



Montréal, Canada

KONTAK^g

✓	Needle and syringe programme
✓	Safer smoking equipment
✓	Naloxone kits
✓	Fentanyl testing strips
✓	Counselling

✓	Workshops
✓	HIV & STI information
✓	Condoms, lubricants and sex equipment
✓	Linkage to health services

History and context

Kontak is a programme run by AIDS Community Care Montréal, a non-governmental organisation in Montréal, Canada. It is a harm reduction programme by and for gay, bisexual and queer men who have sex with men, with a special focus on people who use drugs during sex and sex parties (often known as chemsex or party'n'play). The service was launched in its current form in 2013 in response to the growing presence of a chemsex scene in Montréal. Since its foundation, Kontak has been community-led. Staff and volunteers all have experience of the intersection between sex and drug use, and all are drawn from the community of men who have sex with men.

Integrated services

By launching a programme providing a range of relevant services, and ensuring linkage and accompaniment to those services provided by other institutions, Kontak make the full package of services more accessible. Vitality, the peer-led nature of the project means they are well placed to build compassionate, non-judgemental and trusting relationships with their clients. In treating their clients as rounded people, and not concentrating exclusively on particular concerns (such as drug use or HIV status), they are better able to challenge the stigma that their clients can experience in non-specialised

and non-integrated services.

Kontak primarily engages clients directly through outreach. This includes attending neighbourhood circuit parties, LGBT community spaces (such as clubs), and private parties when invited. During this outreach, Kontak staff and volunteers are available to answer questions about sexual health and harm reduction, and distribute a range of free harm reduction commodities. Among the commodities are condoms and lubricants, needles, syringes, cookers, alcohol swabs and tourniquets, and safer smoking equipment designed for use with crack cocaine or crystal methamphetamine as appropriate. **In addition, Kontak also sell (at cost price) specific equipment relevant to chemsex and sex parties, such as silicon-based lubricants, Latex gloves and silicon sex toys, all of which can contribute to a lower risk of STI transmission.**

In cases where clients may be at risk of fentanyl contamination in their stimulants, Kontak distributes fentanyl test strips (that can identify if fentanyl is present in a substance), and can provide naloxone training and distribution.

Alongside harm reduction commodities, Kontak also educates their clients about staying safe during chemsex. When attending sex parties, they give impromptu workshops on request on a range of subjects, from safe injection to how to care for sex toys. This is paired with an online presence, where they collate information and resources from other

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organisations (as well as their own advice) on a broad range of issues related to sex, sexuality and drug use. They can also be accessed directly online through Facebook Messenger instant messaging and extend their outreach to hook-up apps and websites. Crucial to all this education is a strong emphasis on mutual respect, consent and non-discrimination: sections of Kontak's 'tips'n'tricks' website are dedicated to 'looking out for each other' and 'looking out for yourself'.

During outreach, Kontak also make clear to clients that they are available for non-judgemental, peer-led counselling sessions. These can cover any subject that might be causing people problems, including sex, sexuality and gender identity; sexual violence; stigma and discrimination; alcohol, drugs and harm reduction; STIs, HIV, testing and pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP); or self-care, social life and community building. **Though they are not licensed counsellors, as a peer-based service all workers are members of the LGBT community and have lived experience with many of the concerns faced by their clients.**

Finally, Kontak also provide four streams of workshops relevant to the needs of their clients. They cover topics such as harm reduction, sex and pleasure and issues faced by trans men, as well as any other subject on request from clients. These workshops can be provided as one-off trainings or as a structured series. They are available to individuals and community organisations.

Integration with other organisations

Ensuring that people know where they can go for health and social services is a core part of Kontak's work. Both online and during outreach, peer workers are available to refer people to a range of services, provided both by the public health system and by

other non-governmental organisations. This can include referrals for HIV testing and treatment, PEP and PrEP, drugs services, counselling and sexual health services. **By seeking a referral from the Kontak team, clients are assured that they will be referred to a service that understands their needs, is non-judgemental and non-stigmatising: what Kontak's website call "our favourite non-discriminatory clinics"**. Examples include Clinique L'Actuel, a public sexual health clinic, and Ça Prend Un Village, a peer-led programme for people seeking to reduce their methamphetamine use.

In addition, Kontak's parent organisation, ACCM, is a community-based organisation that exists to support people living with HIV and hepatitis C. Kontak's clients can be referred to ACCM for peer support, practical assistance, and information on accessing treatment through Canada's public health system. They also co-ordinate sex education projects that promote wellbeing and self-confidence. While ACCM primarily serves Quebec's English-speaking population, Kontak is also closely associated with ACCM's French-speaking equivalent organisation, RÉZO.

Kontak also engages with other organisations to educate and train them on the needs of people engaging in chemsex, including other community organisations, sexual health clinics, universities and the provincial Department of Public Health. They run trainings on subjects such as chemsex intervention and the sexual health of queer Trans men. Finally, they maintain an outreach and educational presence at major events and locations in Quebec, such as Black & Blue (a large 'LGBT party festival'), Bal-en-Blanc (an annual rave in Montréal) and Camping Plein Bois (a resort specifically designed for gay men).

Key lessons

- ➊ Peer-leaders in integrated services have a unique insight into the lives and experiences of their clients, and can use that to provide compassionate and non-judgemental services
- ➋ Integrated services understand the barriers their clients face when accessing external services, and can ensure that clients are referred to the most appropriate options
- ➌ Integrated services know their context and clients, and can make sure they have access to the most relevant and safest commodities

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