

Organisation:

Scottish Drug Forum

Key Rights Applied:

All

Background & Context:

The Living Experience Engagement Groups are designed to ensure that people with living experience of substance use can influence local and national policy and services. SDF staff support the groups to collate and share their feedback to local commissioners, service managers and decision makers to ensure their voices are heard.

Too often, people who use drugs are treated as if their lives matter less - facing stigma, discrimination, and exclusion across health, social care, housing, and justice systems. This denial of basic rights creates barriers to the very services that should be keeping people safe. Crucially, recognising rights gives people a stronger voice in shaping the services that affect their lives - ensuring responses are grounded in real experience, not imposed from above.

Realising rights also forces us to confront the wider drivers of harm: poverty, trauma, criminalisation, and social exclusion. By addressing these inequalities, a rights-based approach not only reduces immediate risks but is the building blocks for long-term change.

In short: upholding the rights of people who use substances is not an optional extra. It is a life-saving necessity and the foundation for reducing drug-related harms and deaths in Scotland.

Use of the Charter of Rights and Toolkit:

Key rights awareness, FAIR model and PANEL Principles.

Results to date:

- 12 Living Experience Engagement groups across Scotland have received Charter of Rights awareness training.
- Over 120 Rights Holders with Living Experience trained. Copies of the Charter given to everyone trained.
- FAIR Model is used across all the engagement groups to discuss local issues being raised. A summary of which is then taken to the Local Management Meetings (Supporting PANEL Principles) - whose membership is made up of ADP, NHS, 3rd Sector partners, Police Scotland, Community Justice.
- Peer Led Charter of Rights Training
 - Two peers identified to develop and deliver Charter of Rights Training.
 - 3 Sessions complete:
 - 1 Rights Holders

- 1 Duty Bearers
- 1 Mixed
- These sessions have been received well by participants. Evaluations have been positive in terms of delivery, style and content.
- Training will now be rolled out to other organisations. 4 planned sessions agreed with a 3rd sector partner across Glasgow, Perth and Edinburgh.

Lessons Learned:

- Rights Holders were not aware of what their rights are.
- Duty Bearers were not aware of which rights they are expected to uphold.
- Service providers were not aware of the Charter and some are not aware of the rights being discussed.

Recommendations for Others:

- Look to include everyone at an early stage - Rights Holders, Duty Bearers and the Organisation.
- Start by identifying which rights are currently being met or partly met in your organisation.
- Protected time to learn about the Charter of Rights.