

Harm Reduction: New Westminster's Experience

Union of BC Municipalities
September 12, 2022



NEW WESTMINSTER

Facing a Crisis

Area and statistic	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
New Westminster - deaths	10	24	36	20	37	43
New Westminster - death rate	13.4	31.7	46.8	24.9	44.8	51.9
British Columbia - deaths	993	1,495	1,562	984	1,775	2,264
British Columbia - death rate	20.4	30.3	31.2	19.3	34.5	43.6

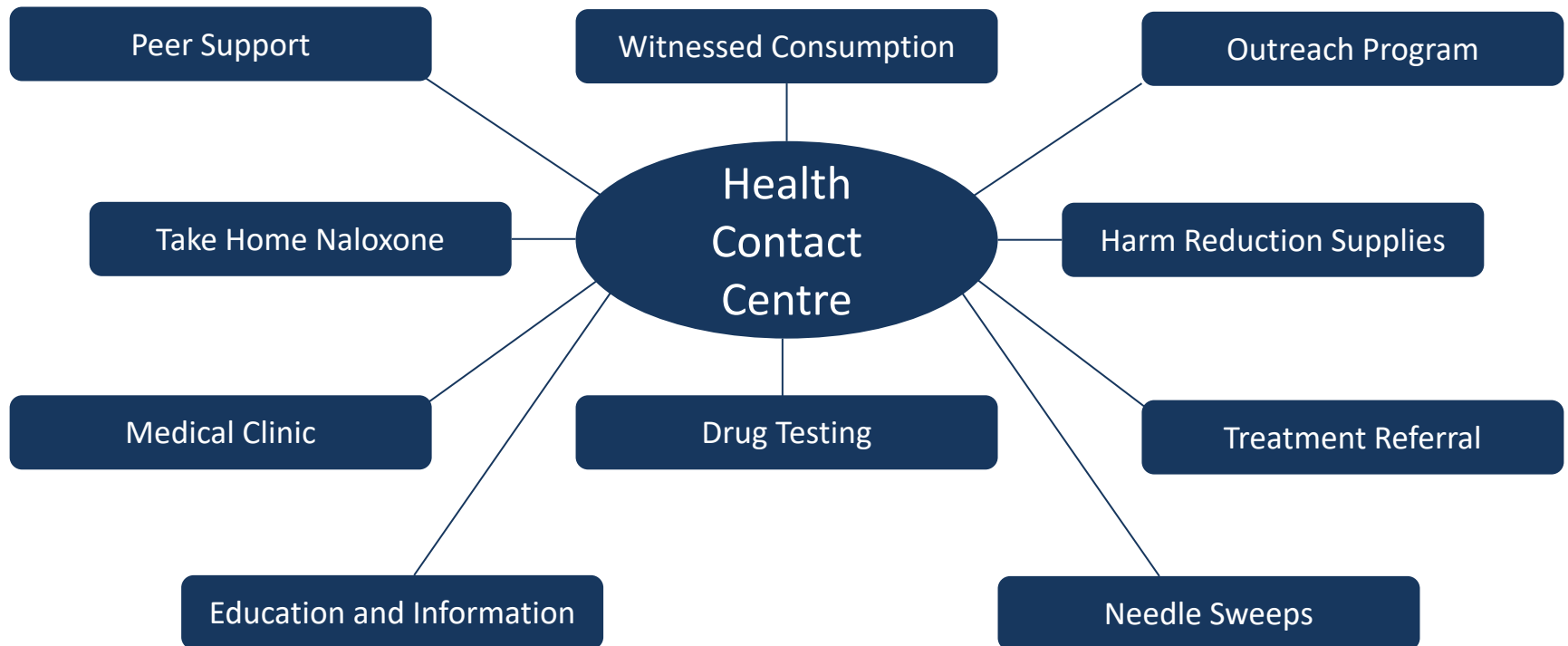
Facing a Crisis



Regulatory Challenges



Services Offered



Feedback Received

Supportive Views

- decrease overdoses and overdose related deaths
- decrease public drug use
- reduce the number of discarded needles
- contribute to addressing social issues in the Downtown

Opposing Views

- attract people struggling with addiction from other municipalities
- encourage or facilitate illicit drug use
- negatively impact public safety, and potentially increase crime
- result in people congregating in the area prior to the centre opening or in its vicinity after they have consumed drugs
- contribute to a further concentration of social services in the Downtown

Safeguards

- Qualified Non-Profit Operator
- Contract Outlining Specific Performance Deliverables
- Neighbourhood Risk Mitigation Plan
- Adequate Staffing
- Regular Communication with Downtown BIA and Residents' Association
- Neighbourhood Advisory Committee

Impacts to Date

Between April 6, 2021 and July 31, 2022, the Health Contact Centre (HCC) had:

- **5,621** HCC staff outreach interactions
 - **2,177** total visits accessing witnessed consumption at HCC
 - **97** toxic drug events at HCC
 - **23** toxic drug events responded to by HCC staff in surrounding area
 - **0** toxic drug deaths for events responded to by HCC staff
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- **5,053** smoking harm reduction kits distributed
 - **3,604** injection harm reduction kits distributed
 - **1,810** take home naloxone kits distributed
 - **675** referrals to a variety of services, including detox and recovery

Potential Benefits

- Decreased Number of Overdoses and Overdose Deaths for Those Using HCC
- Decreased Number of Discarded Needles
- Increased Initiation of Substance Use Treatment
- Reduced Hepatitis C and HIV Transmission
- Reduced Number of People Using Substances in Public
- Reduced demand on Bylaw Enforcement, Fire and Police

Mounting Evidence



Moving Forward

The City's new Homelessness Action Strategy includes the following actions related to the Health Contact centre:

- extended hours for the Health Contact Centre – i.e., 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- an inhalation site as part of the Health Contact Centre, or at another site in conjunction with the Centre



The City is working towards a pilot project to identify persons at high risk of death from a toxic drug overdose and potentially referring them to available harm reduction services.