing the old Dad again. So good.”

World Alzheimer’s Month – raising awareness of dementia and support

World Alzheimer’s Month 2025 in September took place to raise awareness and challenge the stigma surrounding Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. World Alzheimer’s Day takes place on 21 September every year.

Staff at Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) hosted dementia awareness drop-in sessions over the month in local health and care centres. These were well received by local people.

Dementia is a progressive condition that affects the brain in a variety of ways. There are many kinds of dementia but the most common is [Alzheimer’s disease](#). It’s possible to have more than one [type of dementia](#), for example, Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia.



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One of the most common symptoms of dementia is memory loss. If memory loss affects your daily life, or is worrying you or someone you know, you should speak to your GP. Your GP will discuss the possible causes of memory loss with you, including dementia.

Early diagnosis of dementia is crucial to ensure optimal support and information is provided, enabling people diagnosed to live as full and independent lives for as long as possible.

In Scotland, everyone who is newly diagnosed with dementia is entitled to post diagnostic support (PDS). This helps people diagnosed and their carers to understand dementia, plan for the future and get support to stay well for as long as possible.

This year in our HSCP we've started to diversify our PDS to offer group work. The sessions are accessed by referral from the person's diagnosing clinician. They're an opportunity for people recently diagnosed with dementia and their family/care giver to come together to learn more about dementia, the support available, strategies to help manage symptoms and peer support.

The groups meet once a week for six weeks in a relaxed and informal setting at various sites. They're delivered by expert HSCP and Alzheimer's Scotland staff including our Technology Team and they consists of the following sessions:

- What is dementia: understanding the illness
- Memory strategies and managing symptoms
- Healthy living and community connections
- Stress management
- Staying connected.

For more information, please contact Janice Stewart at jstewart@alzscot.org

Lynn Haughey, Change and Development Manager, Older People's Services, South Locality said: "This work has been an excellent collaboration between HSCP and Alzheimer Scotland staff.

Early reports indicate that service users are really valuing the input of staff – the knowledge they bring and the easy to apply tips, particularly the technology that's now available which has had great feedback from all the sessions so far. And of course, the friendliness of everyone."

A service user said: "I've been keeping the diagnosis to myself, and it's been great having people to talk to."

A carer said: "I felt alone with the caring role but was reassured by the group and services that it was a safe space for carers to express their feelings/get help."

Useful contacts

You can find out more about dementia on [NHS Inform](#). Dementia is not necessarily part of the normal aging process. Proactive lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, regular exercise, reducing alcohol and smoking, maintaining social contacts and hobbies can all reduce the likelihood of developing dementia.



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[Alzheimer Scotland](#) has more information available and a free 24/7 helpline on 0808 808 3000.

You may be eligible for [financial help](#) for the person you are caring for and for yourself as an unpaid carer.

If you would like more information on benefits, including benefits for people of working age, phone the Age Scotland Helpline on 0800 12 44 222 or visit the [Money and Benefits](#) information pages.

Advice for unpaid carers is available from <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/carers>

SSSC approves Glasgow City HSCP to deliver PDAPL including to other partner HSCPs

Earlier this year, the West of Scotland's social work education landscape saw a major change. Learning Network West, an independent organisation funded by universities and local authorities, including Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (GCHSCP), closed in March 2025 due to financial challenges.

Learning Network West played a key role in coordinating social work student placements and was an approved centre for delivering the Professional Development Award in Practice Learning (PDAPL).

When the closure was announced in November 2024, seven social workers in Glasgow were already working towards the PDAPL. Determined to support them, Eleanor Ramsay,

Team Leader for Practice Learning, and Karen Sillars, Service Manager Learning and Development, began exploring how we (GCHSCP) could continue the qualification in-house.

Karen and Eleanor met with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to discuss options for sustaining the current staff working towards PDAPL, including support for staff from other Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs). With our team's experience, qualifications and motivation — and as an SQA-accredited centre — we were confident we could deliver the award ourselves.

A follow-up meeting with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) allowed us to present our proposal to deliver, assess and quality assure the PDAPL through our own Practice Learning team. With support from Natalie Campleman (Centre Lead) and Michelle Currie (an External Verifier for SQA), we developed the necessary policies, procedures and partnership agreements.

On 30 April, we received interim approval from the SSSC to continue supporting the existing staff undertaking PDAPL. Following this, our Practice Learning team — Wilma McCoid, Pauline Kelly, Dorothy Apicella and Alison Anderson — worked quickly to update all teaching materials and presentations.

We're proud to share that on 12 August 2025, we received full approval to deliver the PDAPL, not only for Glasgow but also for other partner HSCPs.



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A new group of staff started the course at the end of August 2025, with 25 candidates: 12 from GCHSCP and 13 from across Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire. With two groups per year, this new model will result in cost savings and generate additional income.

The PDAPL is a vital qualification that enables social workers to support students during their practice placements. GCHSCP hosts around 75 social work students each year, and having qualified practice teachers is essential. This initiative supports our workforce plan by helping recruit and retain social workers — 90% of final placement students in 2023/24 secured employment in Glasgow.

The SSSC said: “There’s a very experienced team in place, with a clear passion and enthusiasm for the award and workforce professional development. This was evidenced in the application documentation as well as verbal presentations on the day of the panel.

“The course is very well-structured and organised and utilises contemporary material to support teaching.”

Kelda Gaffney, our Depute Chief Officer, Operations and Governance and Chief Social Work Officer commented: “This achievement reflects the dedication and professionalism of our Practice Learning team. Their commitment to supporting the workforce and ensuring continuity in professional development has been outstanding. The approval to deliver the PDAPL in-house not only secures the future of our current candidates but strengthens our capacity to support social work education across the region.”

News

We also regularly publish [news articles](#) and [briefings / bulletins](#) on our website about specific topics or work happening across our HSCP with partners – whether it be about current services, service developments or achievements to celebrate. If you would like to have something featured, please email GCHSCP_Communications@glasgow.gov.uk. Some recent news items include:

- [Parkhead Update – October 2025](#)
- [Exhibition at GOMA promotes breastfeeding in public places](#)
- [Glasgow City HSCP marks Black History Month](#)
- [People Make Recovery event a huge success](#)
- [Recognition for our Mental Health Nursing staff at National Awards](#)
- [Embracing person-led models of care in our residential homes](#)
- [Celebrating Scottish Learning Disability Week in Glasgow](#)
- [Prevent: working together to keep Glasgow safe](#)
- [New five-year Nursing and Midwifery strategy](#)
- [Spotlight on Falls Awareness Week 2025](#)
- [Sandyford pledges to support people with learning disabilities](#)



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Meetings & Events

We have regular meetings and events to discuss and / or make decisions about health and social care in Glasgow. More information about them with upcoming dates is available below:

- [Glasgow City Integration Joint Board \(IJB\)](#)
- [IJB Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [IJB Public Engagement Committee](#)



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