

BRIEFING FOR THE FIRST MINISTER

VISIT TO THE THISTLE CENTRE

10 January 2024

Key message	We are supportive of the opening of the safer drug consumption facility in Glasgow, the first of its kind in the UK, as part of the National Mission to save and improve lives affected by problematic drug use.
What	The pilot safer drug consumption facility is due to open on 13 January 2025. Prior to this the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care have an opportunity to visit the facility, meet with staff and see how it will operate on 10 January 2025.
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate continued political commitment to the National Mission to reduce drug harms and position this within the PfG mission on high quality and sustainable public services.• Demonstrate continued commitment to the establishment of this evidence-based, harm reduction facility.
Who	FM and Cab Sec will be met at the main entrance to Thistle by [redacted S.38(1)(b)] (Drugs Policy Division, official support) and Dr Lesley Thomson KC, Chair of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
Where	<p>Thistle Centre, Hunter Street Health Centre, 55 Hunter Street, Glasgow G4 0UP</p> <p>There will be parking spaces provided for the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary's cars after drop off at main entrance of The Thistle.</p>
When	Friday 10 January 2025, 9.00am – 11.00am
Likely themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National Mission to save and improve lives affected by problematic drug use• Budget and funding• Safer drug consumption facilities• The Enhanced Drug Treatment (Heroin-Assisted Treatment) Service and the drug checking service which will be co-located with the safer drug consumption facility
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A media invite to be issued either Wednesday/Thursday inviting press to visit.• Media trail to be issued at 00:01 10 January 2025.• A news release to be issued at 09:00 on Friday morning (10 January 2025).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comms Officers to facilitate media interviews with FM and Cab Sec on the day. • Social media posts to be issued across Scottish Government channels.
Supporting officials	[redacted S.38(1)(b)], Drugs Policy Division, [redacted S.38(1)(b)] [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Health Comms [redacted S.38(1)(b)], FM Comms [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Visits and Events [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Special Advisor office [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Video Content Team
Attached documents	Annex A: Agenda & Summary – page 3 Annex B: Key Attendees – page 5 Annex C: Drug Consumption Facilities – page 13 Annex D: Drug Consumption Facilities - Q&A – page 17 Annex E: Finance - Q&A – page 23 Annex F: National Mission Hot Topics - Q&A – page 25 Annex G: Suspected drug deaths in Scotland – page 32 Annex H: Co-located services – page 34 Annex I: Additional work in Glasgow – page 36 Annex J: COPFS information – page 39

Programme

Time	Activity	Location	Details
9.00am	Arrive The Thistle, main entrance	The Thistle, main entrance	<p>First Minister and Cabinet Secretary arrive at The Thistle main entrance, greeted by Dr Lesley Thomson KC, Chair, NHSGGC and introduced to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council • Jane Grant, Chief Executive, NHSGGC • Councillor Allan Casey • Councillor Chris Cunningham • Susanne Millar, Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council • Pat Togher, Chief Officer, Glasgow City HSCP • Paul Ryan Non-Executive Director, NHSGGC and Vice Chair, Glasgow City Integration Joint Board • Sharon Wearing, Chief Finance Officer, Glasgow City HSCP • Kelda Gaffney, Interim Assistant Chief Officer, Adult Services & Interim Chief Social Work Officer Glasgow City HSCP • Dr Saket Priyadarshi, Associate Medical Director in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Alcohol and Drug Services <p>Photo opportunity</p>
9.05am	Tour of The Thistle	The Thistle	<p>Dr Saket Priyadarshi will then take the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary on a tour of The Thistle to include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary will have the opportunity to meet and speak to staff as below during the tour (20 minutes): <p>Photo opportunity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Service Manager • [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Operational Manager • [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Harm Reduction Worker • [redacted S.38(1)(b)], Social Worker 2. The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary will have the opportunity to have a private meeting with four Alcohol and

			<p>Drug Partnership (ADP) Lived and Living Experience Reference group members, supported by [redacted S.38(1)(b)] ADP Coordinator, and [redacted S.38(1)(b)] ADP Senior Officer. These meetings will take place within the two clinical rooms in The Thistle (20 minutes).</p> <p>Clinical Room 1 – [redacted S.38(1)(b)] Clinical Room 2 – [redacted S.38(1)(b)]</p> <p>Tour concludes</p>
9.45am	Media Interviews	The Thistle	<p>Media Interviews will take place in two separate areas within The Thistle.</p> <p>Green room – The two clinical rooms can be used prior to the media interviews.</p> <p>Media interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Swinney MSP, First Minister • Neil Gray MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care • Dr Saket Priyadarshi, Associate Medical Director in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Alcohol and Drug Services
11.00am	First Minister & Cabinet Secretary depart		Visit concludes

[redacted S.38(1)(b)]

Name	Associated Organisation
Dr Lesley Thomson KC	<p>Chair NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde</p> <p>Dr Lesley Thomson KC joined NHSGGC from NHS Lanarkshire where she served on the Board for five years as a Non-Executive Director and Vice Chair.</p> <p>Lesley had a long career in Law and was the Solicitor General for Scotland from 2011 to 2016. Prior to that, she worked as a Procurator Fiscal in many locations across Scotland including serving as Area Procurator Fiscal in Glasgow. In 2016 she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Law by the University of Glasgow.</p> <p>Lesley's previous Non-Executive career includes sport on the Board at Scottish Rugby and Education as a Lay Governor at Glasgow Caledonian University.</p> <p>Her other former roles include Commissioner of the Northern Lighthouse Board and member of the BBC audience council.</p> <p>Lesley has wide ranging experience of strategy development, leadership and collaborative working with partners across the public and third sectors. She is committed to putting people at the heart of the NHS and contributing to improving lives in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde area.</p>
Susan Aitken	<p>Leader of Glasgow City Council</p> <p>Susan Aitken was elected as Leader of Glasgow City Council in 2017, forming Glasgow's first ever SNP-led City Government. She was first elected as a councillor for the Langside ward in 2012, following a career in public policy and communications. Susan was reappointed to a second term as Council Leader following the 2022 Scottish Local Government elections.</p> <p>Under her leadership, Glasgow has hosted the UN Climate Summit COP26 and will host the Commonwealth Games in 2026. She was awarded Scottish Local Politician of the Year in 2019 for her work to end historic gender pay discrimination and Scottish Council Leader of the Year in 2021 for her leadership on climate issues. Susan was selected as one of 40 global city leaders for the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative Class of 2023. In February 2024, Susan was announced as chair of the global Resilient Cities Network.</p>
Jane Grant	<p>Chief Executive, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde</p> <p>Jane Grant was appointed as Chief Executive of Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board from 1st April 2017.</p> <p>Jane was previously the Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley for a period of three and a half years. Prior to joining NHS Forth Valley Ms Grant spent four and a half years as Chief Operating Officer for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.</p>

	<p>Ms Grant joined the NHS in 1983 as a Management Services Officer within Highland Health Board and early in her career worked in Stobhill Hospital as Deputy Administrator. In the early 1990s, she moved to Lanarkshire Health Board as Hospital Administrator within Hairmyres Hospital. Ms Grant then undertook a variety of posts within Lanarkshire, culminating in her appointment as General Manager of Hairmyres Hospital in 1999.</p> <p>Ms Grant moved back to Glasgow in 2000 to become the General Manager for Surgery in North Glasgow. She was appointed as Director of Surgery and Anaesthetics for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde in early 2006 and became the Board's Chief Operating Officer in 2009. She was appointed as Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley in October 2013.</p>
Allan Casey	<p>Councillor, Glasgow City Council</p> <p>Allan Casey was first elected as a councillor for the Dennistoun Ward in 2017 and was re-elected at the Local Government elections in 2022. Allan has served a number of roles in the council including being chairman of council ALEO City Building until 2022. Allan is currently the City Convener for Workforce & Homelessness & Addiction Services. Allan is also a member of the international Mayors Council on Homelessness.</p> <p>Before being elected Allan worked in Construction before taking up a role in politics, working in roles at both the Scottish Parliament & the House of Commons.</p>
Chris Cunningham	<p>Councillor, Glasgow City Council</p> <p>Chris joined Shettleston Housing Association as a Housing Officer in 1982, becoming Director in 1989. From 1989 to 2000 Chris served as a member of the Council of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations. He was Chair of the Federation from 1995 to 1998.</p> <p>Chris retired from Shettleston in September 2017, having been elected as the SNP Councillor for Garscadden/Scotstounhill in a by election in October 2016 and subsequently re-elected in the May 2017 Council elections. He served as Convener for Education, Skills and Early Years from 2017 to 2022. In May 2022 he became Convener for Health, Care & Caring and Older People. He is also Chair of the Glasgow IJB and a member of the Health Board.</p>
Susanne Millar	<p>Chief Executive, Glasgow City Council</p> <p>Susanne Millar became Chief Executive of Glasgow City Council in May 2024, after more than 30 years working for the city.</p> <p>She was previously Chief Officer of Glasgow's Health and Social Care Partnership, having spent her earlier career working in social work and social care services in the city – starting in residential care for older people, then working with vulnerable children and families.</p> <p>After holding strategy and planning roles, she became the Head of Children's Services and Head of Homelessness and Asylum Services.</p>

	<p>In 2012, Susanne became Assistant Director of Social Work Services in Glasgow, then Chief Officer for Planning, Strategy & Commissioning for the newly-formed Glasgow City HSCP.</p> <p>From 2019, Susanne led a team of more than 12,000 people as Chief Officer.</p>
Pat Togher	<p>Chief Officer, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership</p> <p>Pat Togher began his career in 1998 working in Addiction Services prior to moving to Glasgow in 2003 during the introduction of Community Addiction Teams before taking up the post as Service Manager in Children's Services in 2009.</p> <p>In 2014 Pat became Head of Service in North East Glasgow, initially holding responsibility for area team Social Work Services before commencing the position as Head of Children's Services.</p> <p>In 2019 Pat was appointed to the role of Assistant Chief Officer, Public Protection Complex Needs where he held responsibility for the City's Homelessness/Asylum Services, Emergency Social Work, Justice, Health and Social Care Connect, Complex Needs Services and strategic responsibility for adult and child protection.</p> <p>Pat left Glasgow in 2023 to commence the role of Chief Officer for Edinburgh City HSCP where he led on service improvement, organisational restructure and strategic planning.</p> <p>More recently Pat commenced the role as Chief Officer for Glasgow HSCP where he holds responsibility for operational and strategic planning for all delegated services.</p> <p>Pat graduated from Robert Gordon University with BA in Social Work and holds post graduate qualifications in addiction studies, business management and children's permanence planning arrangements.</p>
Paul Ryan	<p>Non Executive Director, NHSGGC and Vice Chair, Glasgow City Integration Joint Board</p> <p>Paul Ryan is appointed as a non-executive board member from 1st June 2021 until 31st May 2025.</p> <p>Paul qualified in Medicine in 1979, and after initial hospital training spent 40 years in general practice, predominantly in North East Glasgow. He retired from clinical practice in 2022.</p> <p>He is a previous chairman of Glasgow Local Medical Committee, and also chaired the West of Scotland Faculty of Royal College of General Practitioners, where he also served on Scottish and UK Councils.</p> <p>Paul Ryan is a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow and the Royal College of General Practitioners.</p>
Kelda Gafney	<p>Interim Assistant Chief Officer, Adult Services & Interim Chief Social Work Officer Glasgow City HSCP</p> <p>Kelda qualified as a Social Worker from Glasgow University in 2001 and began her career in North East Glasgow Children and Families Services. She moved to Addiction Services as a Service Manager in 2013, managing integrated health and social care teams. In 2021, Kelda took up the position of Head of Service with responsibility for a range of</p>

	<p>NHSGGC Specialist Mental Health Services, including the Perinatal service and Mother and Baby Unit, and Glasgow City Alcohol and Drug Recovery Services (ADRS).</p> <p>Kelda has led on the Unscheduled Care and Borderline Personality Disorder work streams of the Mental Health Strategy, and implementation of the Medicated Assisted Treatment Standards and Safer Drug Consumption Facility for ADRS. In May 2024, Kelda took up the interim Assistant Chief Officer with responsibility for health and social care Adult Services in Glasgow City HSCP and currently holds the Chief Social Work Officer role.</p>
Sharon Wearing	<p>Chief Finance Officer, Glasgow City HSCP</p> <p>Sharon Wearing qualified as an accountant in 1991 and worked for the National Audit Office for 6 years in Scotland. From 1992 to 1996 she worked in Strathclyde Region Internal Audit.</p> <p>Sharon moved to Glasgow City Council Social Work Services in 1996 as the Project Accountant for Resource Transfer and was the Community Care Finance Manager from 2000. She took up the post of Head of Finance from 2005 until her appointment as Head of Service Development in Social Work Services in 2007. Sharon undertook a secondment in 2009 as Head of Corporate Finance in Financial Services of Glasgow City Council returning to her post of Head of Service Development in 2010.</p> <p>In 2015 Sharon took up her current post of Chief Officer Finance and Resources for the Glasgow City IJB and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Sharon also chairs the national meeting of the CIPFA IJB CFO Section and works in partnership with the Scottish Government and Cosla in relation to the work of the IJBs/ Health and Social Care Partnerships.</p>
Dr Saket Priyadarshi	<p>Associate Medical Director in Greater Glasgow and Clyde Alcohol and Drug Services</p> <p>Dr Saket Priyadarshi is the Associate Medical Director in Greater Glasgow and Clyde alcohol and drug services. He is responsible for the professional leadership of medical staff and clinical governance in Alcohol and Drugs Recovery Services in the largest health board in Scotland. He has led on a number of service developments in Glasgow, including Scotland's first Heroin Assisted Treatment service in 2019 and the Safer Drug Consumption Facility, planned to open in early 2025.</p> <p>He is a graduate of the University of Glasgow medical school and qualified as a General Practitioner in 2003. Through working in deprived areas in the west of Scotland, he developed an interest in the management of substance misuse problems. Saket is a member of the Glasgow city Alcohol Drug Partnership. Saket has been a member of various Scottish Government advisory committees in relation to drug policy and has worked with the European Monitoring Committee on Drugs and Drugs Addiction. He is involved in research and holds</p>

	Honorary positions at Glasgow Caledonian University and University of Glasgow.
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The First Minister and Cabinet Secretary will also have an opportunity to meet with members of the Glasgow City ADP Lived and Living Experience Reference group who helped with the planning and implementation of the facility.

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Background

Safer drug consumption facilities (SDCFs) are hygienic environments where pre-obtained drugs can be consumed under clinical supervision. They are also able to provide people who inject drugs with sterile injecting equipment, advice on injecting technique and access to other health and social services.

The SDCF will also be able to provide medical attention in the case of an overdose. In that eventuality they are able to provide naloxone, a drug which reverses an opioid overdose. Within the facility there will also be a defibrillator to use in the case of a cardiac arrest and the availability of oxygen to be used in the case of respiratory depression, both of which are associated with cocaine overdoses.

The aims of SDCFs are to:

- Reduce drug-related overdose deaths
- Reduce the transmission of blood-borne diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C
- Reduce injection-related wounds and infections
- Reach people who inject drugs and who might otherwise not engage with any type of treatment service
- Benefit the surrounding community by reducing drug-related litter and the visibility of public drug use.
- Gain valuable insight into trends and patterns in drug use
- Engage with people who use drugs and connect them with addiction treatment services.

Legal Barriers

The establishment of an SDCF in the UK has, until now, not been possible due to the manner in which it operates contravening certain aspects of the Misuse of Drugs Act. This includes examples such as individuals being in possession of controlled drugs and the supply of articles for the administering or preparing of drugs.

Following advice from the previous Lord Advocate, relating to an earlier proposal from Glasgow, that a change in legislation at a UK level be required in order to set up an SDCF, Scottish Government Ministers made numerous approaches to the previous UK Government to seek their agreement for a pilot, without success.

Only when the current Lord Advocate set out her position, that she would be prepared to provide a statement of prosecution policy which would state that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute individuals for possession of a substance within the Glasgow facility, did the previous UK Government agree that they wouldn't stand in the way of a pilot being done.

Evidence

SDCFs are currently in use in an estimated 18 countries around the world, including the USA, Canada, Australia and numerous European locations.

Research and evaluation from these existing SDCFs has found consistent evidence of the effectiveness of these facilities in reducing harms associated with drug use. These evaluations show that these facilities:

- Contribute to lower rates of fatal overdoses
- Reduce rates of infection transmission
- Reduce levels of public drug consumption and publicly discarded drug-related litter

Based on this international evidence there have been calls to have SDCFs established in the UK from a number of different bodies and committees, including:

- UK Government's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD, 2016) - *The ACMD recommends that consideration be given – by the governments of each UK country... to reduce DRDs and other harms through the provision of medically-supervised drug consumption clinics in localities with a high concentration of injecting drug use.'*
- UKG Scottish Affairs Committee (2019) - *We recommend that the UK Government brings forward the legislation necessary to allow for the lawful establishment of a pilot safe consumption facility in Scotland.*
- UKG Health and Social Care Committee (2019) - *Drug Consumption Rooms should be introduced on a pilot basis in areas of high need, accompanied by robust evaluation of their outcomes. If changes to current legislation are required to facilitate the piloting of DCRs, they should be made at the earliest opportunity and the Government must set out where the barriers exist to these evidence-based approaches being taken forward.*

Glasgow SDCF

- Glasgow HSCP have been working for some years to introduce an SDCF in the city. They first identified a need for such a facility in 2016 following a health needs assessment of people who injected drugs in the city centre ([Taking Away the Chaos - 2016](#)) which highlighted an increase in HIV transmissions amongst people injecting drugs in the city.
- An earlier proposal (2017) to the then Lord Advocate to establish an SDCF in the city was rejected on the basis that the proposal asked too much of the Lord Advocate. At that time he said that in order for a facility to operate on the basis set out, a change in the law at UK level would be required.
- Given the nature of the operation of such a facility (essentially that people will be bringing illegal substances for consumption) and how it contravenes the Misuse of Drugs Act (MoD), significant engagement took place with the previous UK Government to seek their agreement on a pilot facility – this was refused on a number of occasions.
- Following the launch of the Scottish Governments national mission to reduce drug deaths and harms in 2021, the Minister for Drugs Policy at the time set out her commitment to the establishment of an SDCF in Glasgow and asked that a new proposal be brought forward for consideration by the new Lord Advocate. The Lord Advocate also set out her willingness to consider a new proposal in a statement to the Justice Committee in November 2021.
- Given that statement from the Lord Advocate, alongside the reluctance from the (then) UK Government, work was undertaken by Glasgow HSCP alongside Crown Office and Police Scotland colleagues, facilitated by Scottish Government officials, to develop a proposal for an SDCF which the Lord Advocate would be able to support.

- Through this work it was identified that an SDCF would be able to operate, with some limitations, if the Lord Advocate were able to provide a statement of prosecution policy (SPP) which would set out that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute individuals for the possession of substances within the facility.
- Once completed a proposal was shared with the Lord Advocate in June 2022 and she confirmed in September 2023 that she would be prepared to offer an SPP ([COPFS Statement on pilot safer drug consumption facility](#)).
- Work then commenced to establish a facility in Glasgow. This required some essential building work to modify the Hunter Street location alongside necessary staff recruitment and training.
- An initial opening date of 21 October 2024 was announced, however, due to essential water testing (as it is a new NHS facility) this opening was delayed until the new date of 13 January.
- Glasgow wrote (16 August) to the Lord Advocate to request that final SPP and confirmation has been provided by COPFS colleagues that this will be provided prior to opening. It is expected that the Lord Advocate will write to the Glasgow HSCP with details of the SPP on 9 January with the final SPP being published on the COPFS website.

Limitations

- In addition to Glasgow, Edinburgh are now exploring the possibility of introducing an SDCF [redacted S.30(b)(ii)]. However, given the constraints of the MoD Act, the situation for those cities around the introduction of such a facility would be the same and any proposals for other SDCFs would need to undertake the same significant work and engagement with the Scottish Government, Police Scotland and COPFS
- Furthermore, despite the agreed SPP from the Lord Advocate there still remain limitations to what such a facility can provide. For example, under the MoD Act it is illegal for a person to supply equipment which may be used for taking drugs e.g. tourniquets [*Note – Injecting Equipment Provision services within the facility will run as normal.*] so users of the facility will need to supply their own.
- Also, whilst the Lord Advocate's SPP would state it would not be in the public interest to prosecute individuals within the facility, this would not extend to individuals on their way to and from the SDCF.
- [redacted S.30(b)(ii)].

DRUG CONSUMPTION FACILITIES – Q&A

ANNEX D

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

FINANCE - Q&A

ANNEX E

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

NRS DRUG RELATED DEATH STATISTICS 2023 (published August 2024)

[redacted S.25(1)]

[Drug-related deaths in Scotland in 2023 - National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#)

SUSPECTED DRUG DEATH FIGURES (December 2024)

[redacted S.25(1)]

[Suspected drug deaths in Scotland: July to September 2024,](#)

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

The Thistle SDCF will be located at the Hunter Street facility in Glasgow which already hosts a range of services. This includes the Enhanced Drug Treatment Service where heroin-assisted treatment is provided. It will also be the location for Glasgow's planned drug checking service.

ENHANCED DRUG TREATMENT (HEROIN-ASSISTED TREATMENT)

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

DRUG CHECKING

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

BACKGROUND

- The drug checking research project was a two-year programme, funded through the Drug Deaths Taskforce, to explore how best to establish drug checking in Scotland.
- It was taken forward by Stirling University and completed in May 2023. The project is now moving towards implementation.
- This is the first time an option like this for drug checking has been proposed and, therefore, there are several areas which needed to be considered.

DETAILS OF FACILITIES

- Through the research work carried out, the 3 pilot cities for drug checking facilities have been identified (Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee) but the research also showed the need for a national hub to be established.
- Through the research project a variety of models were explored which could be adapted and implemented within Scotland.
- The national hub will provide the ability to re-test samples from the city drug checking sites, confirm the identity of compounds and quality check the results supplied by the sites, meaning that they can establish levels of accuracy and error margins, and assess limitations from the city drug checking sites.
- Once the hub has been set up, they will be able to consider the feasibility of a 'WEDINOS' type service for drug checking.

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

[redacted S.30(b)(ii)]

On Thursday 9 January, COPFS colleagues wrote to Glasgow HSCP, Police Scotland Chief Constable and the Parliamentary joint committees with an interest in drugs policy (Health, Social Care and Sport, Criminal Justice and Social Justice and Social Security) to outline her statement of prosecution policy in relation to the operation of the safer drug consumption facility. Copies of these letters have been attached separately.

The Lord Advocate has also provided that statement of prosecution policy which will also be published on the COPFS website on 9 January 2025. A copy of the statement is below.

Statement of Prosecution Policy

[redacted S.25(1)]

[Drug consumption room statement of prosecution policy | COPFS](#)