

Criminal Justice Committee

Inquiry into the harm caused by substance misuse in Scottish Prisons

Written submission from Public Health Scotland for 28 May 2025 Committee meeting

Public Health Scotland has a significant programme of work on Public Health Substance Use across a number of strands with a key focus on reducing drug-related deaths through the improvement of evidence-based population assessment and care as well as monitoring to inform benchmarking and multi-agency service provision.

Planned MAT Standards Implementation in Scottish Prisons – 2025/26

Looking forward to the imminent 17th June 2025 publication of the PHS National Benchmarking Report on the Implementation of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Standards: Scotland 2024/25, implementation through Scottish prisons of reporting on these standards is now planned for this year 2025/26.

The PHS MAT Implementation Support Team (MIST) have held engagement sessions with all Scottish prisons over the past year in preparation for systematic reporting and benchmarking in prison settings against the 10 MAT standards already being applied in non-justice community settings.

Taking forward the MAT standards will involve working collaboratively with key partners and engaging all key sub-groups of Scotland's prison population, including sentenced and remand populations. This will include benchmark scoring using 3 strands of evidence, each contributing the MAT Standards scoring:

- Process - support from MIST will consist of review and support to align pathways, protocols, policies and documentation
- Numerical - support from MIST will provide guidance to collate numerical data required for reporting
- Experiential - contracted to Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC). MIST will work with SRC who are currently active in Scottish prisons as regards the building of recovery communities. With PHS, SRC will build on this to develop the collection of experiential evidence from people who use substances and staff and interested others working with people who use substances.

Data collection in health and community settings has been challenging and much learning has been gained through this collaboration with the 29 Alcohol and Drug Partnerships (ADPs) who commission and oversee substance use specialist services across Scotland.

Support to Implement and Report (StIRs) meetings between PHS and ADPs in the community will be adapted for prisons. These will give the MIST team and the prison services submitting evidence on the standards the opportunity to assess, question and review the submission plans and to look at progress according to PHS guidance to the eventual submission of data by the spring of 2026.

ADPs have gained much expertise in the subject of evidence submission and co-ordination of community services. However, the complexities and practicalities around providing substance use services for prison populations especially for drug / medication supplies, IT data collation and information governance issues makes for a far less straightforward implementation process than for community settings.

The 10 MAT standards [Medication Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) standards: access, choice, support - gov.scot](#) align well with the current Standards 5 on Respect, Autonomy and Protection Against Mistreatment and Standard 9 on Health and Well-Being Inspecting and Monitoring Standards for [Inspecting and Monitoring Prisons in Scotland: Introduction | HMIPS](#) in particular regarding the Human Rights-Based Approach which is now an integral part of the PHS MAT standards methodology.

We understand that the Committee is particularly interested in

- Which drugs are most prevalent and how they are entering prisons;
- The interplay between criminal networks and prison drug economies;
- How the current MAT implementation align with Standards 5 and 9;
- Training and resources for frontline staff.

PHS will be happy to speak to the 3rd question. Mr John Mooney, Consultant in Public Health with Public health Scotland, who leads the MIST team will attend to this item.

Public Health Scotland
26th May 2025