

## **Damian Brewer, London Borough of Croydon**

During a short period at the end of August 2021 and early September, there was unfortunately a series of drug related deaths, and multiple overdoses in the Croydon borough area, due to an undetermined substance, suspected to be fentanyl or Iso (Isotonitazene).

As a result of this, the Director of Public Health, Rachel Flowers, was able to convene a series of urgent meetings with a range of local stakeholders including our community substance misuse services, the Met Police, our local hospital, Croydon Health Services, and other partners who work closely with our residents who are potentially at risk of taking heroin, or heroin like substances.

The community outreach team immediately responded by extending their hours into the evening and visiting hot spot areas in the borough where people were and issuing naloxone kits, with training and health and overdose awareness advice. Also visited were the hostels to ensure individuals had kits and knew how to use them. The advice, training and issue of kits became wider than people who injected heroin as reports showed that people smoking substances were also equally at risk. This was an important message to distribute to ensure service users did not think that they were someone who 'did not need a kit because I don't inject'. We were able to quickly develop a training plan to roll out "Naloxone Lite" training via MS Teams, which explained what to do if someone came across someone who was overdosing, and how to administer the Naloxone kits. As a result of this, we set up 5 training sessions (partners only needed to attend one), and up to 100 people were able to be trained. After attending one of these training sessions, people were able to visit the drug service premises to pick up their naloxone kit which meant a more immediate access to naloxone for professionals working with people using drugs. This training provision massively increased the rate of access and awareness amongst a wide range of organisations across the Borough. As a result of this, the network of people engaged with our substance misuse service has greatly increased, and we have a team of trained people.

There were initial supply issues of nasal Naloxone due to the increased demand so we asked neighbouring boroughs if they had any spare and were able to source a small number of kits to tide us over until we received our order.

At the time of writing, there had been no more drug related deaths since.

Future plans around this work stream is to reinvigorate the Drug and Alcohol related deaths panel, review our LDIS (Local Drug Information System) processes, and working in partnership and sharing resources with our neighbouring South East London boroughs (Sutton, Bexley and Bromley), and also with support from OHID.

With the success of the weekly 'Lite' training sessions, these will be continued along with the promotion of availability to all of naloxone kits.

With a brand new service substance misuse provider in place, there are plans to further develop the needle exchange scheme delivered by community pharmacists to include a naloxone kit within the needle exchange packs as a way to get kits to people who are not engaged in treatment.