What is it?

A Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO) is a community sentence available to Scottish courts for people aged over sixteen whose offending is linked to problematic drug use.

DTTOs combine structured drug treatment, regular drug testing and intensive social work supervision to support recovery, address offending behaviour, and reduce the risk of further offending.

DTTOs recognise that punishment alone may not address the factors driving offending behaviour. The order allows people to remain in their community while receiving support and being held accountable for complying with court-imposed requirements.

Why it matters

Problematic drug use can have significant impacts on individuals, families, and communities. It is often associated with poor physical and mental health, homelessness, financial difficulties, social exclusion, and involvement in the justice system.

For some individuals, offending behaviour is closely linked to substance use. Scotland's public health approach recognises that treatment, recovery, and support can help address the underlying causes of offending and improve outcomes.

Scotland's prisons continue to experience significant population pressures. DTTOs provide a robust community-based alternative to custody, helping people address problematic drug use while supporting rehabilitation and public safety.

Further Resources

Scottish Government: Drug Treatment and Testing Orders Guidance.

Justice Social Work Statistics Scotland.

Partnership Delivery Team (01294 32264) or Community Justice Ayrshire Partnership for information on DTTO delivery in Ayrshire.



Key Facts

- DTTOs can last between six months and three years.
- In 2024/25, 45 DTTOs were imposed in Ayrshire.
- Tens of thousands of people in Scotland experience problematic drug use, making it a significant public health and community justice challenge.

How it works

When a court is considering a DTTO, an assessment is carried out to determine whether a person's drug use is linked to their offending and whether they are suitable for the order. Once imposed, the order typically includes:

- Structured drug treatment.
- Regular and random drug testing.
- Intensive supervision by Justice Social Work.
- Regular court reviews.
- Multi-agency support to address risks and wider needs, for example:
  - Housing.
  - Physical and mental health.
  - Employability.
  - Finances and welfare.
  - Family relationships.

The level of court involvement means that progress can be recognised and celebrated, while any concerns or non-compliance can be addressed quickly. Failure to comply with the order may result in the individual being returned to court.

Key Messages

- Problematic drug use can be a significant factor in offending behaviour, impacting individuals, families, and communities.
- DTTOs help address the underlying causes of offending through treatment, recovery, and tailored support.
- DTTOs support Scotland's public health approach to substance use and recovery.
- DTTOs balance accountability, court oversight and rehabilitation, requiring sustained engagement to achieve positive and lasting change.
- Community-based alternatives to custody can improve outcomes for individuals while contributing to safer communities.
- Effective partnership working is essential to achieving positive outcomes and reducing barriers to recovery.

Your role

Recovery is supported by strong communities. Promoting understanding, reducing stigma, and encouraging people to seek help can contribute to positive change and safer communities.

Community justice partners can support individuals subject to a DTTO by:

Understanding that people on DTTOs often experience multiple and complex needs.

Working collaboratively with partner agencies to support recovery and reduce barriers to progress.

Promoting understanding, reducing stigma, and encouraging engagement with support services where appropriate.

CommunityJustice Ayrshire Partnership