

Surrey County Council and Guildford Action

Guildford has always seen a relatively high number of rough sleepers in Surrey. Once the pandemic hit and the government ordered 'everyone in', there were justified concerns that we may begin see higher risk-taking activities by those injecting drugs. The begging opportunities in the high street were gone and there was an initial increased desire to engage in treatment. This was positive, however the drug treatment service was coping with new pressures and its outreach capacity was over stretched and not able to fully focus upon naloxone provision. With so many people in all kinds of emergency accommodation still using drugs, the risk of overdose was much increased.

Guildford Action has been a stalwart day service in the town for the last 40 years, supporting those who are homeless to engage with pertinent health services as well meeting basic needs with hot food, shower facilities, good company and love. More recently they had begun to offer and develop a needle and syringe programme due to community kick-back to the high street pharmacy needle syringe programme (NSP), as there had been a spate of begging, shoplifting and other antisocial behaviours that were 'associated' with the rough sleeper community (however, not all justified). Guildford Action offering NSP from the day centre 'out of town' was a welcome solution to the local community opposition.

As the pandemic progressed, the day centre was unable to open with the usual offer of refuge. However, the team continued to work in a new outreach approach, offering continuity of support and engaging with the people that they knew so well. The team were trusted and welcomed by these individuals and the possibility to provide naloxone while doing this work seemed like too big an opportunity to be missed.

The first obstacle we faced when pursuing this idea was that, although commissioned to provide NSP by the local authority, the service didn't have any clinical staff on the team and professionals within the public health team were not at ease with a drug being provided by a homeless day service with no clinical oversight. The obvious solution was to find a way to link them into the drug treatment service. However, the drug service was an NHS organisation with strict policies and procedures. We needed to respond quickly and knew that this route would throw up too many governance hoops, causing delays, while we were looking for an immediate solution.

A plea for ideas was put out on Twitter to contemporaries around the country to help. Colleagues from Durham and Wales immediately responded and, after putting several heads together, we collectively came up with a plan which was developed with some additional legal assurance from our friends at [Release](#). The local GP surgery who provided an enhanced primary care service to the homeless community were approached and agreed to be their clinical partner. A new service-level agreement was written with the standard operating procedure ratified by the surgery's pharmacist – and with that, the new service was launched.

Guildford Action have gone from strength to strength and are a model of naloxone good practice. They will go to whatever lengths they can to get naloxone to where it is needed. They have provided more than 70 kits into the community, to those that inject drugs as well as to family, friends, carers, front line workers and local retailers. They are the only service in Surrey to offer a choice of both intramuscular and nasal naloxone. They have developed a successful overdose awareness and naloxone training programme that they have rolled out to services across the county. Once a week, they support the hepatitis nurses in their outreach van by providing kits and training.

Other initiatives include running naloxone cafes and distributing rocks with QR codes that link to an [overdose awareness video page](#) on the Healthy Surrey website. They are currently developing a peer-

to-peer naloxone programme and are also engaging in talks with Timpson's to train their staff in all their high street stores.