

Enhancing Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment: Research project summary

This research and innovation project is designed to augment and enhance current programmes tackling drug and alcohol abuse. By introducing a systemic approach, the project will address some of the underlying reasons people turn to drugs and become trapped in destructive cycles, with the eventual aim of improving service user retention and reducing the rate of relapse.

Our hypothesis is that by including factors not usually taken account of, the influence of key systems (such as peer groups, families and cultural systems) on individuals, they will be more resourced and able to maintain a healthier, substance free lifestyle.

Outcomes will be both in terms of direct benefits for those we work with and fresh knowledge about the issues gleaned through the research process. Three groups will benefit:

- 1) The Drug Treatment Workers (DTWs) will have a fresh and additional perspective on their work, new skills and interventions available for use with their clients. At a personal level, they will be more resourced to deliver their work and reduce burn-out.
- 2) The Drug Treatment Agencies involved with the project will benefit from improved retention in Service of Service User's and reduced 'burn-out' symptoms from employees.
- 3) Service Users will have new insights and will be more resourced to manage a healthier lifestyle.

Using an Action Research method, we will monitor the impact of introducing a systemic approach to at least three Drug Treatment Agencies, in collaboration with an academic institution. It will be a two stage process, initially working with DTWs to listen to and learn about their particular treatment model and understand issues of motivation & beliefs inherent with the work; by co-creating and integrating systemic solutions we will develop their range of skills, then track their work with their Service Users.

Our research will improve understanding of what constitutes effective Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment, with the ultimate aim of promoting well-being and community safety and cohesion. By reducing misuse of substances, not only is there a reduction in harm to the individuals concerned, but also to the wider community as substance-related crime lowers.

It will improve VCS participation in undertaking research, not only through the Nowhere Foundation's work, but through the Drug Treatment Agencies, all of whom will be VCS organisations and will be actively involved in the Action Research process. By seeking the input of service user groups in this development stage, we will be looking to find the most appropriate way to include beneficiaries in research roles.

This paper is part of a submission for Lottery Funding. For further information contact the project co-leader, Chris Williams at chris@bradwill.wandoo.co.uk