

Institution: Middlesex University		
Unit of Assessment: 20 Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Drug interventions for young people in contact with the criminal justice system: transforming practice among practitioners		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2016 (long-term); January 2017– February 2020 (EU funded EPPIC research – Exchanging Prevention practices on Polydrug use among youth In Criminal justice systems)		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name:	Role:	Period employed by HEI:
Betsy Thom	Professor of Health Policy	1999-current
Karen Duke	Professor of Criminology	1994-current
Rachel Herring	Senior Research Fellow	2009-current
Helen Gleeson	Research Fellow	2016-current
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 January 2018-31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the Impact		
The major impacts are:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. production of Quality Standards (QS) across European countries have informed workforce learning, training, and development of 'best practice' among practitioners working in the criminal justice system (CJS), substance use services, and youth services, and in the UK, has initiated further development of the QS to implement in service delivery; 2. development of guidelines/best practice on 'engagement' for UK practitioners - leading to changes in how practitioners develop relationships and engage with young people; 3. improvements in approaches to young clients and development of 'good practice' resulting from knowledge exchange between stakeholders (practitioners, researchers, others); 4. creation of new networks between different stakeholders both nationally and internationally; and 5. evidence to support re-conceptualisation and review of policy and service development. 		
2. Underpinning Research		
<p>Since 2007, the research team has undertaken studies on risk and prevention [1], substance use among marginalised groups and young people [2], and the interface between substance use and the criminal justice system [3]. The findings from these studies underpinned the conceptual and substantive development of the EPPIC project. Involvement in 7 cross-national European research projects and collaborative networks between 2005 and 2016 (e.g. www.alicerap.eu, http://www.rarha.eu/), provided the necessary infrastructure, partnerships, and knowledge of comparative research methods to undertake leadership and execution of the EPPIC study led by Thom and Duke and supported by Herring and Gleeson from January 2017 to February 2020. The EPPIC project involved researchers and professionals from Aarhus University (Denmark), the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research (Austria), Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences (Germany), Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology (Poland), Eclectica (Italy); in the UK: Change, Grow, Live (CGL), DECCA (Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice) Sandwell, and Health Opportunities Team (HOT), Edinburgh.</p>		
Rationale and objectives		
<p>Prior to this research, little attention was paid to drugs prevention policy and practice in relation to young people (aged 14-25) in contact with the CJS. EPPIC addressed this gap by: a) gathering knowledge and exchanging best practice on interventions to prevent illicit drug use/polydrug use among young people in touch with the CJS; b) developing a set of quality standards based on the European Drug Prevention Quality Standards, adapted to initiatives aimed at the target group; and c) initiating a European knowledge exchange network for practitioners and stakeholders working with young people in the CJS.</p>		

Research design and methods

The study comprised: 1) A review/ scoping of current interventions in each country; 2) A 'thick' description of chosen innovative interventions; 3) Interviews and focus groups with a) 198 young people (aged 14-25) who use drugs and are in touch with the CJS, and b) 68 practitioners delivering / managing services for these young people; 4) Analysis of young people's drug using and offending trajectories and practitioners' experiences of delivering interventions; 5) Production and dissemination of a 'quality standards' handbook for use in developing/implementing projects for this target group; 6) Examination of the 'transferability' of innovations and quality standards between and within different contexts; and 7) In the UK only, a series of four 'solutions focused' workshops with practitioners in London, Sheffield, Sandwell, Edinburgh; young people and practitioner focus groups; and focus groups with the project advisory board around different aspects of the research.

Research findings

The key product for impact, the *Handbook on Quality Standards for Interventions aimed at Drug Experienced Young People in contact with Criminal Justice Systems* (see Sect 5, Ref [A]), was developed on the basis of the research findings, and co-produced through consultation with practitioners in the six countries and with international experts from European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and Worldwide Prison Health Research and Engagement Network (WEPHREN) run by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Research findings were transformed into guidance for practitioners but also a wider set of priority recommendations relevant to policy makers and planners. Key research findings which underpin the Quality Standards and the impacts reported are:

- A holistic, inter-agency approach is needed to respond to the complex/multiple problems experienced by young people, who receive drug interventions in coercive contexts. [3,5,6]
- A strengths-based approach/developing trusting relationships can facilitate engagement. [4,5,6]
- Prevention must be understood broadly and include harm reduction approaches. [1,2,5]
- To avoid criminalisation and stigma, diversion to health/education programmes is needed. [5,6]
- Wider structural change is needed and diversity must be recognised (gender, ethnicity, etc). [2,4,5]
- There is a need to review professional awareness/training, policy and systems of service delivery [4,6].

The work packages produced: five national reports from each country, five cross-national reports and the final 'quality standards' package; a policy briefing; publications in special issues in peer reviewed journals; additional published papers; presentations at conferences. All outputs were peer reviewed (see: <http://eppic-project.co.uk>).

3. References to the Research

- [1]. **Thom, B.**, Sales, R., and Pearce, J. (eds) (2007) *Growing Up with Risk*. Bristol: Policy Press. ISBN 9781861347312.
- [2]. Eisenbach-Stangl, I., Moskalewicz, J. and **Thom, B.** (eds) (2009) *Two Worlds of Consumption in Late Modern Societies*. Ashgate.
- [3]. **Duke, K.** (2009) 'The focus on crime and coercion in drugs policy', in MacGregor, S. (ed) *Responding to Drugs Misuse: research and policy priorities in health and social care*. London: Routledge. 14-24.
- [4] **Gleeson, H., Duke, K., Thom, B.** (2019) Challenges to providing culturally sensitive drug interventions for black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) groups within UK youth justice systems, *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 19 (3): 172-181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/DAT-11-2018-0068> <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/26210/>
- [5] **Duke, K., Thom, B. and Gleeson, H.** (2019) Framing 'drug prevention' for young people in contact with the criminal justice system in England: views from practitioners in the field, *Journal of Youth Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1632818>, <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/26870/>
- [6] **Duke, K., Gleeson, H., Dąbrowska, K., Herold, M., and Rolando, S.** (2020) The engagement of young people in drug interventions in coercive contexts: findings from a cross-

national European study, *Drugs: education, prevention and policy* (online), (doi:[10.1080/09687637.2020.1763917](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687637.2020.1763917)), <https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/30350/>

Evidence of Quality: 3 are peer reviewed journal articles, 3 are books/book chapters published by well-respected publishers.

Grants Awarded: EU EPPIC (Chafea), EUR599, 511

4. Details of the Impact

Impacts stem from extensive engagement with practitioners and other stakeholders in the drugs, health and youth justice fields: **UK:** national third sector service providers, government (Home Office, Ministry of Justice, Public Health England, and Youth Justice Board), Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD); **EU institutions:** EMCDDA, European Commission (DG Home, DG Justice and DG Sante); **International institutions:** UNICRI, WHO, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Project meetings in Poland, Denmark and the UK facilitated cross-national knowledge exchange/networking between stakeholders. Research findings informed UNICRI and UNODC projects on family initiatives and on the development of training packages [F,G,J]. The main impacts, with particular focus on the Middlesex contribution, are:

1. *Influence in six European countries of Quality Standards produced collaboratively with practitioners and international stakeholders for drug prevention practitioners working with young people in the criminal justice system*

Practitioners have drawn on findings encapsulated in the Quality Standards Handbook [A] to improve the quality of interventions to provide safe, effective interventions and positive experiences, manage and reduce drug use, and improve well-being, and to inform the training and learning for the workforce involved in delivering services to young people [C,D,E]:

- *'These have helped to improve the quality of interventions we offer to young people in contact with the criminal justice system and we use them to inform training and learning for our workforce. In the future, we also hope to use them in shaping service level agreements between community drug and alcohol support services and our youth justice partners to ensure that we have a common understanding and approach to working with this cohort of young people'* (National Head of Operations, Young People's Services, CGL, UK). [E]

The perceived usefulness of the Handbook is demonstrated by its translation into Polish, German, and Italian (Danish pending). It is available on the EMCDDA website, promoted through the Standards & Guidelines page and Best Practice Portal [H,I]. Stakeholders from a wide range of different countries and contexts were able to access the Quality Standards through: the final EPPIC conference; distribution lists in each country (over 200 relevant stakeholders in the UK); information on the EPPIC website and on international websites (WEPHREN and EMCDDA) and on partner websites. The three UK practitioner partners continue to work with the Middlesex team on the implementation and evaluation of the QS and they were joined in 2021 by practitioners from Italian prison and community services.

2. *Enhancement of UK practice by creating a set of key messages for practice to improve methods of engaging young people in interventions*

Interviews with young people and practitioners highlighted the need to improve effective engagement in interventions. The 4 additional workshops held with UK practitioners resulted in six key messages produced as a short, accessible report [B] and circulated widely to over 200 practitioners/stakeholder institutions. Practitioners reported a positive impact, from attendance at the workshops and from the report, on ways in which they engage young people in services [C, D, E]:

- *'The research findings on engagement and the participation in the engagement workshop helped us as a service to prioritise the preliminary work needed around building relationships with young people, particularly those in contact with the criminal justice system'* (Team Manager, Sandwell Children's Trust, UK). [D]
- *'The report is excellent - really useful and informative. I'll be working with the Team here to implement the learning in our practice. I will use it to develop trauma-informed work around substance use'* (Managing Director, HOT, Edinburgh, UK). [C]

3. Improvements made in approaches to young clients and development of 'good practice' as a result of sustained engagement and knowledge exchange between researchers and practitioners, policy makers and other organisations

UK practitioners reported how involvement with the EPPIC project benefitted them personally and had impacted on their practice with young people [C,E]:

- *'The questions that you asked (in the interview schedules) facilitated a really good discussion with a young person. He felt valued and heard...we're redesigning the way we capture evaluation off young people. I found the questions that you asked in your interviews useful to do that.'* (Substance use worker, Change, Grow, Live, UK). [C]
- *'(It)really helped me to develop...it gave me a different insight into my work'* (Project worker, HOT, UK). [C]

The UK advisory group (representatives from Public Health England, the Home Office, Youth Justice Board, service providers) exchanged ideas and participated in presentations from external speakers (eg. talk on quality standards in September 2018 and presentations by practitioners and young people on 'innovative' interventions from Scotland and England). Board members commented on the practical benefits of the exchange:

- *'The networks we built through the project were really important for getting new ideas for our service and they increased my knowledge and understanding of the wider field both in the UK and abroad'* (Team Manager, Sandwell Children's Trust, UK). [D]
- *'Hearing from practitioners and some of the real-life stories is always a useful exercise for more of a policy-facing person like myself, who works with a lot of data and office-based stuff'* (Government Official, Ministry of Justice, UK). [C]

4. Creation of new networks between different stakeholders both nationally and internationally

The 'networking' facilitated through the research was seen by UK practitioners and policy makers as beneficial to their knowledge and understanding of the field. Practitioners found exposure to stakeholders from different services, policy contexts and countries helpful and used their own networks to create wider awareness of the research and issues among local policy makers, practitioners and other stakeholders [C, D, E]:

- *'I had the privilege to travel to Denmark to learn more about interventions that Danish practitioners had developed...The holistic approach that they adopt is something that we emulate in our services and will further develop following this learning. It was very useful to learn from other practitioners in another country about how they approach their work with this target group'* (National Head of Operations, Young People's Services, CGL, UK). [E]
- *'On the WHO WEPHREN website...we had a specific themed month around youth justice and the EPPIC team were able to contribute through blogs and reports'* (Consultant, Public Health England, UK). [C]
- *'We were able to share the reports with local politicians...We sent them round the local networks that wanted to hear about the learning'* (Managing Director, HOT, Edinburgh, UK). [C]
- *'I do training events and presentations...[and] talk about the different projects that are running and this is one of them. I share what findings I can with the regional teams'* (Programme Manager, Public Health England, UK). [C]

Knowledge of the project was widespread across European networks. Joint sessions were held between Project partners, the EPPIC Project Advisory Group (membership from UNICRI, EMCDDA, Chafea), with practitioners in partner countries presenting their services during project meetings in Warsaw (January 2018) and Aarhus (January 2019). Practitioners from Denmark, Italy, Poland and UK presented at the final EPPIC conference - 90 participants from UK and Europe (academics, practitioners, policy makers); live-streamed to 269 people. Over the final two years of the project, the EPPIC website (<http://eppic-project.co.uk>) received: 2,742 visits, 6,519 page views and 1,119 downloads. EPPIC news, tweeted regularly (@eppic_project), was picked up by 546 followers. An Italian webinar on 8 July 2020 was attended by 90 policy makers and practitioners. Practitioners in the UK networks are continuing to collaborate on new projects related to young people and substance use.

5. Evidence to support re-conceptualisation and review of policy and service

development

EPPIC findings have informed policy and practice at European and national levels through invited high-level presentations and consultations:

- Presentation by Duke at the UNODC/WHO technical expert group meeting of 25 experts from 13 countries on *Elements of Family Therapy for Adolescents with Drug Use Disorders including in Contact with the Criminal Justice System* held 4-7 June 2018 in Vienna. Identified effective approaches to treat adolescents with drug use disorders and provided guidance for the development of a UN training package on family therapy (UNFT). [F]
- Presentation by Thom at “Family-oriented policies in drug prevention”, 2 March 2020 at the 63rd session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, organized by UNICRI, in collaboration with UNODC, EMCDDA, and the Council of Europe. Informed UNICRI project on the needs of families in preventing drug use among children and adolescents. [J] and by Thom and Duke at the UNICRI virtual conference “COVID-19, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Priorities: A Spotlight on Vulnerable Groups”, 2 December 2020. [G]
- Presentation by Thom on EPPIC findings to professional development session for all Public Health England Health and Justice leads nationally, including representatives from the devolved UK administrations. 4 June 2018.
- Duke contributed as an expert member to the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee roundtable preceding the inquiry into the public health consequences of drug policy, 18 December 2018, at which the work of EPPIC was discussed.
- Invited presentation by Thom and Duke to the UK Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) at evidence-gathering session on young people and drug use on 26 June 2020.
- In addition, European stakeholders have participated in seminars and consultations in their own languages and received information (e.g. Policy Briefing published in the newsletter of the European Centre for Social Welfare, Policy and Research, Vienna, <https://www.euro.centre.org/publications/detail/3653>).

5. Sources to Corroborate the Impact

[A] Handbook on quality standards for interventions aimed at drug experienced young people in contact with the criminal justice system. 2019

<https://secureservercdn.net/160.153.138.163/evy.d4d.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Handbook-on-Quality-Standards-2.pdf>

[B] Report from solutions-focused workshops in the UK: Engaging young people: perspectives from ‘solution focused’ workshops and interviews with young people. 2019

<http://drugandalcoholresearchcentre.org/EPPICreport/EPPICreport.html>

[C] An impact report based on interviews and survey responses with practitioners and policy makers, undertaken independently on behalf of the EPPIC team.

[D] DECCA Team Manager, Sandwell Children’s Trust – testimonial.

[E] Head of Operations – Children and Young People’s Services, Change, Grow, Live - testimonial

[F] Report from the UNODC technical expert group meeting on *Elements of Family Therapy for Adolescents with Drug Use Disorders including in Contact with the Criminal Justice System: Creating Societies Resilient to Drugs and Crime* held 4-7 June 2018 in Vienna. The EPPIC project is discussed on pp. 28-29.

[G] UNICRI report of virtual meetings on *COVID-19, crime prevention and criminal justice priorities: spotlight on vulnerable groups*, 2 December 2020, EPPIC presentation summarised on pp.38-42.

[H] Head of Sector – Support to Practice, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction – testimonial.

[I] EPPIC Quality Standards promoted on Best Practice Portal of the EMCDDA website (including translations). Website: https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/drugs-library/handbook-quality-standards-interventions-aimed-drug-experienced-young-people-contact-criminal-justice-systems-eppic_en

Best Practice Portal: (<https://www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice/guidelines>)

[J] Programme Officer, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute – testimonial.