



Governing Parental Opioid Use: A Relational Ethnography

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‘World leading’ Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IOPPN).

Emphasis of research in the Addictions Department is on **‘what works’ in the prevention and treatment of substance misuse.**

Context: Drug Use and Parents in Treatment

- 268,390 adults were in contact with drug and alcohol services in 2017 to 2018.
- 25,593 people who started treatment in 2017 to 2018 (20%) said they lived with a total of 46,109 children under 18.
- a further 38,852 (31% of the total) said they were parents but did not currently live with their children.
- People in treatment for opiates had the highest rates of not living with their children (39%).

All data from: National Statistics (2018) Alcohol and drug treatment for adults: statistics summary 2017 to 2018

Context: Parents Using Drugs and Services

- While most services focus on protecting children from the consequences of parental drug use, there might be **missed opportunities to support parents in other ways.**
- **Less attention has been given** to understanding the ‘lived experience’ and challenges of the **parents themselves**, as well as the practices of the **people working in this complex and challenging area.**

Context: Lived Experience

- Parents using drugs and their families are often stigmatised.
- Supportive social networks can be key to successful recovery.*
- There is a lack of research on how the system works from a family perspective.

*Adfam (2012) Challenging Stigma: Tackling the prejudice experienced by the families of drug and alcohol users.

Rationale for the Relations Study

- While the UK has established ways of working with families affected by parental drug use there is wide variation in these policies and practices.
- **The Relations Study** is an innovative research project exploring how parental drug use is managed in practice from a **family *and* services perspective**.

What is the Relations Study?

What is the Relations Study?

The study will operate for **3 years** across **2 sites** (Scotland & England):

- I. Learning Alliances in England and Scotland.
- II. Relational Ethnography (Parents/Families).
- III. Relational Ethnography (Practitioners/Services).
- IV. Policy Review & Analysis.



The Learning Alliance

Who will make up the Learning Alliance?

- Staff in public services for parents who use drugs and their families.
- Parents using services & family members.
- Policymakers.

What will the Learning Alliance do?

- Help the researchers plan the research.
- Comment on findings (co-produced approach).
- Make suggestions about what can be done to respond to the findings.

What is Relational Ethnography?

“Understanding the social world or people being studied through immersion in their community to produce detailed description of people, their cultures and beliefs”.

- **Participant observation.**
- **Semi-structured interviews.**
- **Focus groups.**

Ethnography: Parents & Families

- Recruit **15 families** over 12-21 months of observational fieldwork.
- **45 interviews** at each site with different family members (including children)

Ethnography: Practitioners & Services

- Recruit at least **6 community teams/services** over 12-21 months of fieldwork (3 months at each site).
- **6 Focus groups** per site and interviews with **senior/team manager (6 per site)** and local **policymakers (6 per site)**.

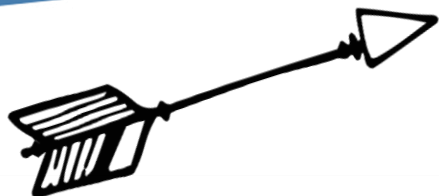
Critical Policy Analysis

- Government documents across areas of health and social services (e.g. adult, child, maternity services, criminal justice, child protection and family law, housing support).
- Any documents (guidelines, tools, terms of practice, strategies, etc.) at the organisational and governmental level that offer an **“organised attempt to select goals and methods for governmental action”**.

Who will Benefit from this Study?

- **Parents who use drugs and their families** to show how **services might better meet their needs.**
- Service **providers and policymakers** by producing new understandings about how **existing practices and policies may or may not be benefiting** the people they seek to help.
- May help **develop new interventions** to help parents who use drugs and their families.

GET
INVOLVED



Relations Study

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- ✓ **Put yourself / organisation forward** to join the Learning Alliance.
- ✓ **Let us know** if you or your service would be interested in participating in the ethnographic study.
- ✓ **Help us identify relevant policy documents** that might frame the experience of parents who use drugs (at the organisational and governmental levels).

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