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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE  
NEEDS OF FEMALE DRUG  
USERS & SEX WORKERS  
IN CROYDON**

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***A REPORT FOR MAINLINERS  
BY NICOLA PRUSS***

***August 2003***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mainliners are currently reviewing and reappraising their work in the borough of Croydon with the aim of focusing specifically upon women's services. It has long been recognised that women are under represented in drugs services nationally and Croydon is no exception. Consequently Mainliners are proposing the development of new services that will better cater for drug using women's needs.

This needs assessment explores avenues to develop appropriate support services for generic drug using women living in the borough of Croydon. These services will expand upon and compliment the work of other Croydon based services. It also investigates ways in which Mainliners can improve and advance their current services for Croydon based women involved in the sex industry.

The research for this needs assessment was carried out in July 2003. Eight key agencies were visited for this needs assessment. And a further eleven individuals were contacted and asked to complete an in-depth interview over the telephone. These individuals included probation workers, hostel workers, domestic violence workers and workers from refugee projects. Brief telephone contact was made with a variety of other relevant services in order to address particular questions.

Fifteen other agencies and community groups, including family centres, resident associations and women's groups were contacted by email. The email response rate was low with only two replies being received, these being from New Addington Women's Centre and Longheath Community Care and Church Centre. None of the refugee services or women's community groups contacted claimed to have any drug using women amongst their client group. .

Additionally five Croydon based sex workers were interviewed at Mainliners Working Women's Clinic.

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## **OVERVIEW OF GENERIC SERVICES IN CROYDON**

Drug users in Croydon are currently served by two key drugs projects, The Oaks Resource Centre and Croydon Community Drugs Agency (Cranstoun). Neither of these projects run any specific women's sessions, although Cranstoun has been looking at starting a women's drop in. Drug using women are also accessing two main day centres, one within Croydon - The Croydon Resource Centre, and one on the border of Croydon - The Spires Day Centre.

The Oaks is a statutory community prescribing service in Thornton Heath. Clients are seen on an appointment basis within the core hours of nine am to five pm. There is presently a two to four month wait for an assessment. The Oaks employs six female members of staff and has facilities for women to attend with children. According to statistical data from July 2002 to June 2003 women make up 30% of The Oaks client base, with an average of seventy seven women seen per quarter.

Croydon clients wishing to access substitute prescribing can also attend Kaleidoscope in Kingston. In 2002 this project had twelve women from Croydon on a methadone programme, compared to forty men. Clients from Croydon are transferred back to The Oaks when a slot becomes available.

Cranstoun CDA's main base is in Cherry Orchard Road, East Croydon. They also run drop in sessions in Thornton Heath, New Addington and Norbury. Women are able to bring children into the project but few do. Similarly to The Oaks approximately a third of Cranstoun's clients are women, with around thirty two women seen each quarter. Cranstoun have started to see younger women attending their drop ins as well as some sex workers who are living in crack houses and squats. Part of Cranstoun's remit is to look at ways to attract women and Black and Minority Ethnic clients into services. Bringing more women into Cranstoun's services is something manager Kenzie Walker-Chong perceives to be a priority.

The Croydon Resource Centre (CRC) is a centrally located church based project catering for unemployed adults. Drop in sessions run every weekday from nine am to four pm. Although service users are predominantly male CRC sees a considerable amount of women. In April 2003 114 individual women attended the centre compared to 779 men, a figure consistent with other months.

Manager Julie Fraser reports that most of CRC's female clients are homeless or hidden homeless, primarily living in Local Authority temporary accommodation, hostels, squats or crack houses. A large proportion are also substance users, mainly of alcohol, heroin and crack and some have mental health issues. The majority of female clients presenting at the centre have Criminal Justice issues and many have dependant children in the care of a family member or Social Services.

The Spires Centre, located on the Streatham/Croydon border is also a church based project, which runs as a day centre. The women's space, held every Friday morning, sees around nine women from Croydon on a regular basis. All of these women are homeless or hidden homeless and the majority have current or past substance use issues and/or mental health issues. Some of the women seen are sex workers who come into Lambeth to work. Workers from Streatham Streetlink, a service specifically catering for female street sex workers in Lambeth, attend the Women's Space. They are able to offer advice and on going support to sex workers and will work with women living in Croydon. Women can bring children into the Spires Centre on a Friday.

Mainliners have a well established relationship and a history of joint working with all of these services, particularly with The Oaks where we have run satellite sessions for many years. A Mainliners worker currently attends The Spires Women's Space and the Mainliners Croydon Housing Worker conducts a weekly satellite session at The Oaks, Cranstoun and CRC.



Mainliners Croydon Housing Service was established in November 2002 in order to work with Croydon residents who are using drugs and suffering housing problems. The service assists up to eight women at any one time. Between January and June 2003 twenty female referrals were made to the housing worker, Yvette Hector. The women's key drugs of choice were heroin, crack and alcohol, many were suffering from physical and mental health problems, including Hepatitis C and HIV and two of the women were suffering from domestic violence. Five clients were either current or ex sex workers. Forty nine male referrals have also been made to this service in the last six months.



## **MAIN FINDINGS – GENERIC SERVICES**

All of the agencies spoken to reported a rise in female crack users accessing their services, in particular women in their early twenties. The rise of crack use amongst women was seen to be problematic as these clients are presenting as extremely chaotic and with multiple needs.

In addition to issues surrounding their substance use agencies identified the key needs of drug using women as housing issues, criminal justice issues and health problems. Secondary concerns were seen to be benefit problems, childcare problems and domestic violence issues.

Housing issues were recognised as a major problem with fairer and better access to housing for drug using women highlighted as a priority. Many workers expressed concern over the amount of women disclosing that they live in crack houses. This environment is unhealthy and dangerous. Women in crack houses are extremely vulnerable and are susceptible to high levels of violence and rape. It is therefore crucial that this group have access to services that can cater for their needs.

Crack houses in Croydon are mainly located on certain estates in the New Addington area and in Thornton Heath. There are a cluster of crack houses in Brigstock and Parchmore Roads, two main roads leading to Thornton Heath railway station. Women are sex working out of these crack houses and in these and surrounding streets. The general consensus between workers is that the continued heavy police presence in Brixton and Streatham has meant that many women are coming into Thornton Heath to sex work, seeing it is being less risky in terms of arrest. The recent crack house closures in Lambeth may have also displaced some women. Women living in these crack houses will come in and out to find customers as and when they need the money. This swift and sporadic way of working means that the women are not highly visible on the streets.

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Police confirm that there has been a rise in street sex work activity in the Croydon area, but will not disclose specific locations or figures. In October 2002 a NACRO Report identified Thornton Heath as an expanding drugs hot spot, due to its close proximity to Lambeth. The report also claimed that women were working in this area.<sup>1</sup> Women are also visible sex working at East and West Croydon railway stations, with some also going down to Gatwick Airport in search of customers.

Hostel spaces in Croydon are extremely limited meaning that agencies are principally dependant on the Local Authority providing temporary accommodation for their clients. Croydon Council's Resettlement and Temporary Accommodation teams were seen to be very helpful and resourceful. However the Housing Advice Unit (formerly The Homeless Person's Unit) was criticised by many professionals as being unresponsive and difficult to communicate with. Drug using clients are perceived to be treated badly by this team and reportedly refused accommodation even when they were clearly in priority need as defined under The Housing Act of 2002.

It appears that few referrals for drug users are either being made or being accepted by hostels in Croydon. Croydon Housing Aid occasionally sees drug using women whom they refer to ARP. ARP runs The Croydon Direct Access Hostel, which has thirteen beds. They employ a Substance Use worker, Nick Toth, who currently works with two female drug users living in the hostel. Two poly users of heroin and crack are on the waiting list.

The YMCA operates two key hostels in Croydon. Lansdowne Road hostel has 100 beds with thirty two designated to women and The Alex Club has 105 beds and houses thirty four women. Mixed hostels are not an ideal environment for women. Female drug users commonly need a high level of support and find hostel culture, which is often male dominated, difficult to exist in. Women in mixed hostels are also prone to being preyed on by unsuspricious male

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<sup>1</sup> Andell et al. "Croydon Class A Drugs Market Study" October 2002.

residents. Additionally women find it difficult to address their drug use in a hostel environment, especially if other drug users are living on the premises. Workers at both the YMCA hostels claim that none of their residents (male or female) are substance users. Obviously they would be wary of disclosing such information yet Yvette Hector (Mainliners Housing Worker) works with drug using clients residing in both of these hostels.

Other key housing providers in Croydon are Croydon Churches Housing Association, which holds five beds for women and CAYSH Housing Association. CAYSH offers low level supported housing to young men and women aged 16-25. They have 28 female bed spaces in houses located in across Croydon and South Norwood. They can also accommodate two pregnant women at any one time. All their referrals come through Connexions. They report that they will accept young women who are ex drug users and now clean but will not accept active drug users as they cannot provide the high level of support that these clients require.

Women who are substance users and suffering domestic violence also have few options. Refuges in all areas are reluctant to house drug using women. Croydon's Women's Aid runs three refuges in the Croydon area but report that their policy is not to house drug using women as they present too much of a risk to other residents and their children living on the premises. They also state that they have had no referrals for drug using women recently, which is probably reflective of their current policy.

It was also pointed out that women are continually leaving hospital, prison and detoxification units with no suitable housing or aftercare in place.

Homeless people in Croydon are also served by Nightwatch. Nightwatch attend The Queens Gardens, central Croydon, every evening from 9.30-10.30pm. They provide hot drinks, soup, sandwiches and support to those living on the streets. Judd Adam, the organisations Chair contends that around three drug using

women access the service regularly and other drug using women are seen on a more sporadic basis. He assumes that some of these women are living in crack houses but acknowledges that this is not information they would necessarily reveal. Nightwatch workers also visit and support clients living in temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts and hostels, and in squats.

Therefore housing options and services for homeless and hidden homeless female drug users in Croydon are extremely limited. One solution to this huge gap in service provision would be the establishment of a high support female only hostel in Croydon. Such a hostel would need to accept drug users and be sympathetic to their needs.

Croydon Drug Action Team are aware of the lack of suitable housing for drug users of both sexes and are addressing this issue as a matter of urgency. They are considering setting up a steering group attended by relevant professionals, who may be able to suggest solutions to this on going problem.

The agencies consulted stated that their female clients were funding their drug use by shoplifting, credit card fraud, selling drugs, sex working and begging. Richard Jolley, manager of Croydon Crime Reduction Initiatives Arrest Referral Scheme has recently noticed a significant increase in the amount of referrals for crack using women. Approximately fifteen percent of the team's referrals are female and these women are predominantly crack using prolific shoplifters. The team has also seen a rise in their contact with female clients who are sleeping in crack houses.

Drug using women entering the criminal justice system are seen as having few options. The current Drug Treatment and Testing Order system in Croydon was perceived by many workers to be failing women. As no women's group is in place women are forced to attend groups dominated by men, often causing them to drop out of the programme. Workers also criticised the system for making it inaccessible to women with dependant children. Presently two women are on a

DTTO programme in Croydon as opposed to twenty eight men. Henry Mullholland the DTTO worker based at Wandle Road Probation Centre is aware of these problems and would like to see a new groups model developed incorporating women's only groups. He feels that this would give women the space to share their own issues, something they are reluctant to do in front of men.

Drug using women who are presenting to services are often doing so in exceptionally poor health. Drug users are discouraged from attending Accident and Emergency Departments due to previous or perceived poor treatment. Furthermore homeless drug users rarely have a GP meaning that their access to primary health care is limited. Some workers mentioned that that they would like to have the resources to enable them to accompany clients to hospital and advocate on their behalf. The fact that there are no female support groups for HIV and Hepatitis C positive women in Croydon was also cited.

Pregnant drug users in Croydon can attend The Maple Clinic at The Mayday Hospital, which is run in conjunction with The Oaks. This weekly clinic works with pregnant drug or alcohol users and their partners and is currently seeing eight pregnant drug users and a further three who have recently given birth. These women are users of alcohol, crack, heroin and methadone. Women who access this clinic are supported throughout their pregnancy and post natal for six months.

All agencies were asked what services they would like to see developed for female drug users in Croydon. All pointed out that improving access for women is the primary issue and accepted that current services are only partially meeting women's needs. Suggestions on how to increase access generally focused around basic points which could be viewed as minimum standards of care, such as making services 'women friendly,' by allowing women to have the right to see a female worker upon request and having women only sessions at The Oaks and Croydon CDA.



The other essential point was ensuring that services are accessible to women with dependant children as this group of women are significantly underrepresented in Croydon's drug services. Crèche facilities in projects were seen as the ideal, but most workers acknowledged that this would be a hard and costly system to set up. One answer to this is employing a "floating" crèche worker who does sessions at various agencies throughout the week. The presence of this worker is then advertised so that women know which times they can bring their children to certain projects.

It was suggested that more specialist female staff should be working across the agencies as female specific workers: 'women's workers or 'women and families workers'. These workers could provide both outreach and centre based services, allowing more intensive support and crisis intervention work to be undertaken.

The benefit of outreach services was recognised by all the agencies. Croydon CDA are very aware of this need and have been looking at developing outreach services for women. Janet Austin, Croydon Joint Commissioning Manager, believes that a more directive approach is needed to bring women into services. She points out that some women may not be presenting to service's as they are not aware that they exist. Certain women may also find it hard to make the initial approach and walk into a drugs agency meaning that women's workers who could work on a flexible basis, thus allowing them to meet clients in a variety of locations such as their own homes and cafes, would be the ideal. These workers could also accompany women to relevant appointments, such as appointments with housing and benefits agencies. However directive outreach is extremely time consuming meaning that, if the resources were available; new posts would have to be created for this work to develop suitably and effectively.

Establishing a female specific drop in session, staffed entirely by female workers, in Croydon was deemed a priority. All agencies believed that such a drop in would only work if it provided a variety of appropriate services, including advice and support around substance use, particularly crack use, housing, benefits,

health and legal issues from skilled workers. Complimentary therapies (e.g. Indian Head massage, shiatsu and auricular acupuncture) Tai Chi, yoga and relaxation sessions, Hepatitis A and B vaccinations, condom provision, needle exchange and hot food and drinks were also seen to be ways to attract women to such a service. A “One Stop Shop” model would therefore be the ideal and to be able to achieve this more than one agency would need to be involved in setting up the drop in. Such a service would also have to be supported and publicised through outreach sessions.

Early evening was considered to be a good time to hold the drop in session as it was believed that this would make it more accessible to women with children, sex workers and women living in crack houses, who slept throughout the day, as well as women at the other end of the spectrum who held down day time jobs which restricted their access to drug projects running within core working hours.

Identifying a suitable location was hard as it was recognised that within such a large borough as Croydon there would never be an ‘ideal’ place to locate a service as certain people would always find it hard, or in some cases costly, to get too. Central Croydon has a good public transport system meaning that if the drop in was centrally located, and in some circumstances fares could be reimbursed, the drop in should be accessible to most women.

Locating the drop in in a Well Woman clinic or NHS walk in centre was looked into. The NHS walk in centre is centrally situated in Croydon High Street. Six Well Woman clinics run throughout the week in health and community centres in Purley, New Addington, Shirley and Thornton Heath. The clinics mainly provide family planning services although some centres run specialist clinics for HIV testing, psychosexual counselling and fertility services.

Julie Fraser at Croydon Resource Centre expressed an interest in hosting a women’s drop in, if the Church the centre is governed by would allow it. The only restriction would be that the Church has previously stated that they will not allow

needle exchange on the premises. Nonetheless if the drop in was held in another location workers at CRC would still be keen to get involved. CRC also have very good links with a local GP who they believe may be willing to offer their services at such a drop in session.

Croydon CDA have been looking to develop a women's drop in for a while and they consider that many of their current female clients would be keen to attend a session that solely caters for women. They would be able to host the drop-in in their premises on Lower Addiscombe Road in East Croydon. This building has two main rooms, one room being equipped with computers that clients can use and a small kitchen.

On a more general treatment basis workers would like to see a female specific crack day programme running in Croydon as well as women having easier access to rehabilitation funding and beds. More female beds in detoxification and rehabilitation units and an increase in rehabilitation centres that will take women and children were also viewed as a necessity. Women in Croydon wishing to secure funding for rehabilitation places have to wait approximately four weeks for a Community Care Assessment to be carried out by Croydon Social Services Substance Misuse Team. Priority cases can be allocated and assessed in two weeks. However waiting lists for female beds in detoxification and rehabilitation centres remain long and clients can become demotivated whilst waiting for a space. Agencies in Croydon state that they mainly refer clients requiring detoxification to Wickham Park House or City Roads and Cranstoun have recently bought some dedicated beds in City Roads for their clients.

Increased user involvement in service development was viewed to be an ideal. Croydon CDA currently have a female user on their steering group. User involvement is something that Mainliners has recently been developing in Lambeth meaning that we would be able to advise and lead on this issue in conjunction with Croydon CDA. Certainly from Mainliners perspective effective consultation and involvement of women is vital if we are going to succeed in

bridging the existing gap in order to develop more appropriate services for female drug users to access.

Developing and improving services for drug using women is an on going process and is something that could be overseen by a multi agency Women's Focus Group. All of the agencies visited or contacted by telephone were extremely keen on the establishment of a Women's Focus Group in Croydon. Seven key agencies said that they would definitely send a representative to such a group, especially if the group could generate more joint up working and referrals between agencies. Other agencies spoken too said they would consider sending someone along once they knew what the group's terms of reference were. The involvement of drug using women in such a group would be vital and as well as looking at generating more referrals between agencies one of the primary aims of the group should be to look strategically at existing services and develop an action plan. This plan could then be fed into the DAT structure to ensure women's services are better catered for in future treatment plans.



## **OVERVIEW OF WORKING WOMEN'S SERVICES IN CROYDON**

Mainliners Working Women's Service (WWS) has been running for over ten years and is well established and utilised in Croydon. Outreach sessions to working flats and saunas in Croydon run once a week. There are currently twenty two Croydon flats on Mainliners lists. Nine of these flats are visited on a monthly basis with the remainder being visited approximately once every three months. Flats are prioritised for visits if there are young, migrant or drug using women working there and/or the security is poor. All flat workers are able to call Mainliners Working Women's worker within working hours to report any problems or request a visit. Flat outreach sessions bring approximately ninety six Croydon women into contact with Mainliners WWS each quarter, including flat owners and maids.

Additionally women are encouraged to access Mainliners twice-weekly evening clinic on Streatham Hill. Medical staff are able to screen women for sexually transmitted infections and administer primary health care whilst Mainliners workers and volunteers provide practical support around sex working, drug use, housing, benefits, legal and safety issues. The women can also collect safer sex supplies and 'ugly mugs' sheets from the clinic. Thirty three women who live and/or work in Croydon attend the clinic on a regular basis. However it is recognised that there is the potential to increase this number, especially when considering the high volume of working flats operating in the Croydon area.

## **MAIN FINDINGS – WORKING WOMEN’S SERVICES IN CROYDON**

Five women who attend Mainliners Streatham clinic and are based in Croydon were asked if they would be interested in attending a similar drop-in session in Croydon. Four of the women were white British and one was Albanian, with ages ranging from twenty four to forty six. Two women commented that they would be wary of people seeing them using such a service, pointing out that the good thing about the Streatham service is that it is discreet and not “on their doorstep.” The remaining three women were keen to have a service nearer to them, even if it was only to collect condoms. Two women stated that due to the day-time opening hours collecting condoms from the Mayday GUM Clinic is not possible and all said they would prefer a service that runs in the evening. Two women were very positive about the idea of a Croydon drop in, even if no doctor or nurse were present. Two women said they would promote the service in the flats they work in.

When asked what they would want from such a service all of the women focused on the experience and attitudes of the staff. It was stated as crucial that the staff should be non judgemental and understanding of the needs of sex workers, as well as having the knowledge to assist with relevant issues and problems effectively.

The Grove Clinic, a joint initiative between Mainliners Working Women’s Service, Croydon Primary Care Team and the Mayday Hospital GUM Clinic was established in July 2001. Flat based sex workers who are contacted via Mainliners Outreach services are able to attend the Grove Clinic to collect eighty condoms, lubricant, gloves (provided by Croydon Primary Care Team) and a copy of The Ugly Mugs list each month. Mainliners are told when a woman accesses the clinic for condom collection.

Eleven flats presently collect condoms on a regular basis. In order to collect the condoms a card must be produced. These numbered cards are given out by

Mainliners WWS Staff. However since each flat is only issued with one card the system is open to abuse. It has been reported to Mainliners that the flat owners or maids generally collect the condoms, meaning that The Mayday and Mainliners have no assurances that the condoms are then distributed fairly the women working in the flats. In some instances they are sold back to them. In order to rectify this situation a system of individual cards would need to be put in place, which would allow women to collect a smaller quantity of condoms for their personal use. If the card system were to be expanded Mayday staff would prefer that women should be directed to come to the clinic at a specific time; however this restriction could discourage women from using the service.

Very few of the women who collect condoms ever book an appointment for sexual health testing at The Clinic. The Mayday GUM only sees three sex workers for testing at present. Nonetheless other clients may be sex working but have chosen not to disclose this. More working women may be encouraged to attend The Mayday GUM if they were fast tracked. Unfortunately Nursing Sister Terese Lawrence feels that this is not viable at present, due to the heavy workload of her staff and the high quantity of clients already presenting. There is currently a two to four week wait for an appointment slot and women attending a 'walk in' session have to arrive at eight in the morning to ensure that they will be seen.

The Health Advisors at The Mayday have no specific training in working with sex workers. Mainliners would be able to provide this training, which would increase their understanding of sex workers needs and also potentially generate further ideas to expand The Clinic's services for sex workers.

The possibility of a nurse or health advisor coming on Outreach sessions or working at a women's drop in, with the aim of providing clients with up to date sexual health information and encouraging them to attend the Mayday, was discussed. The Mayday would find it hard to spare the staff with the only suitable time being a Friday afternoon when the clinic is closed for a team meeting. Staff

would want to be paid on an E grade scale (£14-£20 per hour.) to work on such a session.

A Mainliners worker holding a satellite session at the Mayday is not practical at the moment as it would be almost impossible to contact relevant clients. Additionally, other agencies who have tried to run sessions in the clinic in the past have had little success.

Mainliners WWS sees a great deal of migrant and trafficked women working in the Croydon area. Some of these women attend the Streatham Clinic but none have so far accessed The Mayday. As The Mayday has excellent access to language line and can book interpreters at short notice this service needs to be publicised to migrant women. Ideally the Mainliners WWS worker should accompany clients to a pre booked appointment. If more migrant sex workers were accessing the services at the Mayday there may be a case to fast track this specific group.

A great deal of migrant women are presenting at the Mayday for HIV tests. Since January 2003 there have been sixty new HIV diagnoses with more than half of these being women, particularly migrant women. Setting up a migrant/refugee clinic has been discussed but it was decided that such a session would create too much hostility amongst other clients.

Mainliners Working Women's Service has a well established client base and is well known and respected in Croydon. Subsequently few improvements need to be made but there is the potential to update and expand upon certain elements of this service.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**GENERIC WOMEN'S SERVICES**

**• *Continue to work closely with and develop joint working with other agencies in Croydon***

Mainliners needs to continue working closely with our partners in Croydon, particularly The DAT, The Oaks, Croydon Resource Centre and Croydon CDA.

**• *Increase Mainliners home visits in Croydon***

Mainliners are currently visiting one female Hepatitis C sufferer in Croydon who is in very poor health and needs the support of the agency and it's workers.

Mainliners should aim to take other similar referrals from social services and supported housing services for similar home visits to women suffering from HIV and hepatitis C. This work should be carried out by generic outreach workers.

**• *Expand Mainliners Croydon Housing Service***

The service is currently receiving up to seven referrals a week and the housing worker is presently carrying a caseload of twenty five clients. Another worker would mean that more time could be spent working on behalf of each client and female clients could be prioritised.

It is clear that a direct access women's only hostel which focuses on the needs of female drug users needs to be established in Croydon. Until such a hostel comes into existence Mainliners housing worker should liase with current Croydon housing providers, such as ARP and the YMCA, to see if they are willing to dedicate a certain number of beds to female drug users. Once women are placed in these beds the housing worker will provide on going, intensive support

to the women and identify resettlement options. Referral rights to the beds should ideally be allocated solely to Mainliners housing service, with the housing worker gate keeping the beds and allocating them according to priority need. Our newly appointed women's worker would be able to work with these women, offering specific support around their drug use and other needs. Once clients have been assessed and accepted they should be able to enter the hostel at short notice. Ideally any dedicated beds should be located in one cluster away from the main body of the hostel to ensure that the women have their own space and maintain a feeling of safety.

**•Locate a base for Mainliners Women's Worker in Croydon**

Mainliners have recently appointed a specialist women's worker. Her skills and experience can be well utilised in Croydon. The women's worker should focus on implementing the generic women's work discussed in these recommendations. We are currently negotiating a base at Croydon Resource Centre for at least 3 days a week. It is important that our women's worker is based in Croydon for the vast majority of her time to develop close links with key stakeholders.

**•Develop the role of the women's worker to enable her to give a high level of specialist support to drug using women In Croydon**

The women's worker's primary focus will be to support women around their drug use and BBV status, with her remit being to work with female drug users affected by or at risk of contracting Blood Borne Viruses. She will work closely with both Mainliners Croydon housing worker and working women's worker in order to provide a more comprehensive service for women in the borough.

The women's worker needs to be as visible as possible in Croydon.

Consequently she should initially spend four to six weeks networking in the

borough, attending key meetings and developing links with relevant agencies and professionals.

With their agreement she could use the Croydon Resource Centre as a base, sharing Mainliners housing workers office for two to three days a week. Women would then be able to access the service at set times during the week.

Joint working with Spires Day Centre should be established. The women's worker should occasionally attend their Friday Women's Space in order to link in with Croydon based clients who access this service.

The women's worker should carry out directive outreach and in depth work with Croydon clients, carrying a caseload of up to ten women at any one time. She should assist clients with legal, welfare, benefits and treatment issues. She would need the flexibility to be able to meet women in various locations and also to accompany them to appointments, to hospital and to court etc in order to advocate on their behalf. Time allowing she should also visit clients (and carry out follow on work) in hospitals, prisons and detoxification and rehabilitation units.

Clear service leaflets need to be designed and produced, displaying what support women can get from Mainliners and in particular from the women's worker.

These leaflets would need to be distributed on all Mainliners Croydon WWS sessions as well as being available in the Magistrates Court, police stations, GP surgeries, hospitals, clinics and in other Croydon drugs agencies and day centres.

Referrals for women who need the level of in depth support that the women's worker will be able to provide will be encouraged from all partner agencies.

Therefore the women's worker will need to be proactive in establishing better joint working protocols between Croydon agencies to ensure that, where appropriate, female drug users are referred to her for support.

The women's worker should also take the lead in starting up a Women's Focus Group in Croydon and establishing the women's drop in with Croydon CDA.

*(See below)*

**•Run a women's drop in session in conjunction with Croydon CDA**

Mainliners and Croydon CDA should establish a female drop in session as soon as possible. Croydon CDA are looking into the insurance implications of using their premises in Lower Addiscombe Road in the early evenings (six to nine pm) and allowing children access to the drop in. The drop in should be staffed by Mainliners women's worker, Croydon housing worker and, once in post Croydon CDA's women's worker. Hot food, drinks, needle exchange and condoms will be provided. The workers will be able to offer specialist advice and support around safer drug use, harm minimisation, BBV prevention, treatment options, housing issues and options, welfare issues, legal issues, safer sex working and sexual health. Mainliners' workers have experience and knowledge in all these issues and can particularly lead on BBV issues.

Medical staff from The Oaks should also be approached to work at the drop in to provide primary health care and hepatitis A and B vaccinations. Complementary therapies should also be offered.

The session will be governed by a Service Level Agreement and any problems and suggestions on improvements discussed and looked into at regular review meetings.

The service will need to be well marketed so that all potential clients are aware of its existence. As numbers for the session are anticipated to be quite low to begin with promotion of the drop in should be a priority. Leaflets, posters and cards should be produced to advertise the service with Mainliners and Croydon CDA sharing the costs of such publicity materials.

Croydon CDA are in the process of producing a questionnaire in order to ascertain what services women would want at such a drop in. Dependant on the results of this questionnaire the services provided at the drop in could be expanded or amended.

**•Facilitate a women's support group in Croydon**

Women contacted at the drop in will be encouraged to attend a women's support group. This could be run at the same time as the drop in or directly before or after the session. The group will be a safe space where women can support each other around issues directly affecting them, such as their drug use, childcare problems, their BBV status and domestic violence issues.

**•Provide training to relevant professionals regarding working with female drug users**

Mainliners' women's worker should take the lead in designing and delivering a training package catered towards professionals who need to expand their knowledge in regards to working with female drug users. The aim of the training would be to enhance service delivery throughout all the tiers.

The training should focus on the specific needs of female drug users, particularly those who are homeless, those with children, those who are pregnant and those involved in the sex industry. Current trends in female drug use would need to be explored alongside treatment options and restrictions. Harm minimisation issues should also be discussed. The training will primarily be offered to those workers that female drug users feel most alienated from and poorly treated by; i.e. social workers, GPs, medics working in Accident and Emergency Departments, police officers, probation workers and housing workers. Workers from other relevant agencies, including drugs services, in Croydon will also be able to access this training.

**•Establish a Women's Focus Group in Croydon**

Mainliners should take the lead in setting up a Women's Focus Group in Croydon. This group will ideally be set up as a DAT sub group and would link into other Croydon based focus and steering groups such as The Treatment and Care Group and The Drugs Reference Group. Membership will be open to all Croydon treatment providers and will hopefully attract managers and practitioners who have a keen interest in developing women's services. Mainliners women's worker and women's Manager will take the lead on chairing and setting up the group, initially locating a suitable venue, inviting relevant members and drawing up the terms of reference. The terms of reference will be agreed at the first meeting and an agenda format proposed. The group will run on a monthly to six weekly basis dependant on member's preferences. As well as facilitating networking the group will take forward the needs and issues of female drug users in Croydon. It will look at ways to empower female drug users and advise on the development of local services. An action plan will be established and fed back into the DAT.

Terms of reference for this group should include:

- To look at all existing areas of provision for drug using women in Croydon, particularly housing services.
- To identify and explore gaps in provision and recommend changes that could benefit drug using women and help inform Croydon commissioners.
- To particularly look at the needs of drug using women who are homeless, those with children, are pregnant or who are sex working.
- To endeavour to have a user representative on the group.

**•Feed back to the DAT as new gaps in services are identified**

As Mainliners women's worker starts to implement this work in Croydon she should keep the DAT informed of where additional resources are required to

enhance services and further support to drug using women. The Women's Focus Group will also do this.

• ***Work towards rectifying widely recognised gaps in services***

Mainliners' women's worker should investigate crèche facilities generally and make recommendations to the DAT in regards to how realistic either establishing crèche facilities within Croydon's drugs services or employing a floating crèche worker would be.

Additionally, with the assistance of partner agencies and members of the Women's Focus Group, she should aim to increase the amount of women accessing treatment in Croydon by looking at further ways to attract more female drug users into services.

The amount of female beds in detoxification and rehabilitation services countrywide needs to be established as well as the number of beds for women with children. This should be investigated by the Women's Focus Group and fed back to the DAT.

• ***Substantially increase user involvement in services***

Female service users (and female users not in contact with local services) should be encouraged to be involved in all levels within Croydon's drug services, i.e. attend various forums in Croydon such as The Drug Reference Group and the Treatment and Care Group, have representation on the Drug Action Team, have a meaningful influence in the development of local services through user groups and having representation on the board of trustees, be involved in peer work and become equipped with the skills to be able to apply for paid work in the field. This will empower women by giving them a voice and also enable them to have a real say in the development of services to better cater for their needs.

**•Develop services to better meet the needs of BME communities in Croydon**

Croydon is home to a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers. Further work needs to be done to identify ways to attract such groups into services. Advertising services in appropriate ways in Croydon's high number of bed and breakfast establishments and in refugee centres will let people know what drug services exist in Croydon, if they are in need of them.

**•Develop a post for a Croydon Women's Criminal Justice Worker**

As more and more women enter the criminal justice system due to their drug use there is the potential to employ a worker specifically to support drug using women with criminal justice issues. This post could be set up in conjunction with the Croydon Crime Initiatives (CCI) Services. Similarly to an arrest referral service the worker would contact women in police stations. However for this post to develop the worker would also have to work in courts, probation centres and prisons, particularly Holloway prison. Croydon women serving sentences in Holloway prison could be supported prior to release and linked into housing and treatment services to avoid the pattern of being released from prison with no fixed abode, limited treatment options and, due to lack of support, immediate relapse.

This worker would need to work closely with Croydon's Arrest Referral Team and referrals into the service would also have to be encouraged from probation workers and police officers. This worker could also be able to support women on DTTO programmes, thus reducing drop out rates. Mainliners should look at the implications and advantages of developing this post as part of their women's services.

In the meantime Mainliners women's worker should establish partnership work with CCI to ensure that women are fairly represented in any criminal justice

interventions such as DTTO orders and court diversion schemes. She will also need to ensure that relevant clients are referred to her via the Arrest Referral Team.

## **WORKING WOMEN'S SERVICES**

### **•Expand the Working Women's street outreach to cover Thornton Heath**

Mainliners working women's street outreach session goes out every Friday night from 10pm-1am. Working Women are provided with up to 40 condoms, ugly mug lists and hot drinks. Currently the outreach focuses on Brixton, Streatham and Tooting. Part of the session should be spent contacting women in Thornton Heath, particularly Brigstock Road, Parchmore Road and the surrounding streets.

Women contacted should be directed back to Mainliners Working Women's Clinic and when it is set up the new Mainliners and Croydon CDA Women's Drop in.

Prior to the session going out in the area Mainliners working women's worker needs to contact Thornton Heath police and explain the benefits of providing an outreach service for working women in order to get the police's support and, if possible, establish a certain level of information sharing.

### **•Review the Working Women's Service flat outreach sessions in Croydon**

The flat outreach session in Croydon needs to be reviewed. Flat lists need to be updated to ensure that Mainliners are not missing any potential clients. Now that extra female staff and volunteers are working on the WWS there are the resources to organise to visit extra flats. Flats need to be re prioritised and divided into those that require monthly visits and those that only need to be visited every three months.

Mainliners working women's worker should start cold calling new Croydon flats and get a ballpark figure of how many flats are currently operating in Croydon. If new flats are willing to allow her to visit a risk assessment should be carried out on the first visit. This will help to identify flats most in needs of our services. The workers in flats which don't need regular visits should be encouraged to attend Mainliners Streatham Clinic and the new Croydon Women's drop in for condom

collection and extra support. Mainliners should aim to cover twenty to thirty flats in Croydon.

**• *Redesign the card system at the Mayday Clinic***

Instead of just having one card per flat all women contacted in Croydon flats should be issued with individual cards as soon as possible. These individual cards will follow the same numbering system as the flat cards but will be a different colour. In line with Mainliners current allocations they will entitle a woman to collect fifty condoms per visit. The card system should also be expanded to escort workers who live in Croydon, many of whom already attend Mainliners Streatham Clinic. Mainliners will continue to give out the cards to the women. If the uptake of this service exceeds expectations the amount of condoms given out may have to be reviewed in line with resources. However as long as lines of communication between the Mayday and Mainliners are kept open it will be recognised if women are presenting at both The Mayday and Mainliners Working Women's Clinic and limits will be enforced on the amount of condoms they can collect within a certain time period.

**• *Publicise the services of the Mayday Grove Clinic, particularly to migrant sex workers***

Mainliner's needs to utilise the excellent access to translation services The Mayday provides. Migrant and trafficked sex workers who need sexual health services and are unable to communicate well in English should be directed to The Mayday. Mainliners working women's worker should make appointments for such women ensuring that the relevant translator will be present. If the woman requests it she should also accompany them to the clinic as part of the Croydon flat outreach session. This service needs to be publicised in all the flats that migrant workers are working in.

- ***Provide training to Mayday staff around the issues of working with sex workers***

Mainliners working women's worker will be able to plan and facilitate this training which will cover all relevant issues including working with trafficked and migrant sex workers.

- ***Look again at fast tracking working women at the Mayday***

Ideally working women should be fast tracked at the Mayday Clinic. This would encourage them to access the service as they will be seen quickly and also as their status as a sex worker would already be known they would be reassured that they wouldn't encounter any prejudice. However The Mayday needs extra resources in order for them to consider implementing a fast tracking system for this client group.

- ***Employ a GU Nurse to come out on WWS flat outreach sessions***

A GU nurse should accompany Mainliners working women's worker on a flat outreach session at least once a month. The nurse will be able to provide working women with up to date sexual health information and also encourage them to utilise the services at the Mayday Clinic. Having a medical professional on outreach sessions would also reassure women that their sexual health needs are being met by Mainliners WWS.

- ***Assist the Mayday in starting up a Women's HIV Support Group***

The Mayday are considering starting up support groups for those suffering from HIV. They are currently in the process of moving their HIV department upstairs, which means they will have the room to run such groups. If they decide to start such a group up Mainliners should get involved in assisting to establish and run an HIV support group specifically for women.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mainliners have extensive experience in the development of new services. The recent appointment of a women's worker and planned appointment of a specialist women's manager, in addition to our Croydon housing worker and working women's worker, means that we are now in an ideal position to take the lead on establishing some of the new services for drug using and sex working women in Croydon as highlighted above.

However, although many of these recommendations can be implemented over a reasonably short period of time others would require additional resources which Croydon DAT would need to consider.

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## APPENDIX: CROYDON CONTACT LIST

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CONTACT LIST  
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AGENCY	KEY CONTACT(S)	PHONE NO'S
<u>CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES</u>		
<b><u>Croydon Arrest Referral Scheme</u></b> (Crime Reductions Initiatives) C/o Magistrates Court, Barclay Rd, Croydon	Richard Jolley (Manager)	020 8686 5560
<b><u>Church House Probation Centre</u></b> Church House, Old Palace Rd, Croydon	Chris Giles (Probation Manger)	020 8686 6551
<b>Wandle Road Probation Resettlement Centre</b> Wandle Rd, Croydon	Henry Mullholland (DTTO Worker)	020 8686 4441 07956 149 845
<u>Croydon Police Station</u> <b><u>71 Park Lane, Croydon</u></b>	/	020 8649 0200
<u>Thornton Heath Police</u>		020 8677 1212
<b><u>South Norwood Police</u></b>		020 8649 1202
<u>DAY CENTRES</u>		
<b><u>Croydon Resource Centre</u></b> Wellesley Rd, Croydon	Julie Fraser (Manager)	020 8686 1222
<b>The Spires Day Centre</b> Tooting Bec Gardens, SW16	Amanda Cooper (Deputy Director)	020 8696 0943
DRUGS SERVICES		

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<b>Drug Action Team</b> ..... Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon	Andy Opie (DAT Co-ordinator)	020 8760 5579
<b>Bromley CDP</b> ..... 35 London Rd, Bromley, Kent	Janet Austin (Joint Commissioning Manager)	020 8289 1999
<b>Croydon CDA</b> ..... 128 Cherry Orchard Rd, Croydon	Kenzie Walker-Chong (Manager)	020 8681 6000
<b>Social Services Substance Misuse Team</b> Croydon Council, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon	Neia Glynn (Development Worker)	07812 154297
<b>Kaleidoscope</b> 40 – 46 Cromwell Rd Kinston Upon Thames	Martin O'Brien (Manager)	020 8686 4433 (Ext 2124)
<b>The Oaks Resource Centre</b> 843 London Rd, Thornton Heath	Roslyn Chamberlin (Manager)	020 8549 2681
<b>Pharmacy Based Needle Exchange  Scheme</b> .....	Matt Beavis (Manager)	020 8700 8600
..... <b>HEALTH SERVICES</b> .....	Nicky Hobson	07958 994 895
<b>Croydon Primary Care Trust</b> Knollys House, 17 Addiscombe Rd, Croydon	/	020 8274 6000
<b>Public Health</b> 12-18 Lennard Road, Croydon	Susie Sykes	020 8680 2008 (Ext 205)

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<b><u>Community Health Information Point</u></b>	/	020 8680 2008 (Ext 282)
<b><u>Mayday University Hospital</u></b> London Rd, Croydon	/	020 8401 3000
<b><u>Maple Clinic</u></b>	Kelly O'Donnell (Nurse)	020 8401 3459
<b>Mayday University Hospital GUM Clinic</b>	Terese Lawrence (Nursing Sister)	020 8401 3002/6
<b><u>NHS Walk In Centre</u></b> 45 High St, Croydon, CRO 1QD	/	020 8666 0348
<b>HOUSING SERVICES</b>		
<b><u>Croydon Direct Access Hostel (ARP)</u></b> 4 High St, Croydon	Nick Toth (Substance Misuse Worker)	020 8680 3700 07747 114 695

<p><b><u>CAYSH Housing Project</u></b>  799 London Rd, Thornton Heath</p>	<p>Carleen Williamson  (Housing Manager)</p>	<p>020 8683 0227  020 8655 3461</p>
<p><b><u>Croydon Council Housing  Department</u></b>  Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon</p>	<p>Mike Davis  (Chief Officer)</p>	<p>020 8686 4433  (Ext: 2721)</p>
<p><b><u>Croydon Housing Aid Society</u></b>  The Old House, 2 Wellesley Rd, Croydon</p>	<p>Kevin Gibb  (Manager)</p>	<p>020 8688 7900</p>
<p><b><u>Croydon Churches Housing  Association</u></b>  9 Birdhurst Rd, Croydon</p>	<p>Stephen Cole  (Project Manager)</p>	<p>020 8240 9867</p>
<p><b><u>Mainliners Croydon Housing  Service</u></b>  38 – 40 Kennington Park Rd, London, SE11</p>	<p>Yvette Hector  (Housing Worker)</p>	<p>020 7582 5434  07932 993 567</p>
<p><b><u>Nightwatch</u></b>  PO Box 7576, London, SE23 3ZH</p>	<p>Jad Adams  (Director)</p>	<p>020 8699 6718</p>
<p><b><u>YMCA</u></b>  Keystone House, 9 Akabusi Close, Davidson Rd,  Croydon</p>	<p>Steve Thompson  (Housing Worker)</p>	<p>020 8688 2845  07970 182 771</p>
<p><b><u>SEX WORKERS SERVICES</u></b></p>		
<p><b><u>Mainliner's Working Women's  Service</u></b>  38 – 40 Kennington Park Rd, London, SE11</p>	<p>Resham Dulay  (Working Women's  Worker)</p>	<p>020 7582 5434  07930 324 111</p>
<p><b><u>Streatham Streetlink</u></b>  C/o The Spires Centre</p>	<p>Pamela Mazava  (Project Manager)</p>	<p>07956 121 434</p>

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## REFUGEE/BME SERVICES

### **African Community Involvement Association**

.....  
Eagle Court, 224 London Rd, Mitcham

Rejoice Kampergele  
(Development Officer)

020 8687 2400

### **Asian Resource Centre of Croydon**

.....  
Day Lewis House, 324-340 Bensham Lane,  
Thornton Heath

Mashhood Ahmed  
(Project Manager)

020 8684 3784

### **Refugee Day Centre**

.....  
C/o West Croydon Baptist Church Hall,  
1 Whitehorse Rd, West Croydon

Beryl Telman  
(Manager)

020 8665 0696

### **Refugee Project**

.....  
South Norwood Centre, Sandown Rd, South  
Norwood

Susan McDonald  
(Co-ordinator)

020 8656 4560

## WOMEN'S SERVICES

### **Domestic Violence Advocacy Service**

.....  
Ambassador House, Brigstock Rd, Thornton  
Heath

Barbara Young  
(Project Manager)

020 8239 8846

### **Women's Aid**

.....  
PO Box 314, Croydon, CR9 2YJ

Esther Brewster-Thizy  
(Manager)

020 8679 8448

### **New Addington Women's Centre**

.....  
1a Overbury Crescent, New Addington, Croydon

Doreen Small  
(Development Officer)

01689 841 789

### **Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre**

.....  
PO Box 383, Croydon, CR9 2AW

Yvonne Turner  
(Service Director)

020 8683 3311

## OTHER SERVICES

### **Citizens Advice Bureau (Addington)**

.....  
1b Overbury Crescent, New Addington, Croydon

Ruth Wood  
(Advice Services  
Manager)

01689 646 890

### **CAB – Thornton Heath**

.....  
Strand House, Zion Rd, Thornton Heath

Trefor Parry  
(Borough Services  
Manager)

020 8683 2236

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<b><u>Connexions</u></b> ..... 112-114 High St, Croydon	John Dempster (Co-ordinator)	<i>020 8410 0370</i>
<b><u>Croydon Voluntary Action</u></b> ..... 97 High St, Thornton Heath	Steve Phaure (General Manager)	<i>020 8684 3862</i>
<b><u>Croydon Volunteer Bureau</u></b> ..... 2A Garnet Rd, Thornton Heath	Mary Benton (Manager)	<i>020 8684 2727</i>

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**Mainliners Ltd**

38/40 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4RS

Tel: +44 (0)207 582 5434

(0) 207 582 3338

Fax: + 44 (0) 207 582 6999

Web: [www.mainliners.org.uk](http://www.mainliners.org.uk)

Registered Charity: 801862

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