

The Cycle of Relapse and Recovery Of Community Based Drug Misusing Offenders: The impact of childhood, trauma, relationships & psychological health

1. Background & aims

Flores (2012) views addiction as a mechanism to help those manage who've had difficult childhoods due to poor attachments to parents/primary care givers. This might be due to abuse, neglect, trauma or bereavement/loss.

The UK Government's **Drug Interventions Programme (DIP)** aims to reduce Class A drug misuse & the associated offending behaviour. This group have entrenched & long lasting addictions with many 'failed' attempts at recovery.

No published qualitative research on the characteristics of DIP clients i.e. their psychological health, family upbringing, abuse, trauma & relationships & how this might impact on their relapse & recovery.

Aims:

- To ask DIP clients what they consider to be important factors in their relapse & recovery.
- To improve service provision & policy development to help this group in sustaining recovery.

2. Design, participants & setting

Design:

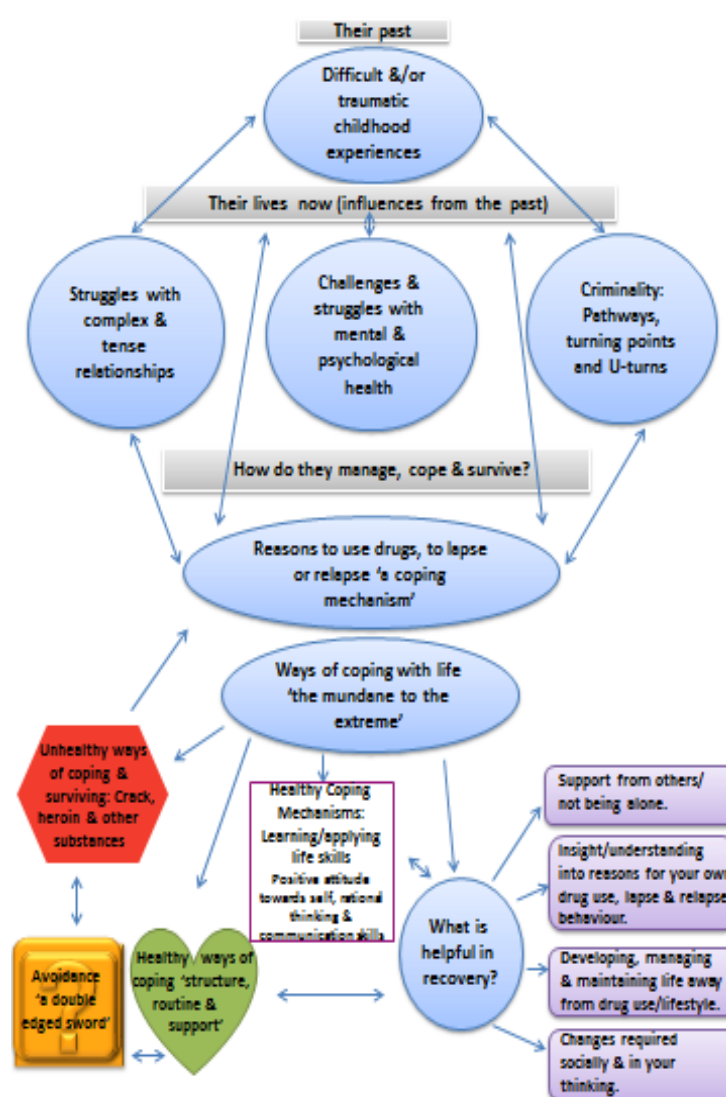
- 4 focus groups
- Thematic analysis: IPA
- NHS ethical approval
- Recruitment was challenging
- Focus group & Q-card sort design provided very rich data.

Participants:

- Current/past community based DIP clients (N=10)
- Crack/heroin users
- Range of length of use: 4-25yrs
- Recovery range: 1 month-3yrs
- 6 males & 4 females – adults.

4. Findings

Clare: "Things that I felt I had dealt with or **situations I'd been through** where you thought, you know what I'm cool with it and erm, actually realising, actually realising that **I hadn't dealt with it** was a stress in itself... Between the ages of four and eight **I was molested** by my Gran's partner".



Ellen: "I had **undiagnosed post natal depression**. Yeah so it was on the back of post natal depression & **not knowing how to ask for help**. It's like **structure, routine, support & honesty with myself** & others but still myself when I'm having **dodgy thoughts, planning a use up**, might even be that I'm **raging with my Mother**".

3. Questions

Participants spoke from their own experiences & discussed:

1. What do you think might cause someone to relapse from Class A drugs?

2. What do you think is helpful in sustaining a person's recovery from Class A drugs?

Q-card sort (below) invited rich discussion on topics considered to be important in relapse & recovery e.g. family, partner, feeling depressed.



5. Discussion

Implication of results for:

- The addiction & psychology field
- Policy development (e.g. Government)
- Therapeutic interventions
- Improving service provision.

Next steps: Findings have been developed into an interview schedule and will be explored further in one to one interviews.