



## **UWL REPOSITORY**

**[repository.uwl.ac.uk](https://repository.uwl.ac.uk)**

This is a University of West London scholarly output.

Contact [open.research@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:open.research@uwl.ac.uk) if you have any queries.

**Alternative formats:** If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:  
[open.access@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:open.access@uwl.ac.uk)

**Copyright:** [CC.BY.NC license]

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy:** If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us at [open.research@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:open.research@uwl.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# Social stigma as a major barrier to evidence-based interventions to reduce opioid drug-related deaths: A qualitative analysis (Miller et al., 2023)\*

Dr Nicole M Miller  
University of West London

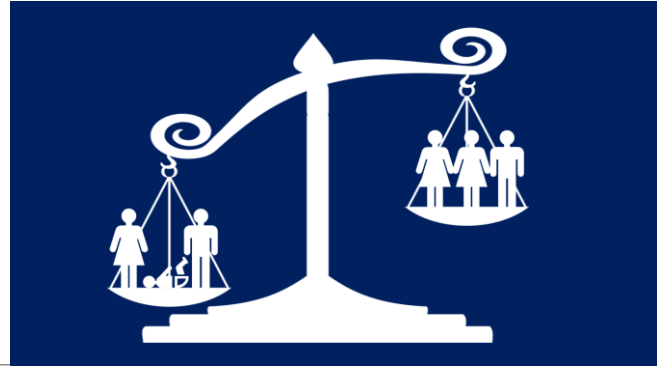
\*Oral presentation for the British Psychological Society Health Psychology conference. June 2024. Stirling

Cited Paper: Miller, N.M., B, Campbell, C, Shorter, G.W. (2023). Barriers and facilitators of naloxone and safe injection facility interventions to reduce opioid drug-related deaths: A qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 117. 104049

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2023.104049>

## Session aims

- Prevalence of drug related deaths
- Discuss a findings from a qualitative study examining barriers and facilitators to evidence-based interventions
- Provide practical recommendations



## Prevalence of drug related deaths

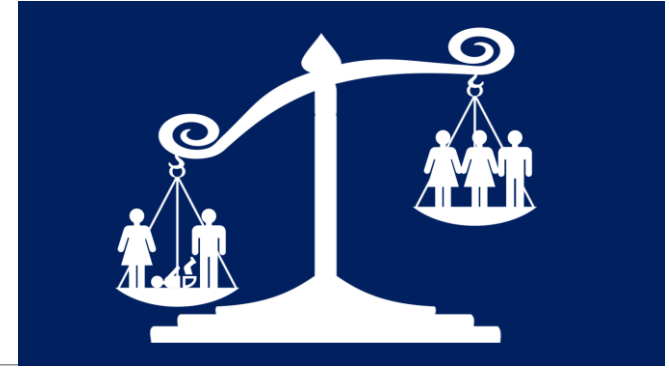
---

- 600,000 global deaths were due to drug use in 2019 (World Health Organisation, 2019).
- 80% was due to opioids

### United Kingdom

- 4,907 drug-related deaths in 2022 in the UK (Office for national Statistics [ONF], 2023).
- Highest record of drug related deaths in the UK since reporting began in 1993. Almost half of these deaths was due to opioids.
- 37.8 % of these deaths where people living in most deprived areas.

# Prevalence of drug related deaths : Context of the Study



## Northern Ireland

- 213 DRD in 2021. Opioids mentioned most often and DRD are highest in areas of high deprivation. (NISRA, 2024).

## Republic of Ireland

- 409 drug related deaths in 2020. Most deaths was due to opioids.
- Half of the people who had a DRD had a history of pre-existing disorders (mental health)
- 1 and 8 were homeless, (Health Research Board, 2023).



# Policy Solutions

Response to the problem:

Implement evidence-based interventions (EBI) to reduce drug related deaths

- 1) Naloxone ( Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales)
- 2) Naloxone + Supervised injection facility  
(Republic of Ireland –Recently Scotland)

**Yet, deaths are still increasing**





# Study aims

---

This study examined the **social and policy barriers and facilitators** to EBI in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.





# Study Methods

## Methods

- 23 one-to-one semi-structured interviews in ROI and NI with
  - Experts by experience (n=8)
  - Staff from low threshold services (n=9)
  - Individuals involved in policy making (n= 6).

# Study Methods

- Coding reliability Thematic analysis ( Braun & Clarke, 2019) using a deductive framework
- Data were analyzed using the **Risk environmental framework** (Rhodes, 2009)
- Systems within the environment work together to create harm or enable health
  - Physical, social, economic, policy
  - Macro and Micro level
- CORE-Q standards of reporting

# Findings

## **Findings: Four Major themes**

- Naloxone Enablers
- Naloxone Barriers
- Common barriers to Naloxone and SIF in both NI and ROI
- Environmental enablers to SIF implementation

## Enablers for Naloxone

Peer to peer naloxone distribution

Increase opportunities for training: Community  
Police  
Emergency departments

Interagency collaboration  
Abstinence programs, Harm Reduction, OST and methadone  
clinics, community pharmacies

Rescheduling of naloxone- Over the counter

Uh, it's a massive thing. I mean, if we could give it out peer-to-peer it would even better, but the fact that we must go to certain places to get it." (Expert by experience 3 NI)

## Enablers for Supervised Injection Facility

Enable a safe external environment:  
Reduce drug litter, crime

Internal environment: Safe  
destigmatizing environment  
leading to greater feelings of  
security, acceptance etc

Mobile site



“I think it would have to be a mobile. It would have to be an ambulance or something like that where people come and shoot up do their thing and leave. So it’s not set up a particular area.” (Expert by experience 3 NI)

**Stigma: Macro  
environmental barrier  
For naloxone and SIF**

Delay Policy  
Makers

Lack of political  
will

I think what must change is this idea, which is based on stigma, that like, if you deny people any safety or proper hygiene or dignity, they're going to stop using. That's like based on stigma, it's not true." (Expert by experience 4 ROI)

## Stigma: Micro environmental barrier

Community:  
Paramilitary intimidation  
Negative attitudes

Local health sector: GP, OST  
Clinics, Emergency departments

Hostel Accommodation

Policing



Someone had overdose they used naloxone, they sent for an ambulance and then they got evicted from their hostel for having naloxone and using it, um, which was quite shocking.” (Staff 5 ROI)

Proposed Solutions

Multimodal  
campaigns

Webinars

Murals

Town Halls  
& Citizen's  
Assemblies

Experts by experience, family, friends  
and community

Debunking myths  
Sympathetic messaging



# Recommendations

---

## Stigma campaigns

- **People with living and lived experience** should inform the design of stigma campaigns
- Stigma programs should be **cross environmental (micro and macro)**

## Practice guidelines

Stakeholder groups may want to adopt thinking systemically :

- **Stakeholder mapping sessions : Identifying, analysing, mapping and prioritizing**

# Implications for Health Psychologists

---

## Health Psychologist

- Sensitivity and care: Approaching PWUD should be done with sensitivity and exploring perhaps **how stigma may relate to diagnosis** and how they can **build on strengths**
- Question one's beliefs about PWUD



**Please get in touch if you are interested in :**

- Incorporating a stigma campaign in your place of work
- Collaborating on research relevant to stigma campaigns in your area



Contact:

Dr Nicole M Miller

University of West London

[Email: Nicole.miller@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:Nicole.miller@uwl.ac.uk)

Twitter: @NicoleM\_Miller

**THANK  
YOU!**



the british  
psychological society  
promoting excellence in psychology

Miller, N.M., B, Campbell, C, Shorter, G.W. (2023). Barriers and facilitators of naloxone and safe injection facility interventions to reduce opioid drug-related deaths: A qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 117. 104049 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2023.104049>

# References

---

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (2018) What are the risk factors that make people susceptible to substance use problems and harm?

Degenhardt, L., Glantz, M., Evans-Lacko, S., Sadikova, E., Sampson, N., Thornicroft, G., ... & Zaslavsky, A. M. (2017). Estimating treatment coverage for people with substance use disorders: an analysis of data from the World Mental Health Surveys. *World psychiatry*, 16(3), 299-307.

Health Research Board. (2023). Health Research Board reports latest drug-related deaths figures. (24 Jun 2023). <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/39036/>

Livingston, J. D. (2020a). *Structural Stigma in Health-Care Contexts for People with Mental Health and Substance Use Issues: A Literature Review* (Issue June). <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21168.17929>

Livingston, J. D. (2020b). *A Framework for Assessing Structural Stigma in Health-Care Contexts for People with Mental Health and Substance use Issues*. June, 1–25.

Miller, N.M., B, Campbell, C, Shorter, G.W. (2023). Barriers and facilitators of naloxone and safe injection facility interventions to reduce opioid drug-related deaths: A qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. 117. 104049 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2023.104049>

National Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. (2024). Drug-related and drug misuse deaths in Northern Ireland, 2022. <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/drug-related-and-drug-misuse-deaths-2012-2022>

Office of National Statistics ( 2023). Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2022 Registrations. [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2022registrations#:~:text=The%20rate%20of%20death%20relating,per%20million%20\(949%20deaths\).](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2022registrations#:~:text=The%20rate%20of%20death%20relating,per%20million%20(949%20deaths).)

Rhodes, T. (2009). Risk environments and drug harms: a social science for harm reduction approach. *International journal of drug policy*, 20(3), 193-201.

Yang, L. H., Wong, L. Y., Grivel, M. M., & Hasin, D. S. (2017). Stigma and substance use disorders: an international phenomenon. *Current opinion in psychiatry*, 30(5), 378-388.