



Date: 15th July

INTERNATIONAL REMEMBRANCE DAY - 21st JULY

21st July is recognised internationally as a day to remember those who have died as a direct, or indirect, result of substance misuse.

International Remembrance Day is held in many cities and countries around the world.

Birmingham Drug & Alcohol Action Team (BDAAT) and local treatment services across the City will be holding commemorative events and activities to remember friends and colleagues who have passed away. The day will give substance users, their families, friends and those who work in the substance misuse field, an opportunity to come together and pay tribute to those who have died.

To mark the occasion Inclusion Community Drug Team and Addaction, two of Birmingham's leading drug treatment services, have teamed up and will redesign their reception area in memory of those who have lost their lives. Harm reduction information and advice will also be displayed in the main foyer area to remind service users of the importance of seeking help and adopting safer using practices.

A symbolic branch tree will also be placed in the reception area of the two services. Anyone who has lost someone they care about through substance misuse will be invited to write a message and hang it from the tree in their memory. This area will create a peaceful environment for service users and will provide the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the day.

Sharon Wain, Service Manager for Addaction, said, "We hope this will help to reinforce the message that by engaging in treatment services, you (substance misusers) are on the right path to tackling drug use".

The treatment service 'SAFE', will be scattering black poppy seeds to pay tribute to the people who died last year in Birmingham through a drug or alcohol related death. They will also be educating service users what to do when they see that someone has overdosed, by teaching people how to do the recovery position.

Emma Barrie, Methadone Clinic Manager at SAFE, said "Teaching this straightforward procedure could save many peoples lives, and hopefully by training the users in our service they will go on to teach peers, so more people will know what they can do to help if a person over doses.

Birmingham's service user and drug using community will be holding a joint event at Turning Point Zepher, another of Birmingham's treatment services. At the event they will be unveiling a plaque to remember loved ones but also to celebrate and recognise the people who are tackling their drug use by engaging in the drug and alcohol treatment services across the city.

Approximately 30 people each year in Birmingham die because of a drug related death and many more die due to alcohol related conditions. Birmingham Drug & Alcohol Action Team (BDAAT) is constantly working hard to help individuals into treatment services. It commissions a variety of harm reduction interventions to help reduce the sometimes fatal consequences associated with drug and alcohol use. These include:

- Needle exchange services across the city (which help to reduce the risk of individuals contracting blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis C and HIV); and
- A new confidential text network facility designed to inform drug users of any contaminated batches of drugs which are reported to be in the area.

Jenni Northcote, DAAT Strategic Lead, said, "This day provides an opportunity for commissioners, those working in the drugs field, service users and local communities to not only reflect with sadness on lives lost to drug and alcohol misuse, but to also celebrate and support the increasing numbers of individuals who make the decision to address their drug or alcohol misuse."

A one minute silence will be held on 21st July at midday by all staff within the Birmingham Drug & Alcohol Action Team, and by the treatment services across the city.

For information and advice about drug and alcohol treatment services within Birmingham, call the free helpline on 0800 073 0817.

END

Notes to Editors

1. Please contact Christie Galloway on 0121 465 4942 for further information
2. Please contact Tony Mercer on 0121 456 4961 for further information on drug related deaths in Birmingham
3. The Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team is part of the Safer Birmingham Partnership, a multi-agency organisation that includes West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Fire Service, Birmingham Primary Care Trusts, Third Sector Assembly, Probation Service and a range of other agencies. Safer Birmingham Partnership ensures the delivery of a range of community safety activity which is aimed at making Birmingham even safer.