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Anchor House marks International Overdose Awareness Day

Friday, August 28, 2015 9:36 pm.

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International Overdose Awareness Day is a global event which aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of drug related deaths.

Held every year on 31 August, this year's event falls on Bank Holiday Monday, and has the theme of prevention and remembrance, acknowledging the grief felt by families and friends remembering those who have met with death or permanent injury as a result of a drug overdose.

It is estimated that globally there were 183,000 drug-related deaths in 2012, with nearly twice as many people dying due to overdose in the UK than road accidents. Sadly, many of these deaths could have been prevented if people received clear information about the risk factors surrounding drug use and had better access to support services.

At Caritas Anchor House in east London, 25% of residents have substance misuse needs, whether that be alcohol or drug related, and receive support from Lifestyle Architects. The house also hosts regular Alcoholics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous meetings which open to the resident group and community members.

"As many of the individuals we work with have drug and alcohol issues, we offer harm minimisation advice to ensure residents understand the risks of overdose," said Sian, Substance Misuse Lead at Caritas Anchor House. "This is especially vital for those with history of using substances such as heroin who have had a period of abstinence and may be at risk of relapse and overdose. We use learning materials and talk to individuals 1:1 to make sure they understands the risks and can take control of their recovery. These discussions can save lives."

One resident who came to Caritas Anchor House with substance misuse needs is David. When David joined, he had a long history of drug and alcohol addiction and was associating with other users. Initially, David found it difficult to stay away from his old friends and their drink and drug habits, but after six months at Caritas Anchor House, he has a completely different attitude to life. David regularly attends mutual aid meetings and takes part in the volunteer programme, including helping out in the kitchens and at the local food bank for people sleeping rough in the community.

"Having a structured environment helps me to stay away from my old friends and habits, and it provides me with a purpose to wake up every morning" David says. "I could very easily have gone down a different path in life, and potentially done myself some serious harm or worse. Now, I'm getting the support I need and am on the road to recovery, and for that, I have the Caritas Anchor House team to thank."

To support the work of Caritas Anchor House, and ensure they can help more people like David, please text HOPE to 70300 to give just £3 or donate online via JustGiving <https://www.justgiving.com/anchorhouse>

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