



Drug policy and intervention change: exploring the interfaces

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What are the processes that enable change to happen?

Policy change in Ireland:

historically slow and gradual, ambiguous in nature and featuring 'long periods of almost total acquiescence interspersed with frenzied burst of activity'

(Butler, 2007: 141)

Policy and intervention change in three domains

Local

Domestic violence and substance use – how a women's refuge changed

Regional/National

Boxing Clever – the research/intervention interface

International

Iceland, drug use and gender

Local: Cuan Saor Women's Refuge

- ▶ Domestic violence service based in Clonmel, Co Tipperary
- ▶ Provides self-contained refuge accommodation, support and advocacy, outreach, court advocacy and support, counselling, 24 hour helpline, children's support, play therapy, parenting support and the Pattern Change programme. (10.4 FTE staff).
- ▶ Over the past 5 years engaged in policy, practice and inter-agency change in addressing co-existing domestic violence and substance use.



Why change?



- ▶ Ongoing presentation of women with dual issues.
- ▶ Refused accommodation to women actively using.
- ▶ Collaborative approach with women embedded in service – conflict with presenting issues of substance use, sex working and sexual exploitation.
- ▶ Change in context – availability of substances & mobile technology

Cuan Saor Approach



Policy

- Organisational policy
- Informing women
- Routine screening question
- Data collection



Practice

- Harm minimisation
- Women actively using are accommodated
- Managing risk
- Inter-agency
- Advocating
- Child-focussed
- Addressing stigma and shame



Presenting issues

- Poly-drug use
- Long standing alcohol use
- IDU
- Trauma histories
- Intergenerational patterns
- Child welfare and protection
- Sexual exploitation
- Risky sexual behaviour

Collaborative relationship with women; dual needs of children and mothers

Learning points

- ▶ Achieved with very limited resources.
- ▶ Importance of good training and leadership within the organisation.
- ▶ Naming the unspeakable within the staff team....dealing with 'the fear'
- ▶ Opening conversations with clients – “Some of the women/young women I have worked with....”
- ▶ Developing fearlessness....challenging silo approach.
- ▶ Embedding skills transfer.
- ▶ Training, allies and advocates.
- ▶ Reactions from women sustained change.
- ▶ Research and publications followed.

Cold: A meditation on loss

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Keywords: Intimate partner violence, substance use, first person narrative, practitioner engagement, loss, empathy.

Abstract

This first person narrative explores themes of empathy, resonance and loss through a challenging narrative form that seeks to engage the reader viscerally and emotionally. In particular, the narrative focuses on practitioner engagement with complex client issues including violence, substance use and child welfare within an Intimate Partner Violence agency in Ireland. The narrative form seeks to communicate the lived experience of a particular client, whilst also implicitly considering the impact on the practitioner of working with these issues, especially in the aftermath of loss.



PDF

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Routine Enquiry as a Way of Working with Women's Trauma: Narratives of Practitioner and Organisational Change

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Keywords: domestic violence, trauma, innovation, adverse childhood

REFLECTIONS
NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING



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Regional - Boxing Clever

Boxing Clever is a twenty week integrated educational, substance use recovery and fitness programme that aims to support participants to develop more resilient identities, while encouraging educational achievement, physical wellness and reduction in harmful or risky behaviours.

- ▶ Based in the community.
- ▶ Run in partnership by BYAP and the Health Services Executive (HSE) Rehabilitation Integration Service.
- ▶ Educational study for two QQI minor awards in Health-Related Fitness (Level 4) and Community Addiction Studies (Level 5)
- ▶ Physical training; boxing skills and tailored fitness training.
- ▶ Research study in 2014/15 to explore the impacts of Boxing Clever for one cohort of participants



Policy and practice implications – beyond an individualistic frame

- ▶ Substance use treatment historically considered within individualistic frame – engage and intervene at an **individual**, an **inter-personal**, a **social** and a **community** level.



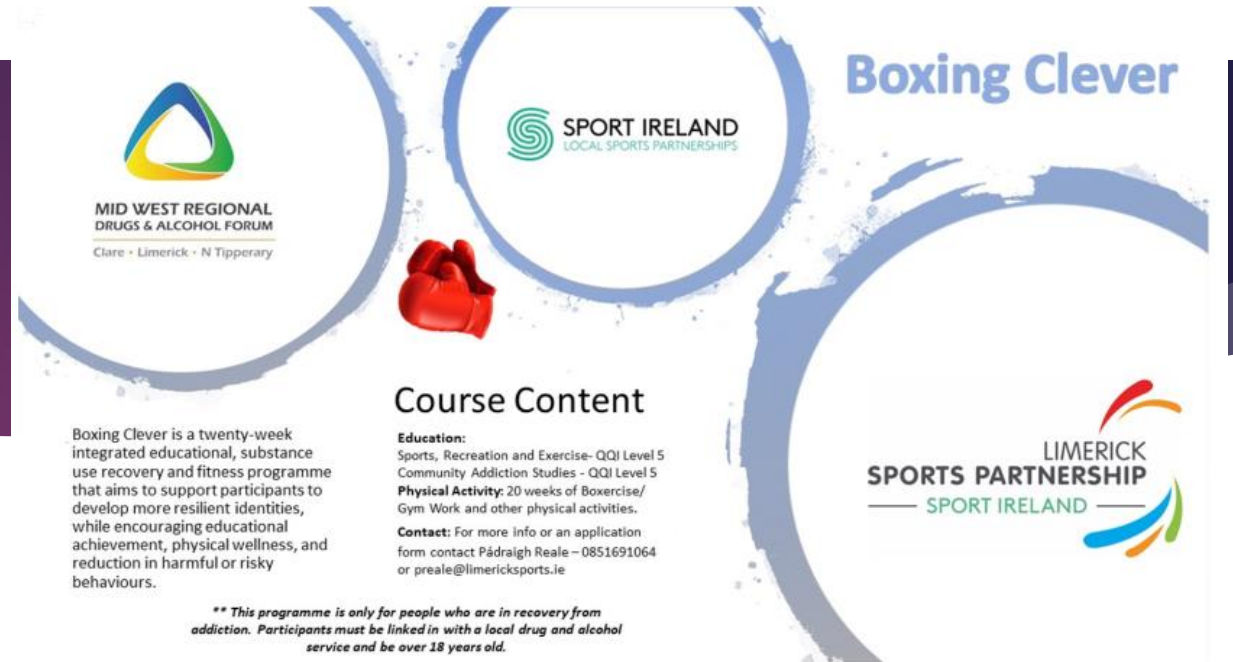
- ▶ Elements identified as constituting recovery capital for participants broad - from the development of **communication skills** to having a **sense of belonging** within the wider community.



- ◎ Support people to see themselves differently- in their behaviours, physical presentation and self perception- in this case **embodying the ideals of an athlete and a student** rather than an addict or recovering addict.
- ◎ Focus less on the drug use and more on the capacity of the person to develop **abilities and talents** in the realm of sport, boxing, education.

Current status

- ▶ Boxing Clever continues to run every year in BYAP
- ▶ Now also running in Limerick, Cork, the midlands and across a range of locations wider Dublin. HSE and/or Sport Ireland support.
- ▶ Amended and developed to suit local population
- ▶ Inclusion of sport and exercise into other treatment approaches eg Coolmine
- ▶ Four of the participants who were involved in the programme or film have now completed their undergraduate Diploma in Community Drug and Alcohol Work



The graphic features a central image of red boxing gloves. To the left is the logo for the Mid West Regional Drugs & Alcohol Forum, which includes a stylized blue and green triangle and the text 'MID WEST REGIONAL DRUGS & ALCOHOL FORUM' and 'Clare · Limerick · N Tipperary'. To the right is the Sport Ireland logo, consisting of a green circular icon and the text 'SPORT IRELAND LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS'. The title 'Boxing Clever' is in the top right corner. Below the gloves, the 'Course Content' is detailed: 'Education: Sports, Recreation and Exercise - QQI Level 5 Community Addiction Studies - QQI Level 5' and 'Physical Activity: 20 weeks of Boxercise/ Gym Work and other physical activities.' Contact information for Pádraigh Reale is provided. A disclaimer at the bottom states: '** This programme is only for people who are in recovery from addiction. Participants must be linked in with a local drug and alcohol service and be over 18 years old.' On the right side, there is a logo for the Limerick Sports Partnership, which includes the text 'LIMERICK SPORTS PARTNERSHIP' and 'SPORT IRELAND' with a colorful swoosh graphic.

Boxing Clever

Course Content

Education: Sports, Recreation and Exercise - QQI Level 5
Community Addiction Studies - QQI Level 5

Physical Activity: 20 weeks of Boxercise/ Gym Work and other physical activities.

Contact: For more info or an application form contact Pádraigh Reale – 0851691064 or preale@limericksports.ie

*** This programme is only for people who are in recovery from addiction. Participants must be linked in with a local drug and alcohol service and be over 18 years old.*

LIMERICK SPORTS PARTNERSHIP
SPORT IRELAND

Boxing Clever promotes recovery through fitness

18th July 2023



What factors supported change?

- ▶ Research publications
- ▶ Report publication
- ▶ Policy briefing
- ▶ Short film
- ▶ Evidence, applicability and resourcing



Gender and drug policy in Iceland

Gender, Policy and Treatment

Introduction

In this briefing on the Icelandic national alcohol and drug policy, the focus will be on the visibility of gender in policy documents, how the policy relates to international policy trends, and what implications this has for the situation of women with alcohol and drug problems in Iceland. There is also a discussion of the treatment system in Iceland and the unfortunate power structure characterizing the treatment system in a country with few inhabitants and a monopolized NGO run treatment offer.

In many respects Iceland differs from other European and Scandinavian countries both in the history of alcohol and drug patterns, and in policy and treatment; trends and differences will be described in broad outline. The paper ends with some considerations that are necessary if Iceland is going to take gender issues seriously at this point of change in the history of drug and alcohol policy and treatment.

Background

Policy and treatment in Iceland has been characterized by abstinence based policy and a focus on the reduction of supply, since the beginning of the 20th century. The International Good Templars Organization (IOGT) was very influential in Iceland, founded in 1894, and as a result of their efforts a prohibition went into effect in 1915, prohibiting all alcohol in Iceland until 1922, when wine was legalized, and in 1935 all alcohol beverages were legalized, except beer, which was prohibited until 1989 (Ólafsdóttir, 2012; Government Offices of Iceland, n.b.).

Konukot



Markaður Konukots



In progress...

- ▶ Longstanding treatment centre
- ▶ Drug strategy ended in 2020
- ▶ Mixed gender detox and treatment
- ▶ NGO and health services led harm reduction (needle exchange, low threshold responses)
- ▶ Two major conferences to consider gender and drug use in 2019 and 2023

TREADING THE PATH TO HUMAN RIGHTS

HOTEL REYKJAVIK GRAND

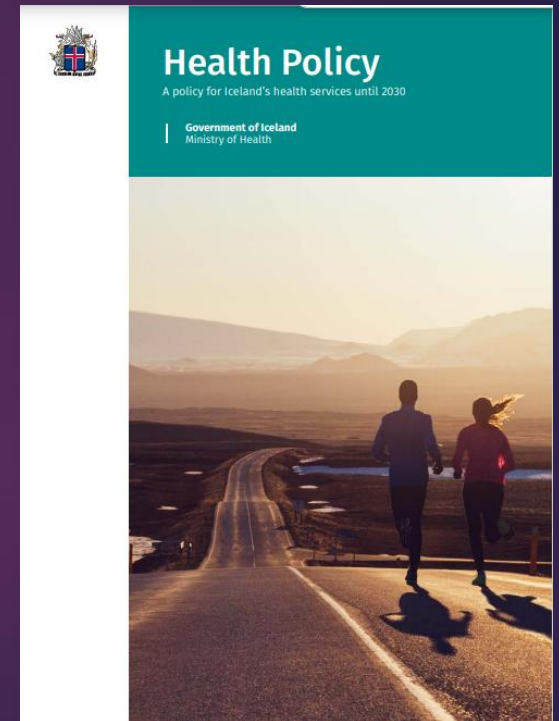
17–18 OCTOBER 2023

The interdisciplinary conference *Treading the Path to Human Rights. Gender, Substance Use and Welfare States* focuses on the current status, the changes that are happening and the future of policy and services to people with problematic substance use in European welfare states. Special focus is on the Nordic countries with regards to human rights, gender, harm reduction and the social factors affecting substance use and policy development. Discrimination on the grounds of race, class, gender, sexuality, and gender inequality will be on the agenda in line with appeals from international organizations and people using substances. Special emphasis is put on the necessity of mainstreaming gender into drug and alcohol policy, considering particularly the needs of women and LGBTQI people. The conference is organised by Róttín and RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland.

The aims of the conference are to raise awareness of the importance of policy making in the field, gather professionals, policy makers, and other players to share their knowledge and views on policy development in the substance use field and learn from lecturers from European countries.

Practice and policy – how do we start a process of change?

- What are the drugs?
 - Who is using them?
 - For whom is this problematic?
 - How do we know?
 - What responses and interventions do we need?
 - How do we know these are working?
- Prevalence data
 - Treatment and intervention data
 - Government led substance use strategy
 - Integration with mental health strategy



Concluding thoughts.....

- ▶ Change can be practice driven or research driven.....but practice/research interface may be key.
- ▶ Progress is often gradual, requires drivers - individuals, organisations or funders - who may require tenacity
- ▶ Policy change in a strategy vacuum is challenging.



Thank you!

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