

West Lothian Locality Clinic

Background

West Lothian's Locality Clinic was developed in response to an increase in people requiring treatment for drug misuse in West Lothian. At that time, 8 out of 24 GP practices in West Lothian refused to treat drug users. This reluctance was due in part to a perceived lack of training and support for GPs. The increase in clients, coupled with the reluctance of GPs lead to a large number of people being referred to the Community Drug Problem Service (CDPS), a specialist statutory service for drug treatment. A gradual build up of clients culminated in a waiting time of 35 weeks in October 2002. The waiting time as of August 2004 for the Locality Clinic is 9 weeks.

The Locality Clinic model was developed in line with similar systems operating in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The concept was to establish a system of shared care whereby GPs could refer patients who were **primarily dependent on opiates** to the clinic for assessment, treatment and stabilisation of their drug use. The patient would be referred back to the GP once stabilised and the GP would receive ongoing support from the clinic staff. It was felt that this would in particular ease the pressure on the CDPS. GPs would also be provided with extra support for treating drug users with a primary opiate dependence and this was thought to encourage more GPs to opt into the treatment of drug users.

Description of Service

The Locality Clinic is funded by NHS Lothian Health Blood Borne Virus money. Funding has been secured until March 2005. A steering group has been established and services represented on the group include the voluntary organisation West Lothian Drug & Alcohol Service (WLDAS), West Lothian Social Work Drug Team (SWDT) and the Community Drug Problem Service (CDPS).

In terms of the development of **integrated care pathways**, the Locality clinic operate a weekly allocation meeting whereby all referrals, where prescribing is required for opiate dependence, are dealt with and prioritised. A rapid referral service is available to GPs in the event of de-stabilisation of those clients who have initially been stabilised through the Locality Clinic. Common priorities for patient referral were put in place on 1st April 2004. Patients are given priority for treatment if they fall under any of the following categories:

- Seriously at risk of overdose
- Have one or more children
- Are pregnant
- Have significant co-morbidity
- Have serious physical injury through harmful injecting practice
- Referrals from another service where clients have already been stabilised e.g Prison
- Have a partner in treatment

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- Have a co-resident in treatment

Services share joint waiting time/waiting lists. Currently the waiting time between initial assessment and treatment is approximately 2 weeks.

Locality clinics operate in the health centres in Bathgate, Broxburn, Whitburn and Livingston. The clinics are staffed by a Locality Clinic GP, a WLDAS counsellor, a CDPS Community Psychiatric Nurse and supported by an administrative assistant.

Who can access the service?

- Drug users who have a dependence on opiates and are receiving treatment through primary care or want to receive treatment through primary care.
- Aged 18+
- Residents in West Lothian
- Patients must be registered with a GP who is willing to continue to treat them, with support from the clinic following assessment.

What services are offered to clients with a dependence on opiates?

- Joint assessment by substance misuse professionals
- Access to specialist GP and substitute prescribing
- Advice and information
- Support and counselling
- Support in accessing other services

Process of Care

The flowchart on page 3 illustrates the processes involved from initial referral through to stabilising and referring/discharging patients. Referrals are accepted from any professional source however clients must be registered with a GP. Assessment takes place over 2 appointments and also involves a urine test. Following assessment they are referred to the clinic for prescription. Clients must show they are withdrawing from heroin at their first appointment for prescription in order to receive a script. Clients are seen on a regular basis once they have accessed treatment. Urine tests are conducted as needed. GPs are kept informed at all times of their patient's progress. The client has a 12-week period in which to become stabilised on medication. A clean urine test is the necessary proof of stabilisation before the client can be referred back to their GP.

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West Lothian Locality Clinic Procedure Map 2004

