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EPPIC Newsletter 1 (UK)

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Exchanging Prevention practices on Polydrug use among youth In Criminal justice systems

Key Points

- There are few prevention interventions designed specifically for young people in the CJS
- Young people present with a complex interaction of multiple problems, including physical and mental health needs, criminal activity, family and social difficulties, educational problems, and deprivation. Prevention responses that focus solely on drug use or on criminal activity are unlikely to be successful.
- There are tensions arising from the location of service delivery - at the intersection between criminal justice, health, social welfare and educational systems - and from the need for practitioners to work in partnerships across and within different legal and service contexts.
- Specific challenges arise in interventions delivered in secure settings: uncertainty of length of stay (especially for those on remand); short sentences reducing impact of interventions; reluctance to admit drug use in prison settings; motivation of young people; transition from youth to adult services at age 18.
- Engagement and motivation of young people is a major issue for prevention intervention, particularly intervention before the young person is at risk of a custodial sentence. Young people may accept a treatment intervention as a means of avoiding a prison sentence.
- Interventions were unlikely to involve young people in their design or implementation, although many practitioners thought it was something to aim for in the future.
- Language: Young people from different ethnic backgrounds were noted to have particular difficulties both accessing and benefiting from interventions
- Funding: Many interventions are funded on a short-term project basis (1-4 years) and end when funding stops. Outside the prison system, projects often face issues of sustainability and inadequate resource allocation.



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The EPPIC Project

EPPIC is funded by the Third EU Health Programme (2014-2020) Consumers, Health, Agriculture and Food Executive Agency (Chafea) (January 2017 – December 2019). It is implemented in six countries: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK, which co-ordinates the project. The project aims to:

1. gather knowledge, exchange best practice and 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 (age 15-24) in touch with the criminal justice system (CJS)
2. develop a set of guidelines adapted to the development of initiatives aimed at the target group based on the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards (EDPQS)
3. initiate a European knowledge exchange network for practitioners and stakeholders working with young people in the CJS

Project partners work towards: developing a better understanding of the cultures of young drug consumers and the factors that support voluntary participation in interventions in the context of law enforcement; and identifying and strengthening prerequisites for involvement of all stakeholders in active exchange of good practices across Europe.

Progress

The key points noted above are preliminary findings from two work packages.

WP 4 was dedicated to knowledge exchange on current evidence and practice. The cross-national report is based on six national reports which used reviews of published literature and documentation, a scoping survey and key informant interviews to ascertain existing information on substance use among youth in criminal justice systems, and prevention and intervention initiatives, including those evaluated as ‘best practice’.

In **WP 5** “thick” descriptions were produced on selected innovative interventions in each partner country; interviews were conducted with practitioners and young people to explore their perspectives and experiences of interventions, and key issues for intervention approaches were identified.

The cross-national reports and all country reports are on the EPPIC website: <https://www.eppic-project.eu>

Next steps in the project

As part of Work Package 5, 240 interviews with young people are being analysed. This will allow us to look at young people’s accounts of their drug consumption and involvement with the law and at their explanations of the factors driving consumption and criminal involvement.



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Announcements

The EPPIC Project will be presented in 2018 at the following conferences:

- Annual conference of the International Society for the Study of Drug Policy, 16-18 May 2018, Vancouver; Duke, Thom and Gleeson: Framing drug prevention for young people in touch with the criminal justice system in England: views from practitioners and professionals working in the field.
- [Annual conference of the European Society of Criminology \(ESC\)](#): 29. Aug. - 1. Sept. 2018; Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Stummvoll G.: "Exit strategies from criminal proceedings, social services and narratives of health promotion in the criminal justice system".
- [Annual conference of the European Society of Prevention Research \(EUSPR\)](#): 24.-26. Oct. 2018; Lisbon, Portugal. Conference panel on EPPIC.

Project Partners:

Coordinator: Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, Middlesex University (UK) in partnership with Change Grow Live (UK) and Health Opportunities Team (Edinburgh, Scotland), 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).

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