



EXCHANGING
PREVENTION PRACTICES
ON POLYDRUG USE
AMONG YOUTH
IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE
SYSTEMS

Setting the scene

Betsy Thom

b.thom@mdx.ac.uk



Co-funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union

www.eppic-project.eu
 ***@eppic_project***

Project details



Duration: January 1° 2017 – February 28° 2020

Supported by: 3rd EU Health Programme (2014–2020) (Chafea) [grant number Project 768162].

Partners: 6 countries

- Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, Middlesex University (UK: co-ordinator), Change Grow Live (UK), {Health Opportunities Team (HOT)}, UK,
- Aarhus University (Denmark),
- Eclectica (Italy),
- European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (Austria),
- Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (Germany),
- Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology (Poland).

Objectives



- To gather knowledge, exchange best practice & identify transferable innovations & principles of good practice on interventions to prevent illicit drug use, the development of polydrug use, and use of NPS among young people in touch with the criminal justice system (CJS)
- To develop a set of guidelines/ principles/ tools adapted to the development of initiatives aimed at the target group based on European Drug Prevention Quality Standards
- To initiate a European knowledge exchange network for practitioners and stakeholders working with young people in the CJS

Target groups



Young people – age 15-24

In touch with the CJS – in prison or secure settings, in community-based projects/ programmes, in rehabilitation/ treatment services.

Practitioners: drug workers, prison officials, probation workers, youth workers, educationalists, health workers – (ie those who work with the target group of young people).

Other stakeholders: national and local policy makers, service commissioners, voluntary groups working with youth/ families.

Prevention

Some of them have been smoking weed since they were 12 years old ... we do work on ones who are 15, they are already 2.5 years down the line, ... so I think prevention may be too late then. It's more about damage limitation... (YP Substance Use worker, UK)

People aren't going to stop doing it, but you have to find a way for them to do it safely (Young person 3, focus group UK).

...there is definitely a gap for effective intervention around supply because ... If they make loads of money, if they're helping their mum out, they're not really getting caught, and if they do get caught, it's fairly light touch, because that's the whole point of trying to stop kids from becoming entrenched in it. (YOS case worker 4, Project B Focus Group).

Prevention as used in the EPPIC project



- *At a simple level, drug prevention may include any policy, programme, or activity that is (at least partially) directly or indirectly aimed at preventing, delaying or reducing drug use, and/or its negative consequences such as health and social harm, or the development of problematic drug use (UK: ACMD 2015:12).*

This broad definition was reflected in the country reports where prevention interventions were framed very widely to include primary prevention aiming to prevent or delay onset of use, through to preventing the development of more harmful patterns of use, treatment, and harm reduction. (WP5 cross national report)

Overview of Work Packages



WP4

Knowledge exchange on current evidence & practice

April-July 17

WP5

Drug using trajectories, innovative interventions & experiential evidence

June 17-Dec 18



WP6

Guidelines for good practice & quality standards in the CJS

Jan 19-Nov19

WP7

Cultural appropriateness & transferability

April 19-Dec 19

Methods



- **WP4:** Literature review, ‘thick’ descriptive reports on: legislation/ CJS, prevalence: scoping survey & key informant interviews to describe service approaches, overview of interventions/ approaches targeting young people in the CJS.
- **WP5:** developed common research tools (interview schedules & coding and analysis guidelines); interviewed young people and practitioners – one to one and focus group.
- **WP6 & 7:** literature reviews, workshops, discussion groups, individual interviews with key informants/ practitioners and other stakeholders.
- **Knowledge exchange network:** problematic; websites; country specific workshops / discussion groups.

Writing –up: terminology



Aim for non-stigmatising, non-labelling terminology

- Use ‘people first’ language – young people with... young people who...
- Use the expression - young people in contact with the criminal justice system
- Use - young people who use drugs/drug experienced young people; young people involved in crime, young people involved in offending
- Avoid the terms ‘addicts’, ‘addiction’, ‘addicted’ etc.
- Avoid ‘prisoners’, but use young people in prison, secure settings etc.
- Avoid the terms ‘juvenile delinquents’, ‘young offenders’
- Avoid the term ‘vulnerable’ – except where used in policy and practice documents.

Outputs



- WP4 – 6 national reports and 1 cross-national report
- WP5 – 12 national reports and 2 cross-national reports
- WP6 – cross national report and the Quality Standards
- WP7 – 6 national reports and 1 cross national report

All available on the project website: <https://www.eppic-project.eu>

Academic publications: (see abstracts document)

5 papers published in *Drugs and Alcohol Today*;

1 paper published in *Journal of Youth Studies*

5 papers under review in *Drugs: education, prevention and policy*

Other outputs include: articles in *Stof* (Danish practitioner journal; blogs, short reports and briefings).

Some key findings: Individual level



- Most young people who are drug experienced and in touch with the criminal justice system have a **range of complex problems**, including mental health issues / social difficulties (family, home, school). Responses aimed to prevent/ reduce drug use and/or crime will not be effective if those other problems are not addressed.

...emotional wellbeing is just horrific and also the kind of troubled family... extensive amounts of disaffection within the family. ...Essentially, every client that we have now has a number of issues of which substance use is one of them – We're not a substance use team anymore, we are an emotional wellbeing service with a specialism in substance misuse... (project manager, UK)

Some key findings: Structural level



- Wider structural change is needed to address systems and socio-cultural factors associated with problem drug use and crime.
- Delivering interventions/ services within criminal justice contexts places constraints on what practitioners can offer young people.
- The criminalisation (and stigmatisation) of young people makes it more difficult to build positive social roles and self-identity.

It's hard when you leave prison, because even people who know you ...my Italian friends looked at me differently, did not trust me, 'cause in the end prison remains the place of criminals. (young person, Italy)

Some key findings: Organisational level



- A holistic, inter-agency approach is needed. Partnership working within the CJS and good transition services between prison/ secure units and return to the community are essential.
- Agencies need to find appropriate, effective ways to engage young people in interventions.
- Building the relational aspects of service/ intervention delivery and fostering trust are key elements of engagement.

It is so annoying to go somewhere for help and then you are passed on to another place. In the end, you give up, you feel like an idiot. (young person, Denmark)

Transferring / translating innovation & principles of good practice



- **Policy level:** Recognise that structural factors are important – poverty/ deprivation; homelessness & unemployment; immigrant status; unequal access to resources. (transferring/ translating policy models: broader than CJS)
- **Organisational level:** Emerging findings on importance of considering organisational models and good practice – partnership working/ CJS context
- **Practice level:** Transferring/ translating intervention programmes / models & principles of good practice – focus of the EPPIC work (WP7)
- **Projects/ approaches described in EPPIC** – mainly based on individual change theories and responses – counselling, provision of practical support with accommodation, education, general health & welfare needs.
- **Another way:** Changing environmental contexts – local level systems approach: combines policy/ organisational and practice levels within local areas.



The quality standards

Diversity issues:
Ethnicity –
language –
cultural clash in
therapy contexts
(Austria)

There is a lack of evaluation practice in prisons and in community addiction services; there is a general lack of evaluation culture (Italy)

Fragmentation of interventions & services across health/ CJS/ social welfare – different professional groups (UK)

Shift attention from a narrow focus on drugs. Standards need to apply to prevention AND treatment/ rehabilitation (Poland)

Professionals generally did not know whether their organisation operates with quality standards (Denmark)

Comments from country reports

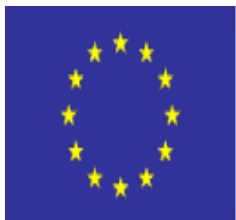


**EXCHANGING
PREVENTION PRACTICES
ON POLYDRUG USE
AMONG YOUTH
IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE
SYSTEMS**

For more information about the project, visit the EPPIC website:

www.eppic-project.eu

 ***@eppic_project***



Co-funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union