

# Place-based initiatives to reduce drug-related threats in communities: an evidence review

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# STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

- 1) Context
- 2) Key concepts
- 3) Existing evidence reviews
- 4) Challenges
- 5) Extensive literature searches
- 6) Relevant initiatives
- 7) Prospects

# CONTEXT 1

- This study was funded by the **Health Research Board**
- Research was carried out in **2022-2023**, with Julie Glanville
- Evidence review included **qualitative research** and **grey literature**
- Emphasis was on **identifying initiatives** and understanding **how they seek to intervene** in specific kinds of localities
- PBIs are often seen as **an alternative to top-down interventions**, perceived as often yielding disappointing results
- Ultimate goal of **contributing to debates** in Ireland

## CONTEXT 2

- We are dealing with **a specific type of initiative**, variously referred to as *place-based, community-driven, community-based, community-level, coalition-based, community-wide, whole-of-community, community partnership, comprehensive, collaborative, collective impact, ecological, environmental or neighbourhood-based*
- Even before the WHO Ottawa Charter, the importance of **working in partnership with service users**, people who use drugs and the communities they belong to was widely recognised
- PBIs emerged initially in the field of health, but **are viewed as particularly useful** in relation to drug-related harms

# CONTEXT 3

- Linked with ideas regarding the **social determinants of health**, the role of **socio-ecological contexts**, the growth of **implementation science**, and **community empowerment**
- By the 1990s, spatial targeting and community involvement were being used in **community development, urban regeneration, industrial innovation, housing improvement and crime prevention** (Bailey et al., 2023; Braga et al., 2019; Dillman et al., 2017; Lawless, 2004; T. Moore & Fry, 2011)
- Awareness of **complex relationships/dependencies** between factors at local level (Duncan & Aber, 1997; Sampson et al., 1997)

# KEY CONCEPTS

- Basic idea: **comprehensive programmes can be used to tackle social problems at local level** (dates back to 18<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Modern version: "Population-level outcomes require **systems-level interventions**" (Flanagan *et al.*, 2018)
- Community **involvement/ownership** is a central idea – with a local coalition or board (to mobilise local resources/stakeholders)
- **Local people** play an important part (social innovation)
- Usually involve **multi-stranded** interventions (holism)
- May be **targeted** at disadvantaged areas (but this is rare in US)

# EXISTING REVIEWS 1

**Flanagan, S. K. et al.** (2018). *Comprehensive Community Initiatives: The Impact on Population-Level Children, Youth, and Family Outcomes*. Weiss Institute.

**Hutchison, M., and B. S. Russell** (2021). Community Coalition Efforts to Prevent Adolescent Substance Use: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Drug Education*.

**Nagorcka-Smith, P. et al.** (2022). The impact of coalition characteristics on outcomes in community-based initiatives targeting the social determinants of health: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health*

**Stockings, E. et al.** (2018). Whole of community interventions to reduce population level harms arising from alcohol and other drug use: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*

## EXISTING REVIEWS 2

- Rather than focusing on individual behaviour, PBIs **seek to change social conditions** (collective impact): "There is agreement that **health promotion is done most effectively** when interventions are place-based" (Nagorcka-Smith *et al.*, 2022)
- "Improved population-level outcomes for children and families can best be achieved by **engaging multiple community systems, structures, and constituencies** that coalesce around a common goal" (Flanagan *et al.* 2019, p. 1)
- Community coalitions have demonstrated **some positive effects** in reducing substance use (Hutchison & Russell, 2021)



## EXISTING REVIEWS 3

- There are **significant associations** between coalition characteristics and drug-related outcomes (Nakorcka-Smith *et al.*, 2022)
- Place-based initiatives have **demonstrably delayed initiation** and **reduced frequency of use** across an array of drugs, e.g. Communities the Care and PROSPER initiatives (Flanagan *et al.*, 2018) – but these programmes mainly involve preventive interventions with children
- Interventions appear to have **little impact** on the prevalence of substance use when using random-effects inverse variance meta-analysis (Stockings *et al.*, 2018)

# CHALLENGES

- It is difficult to search the literature because...
- **Language** used to describe programmes varies greatly
- Many features are **not unique** to PBIs
- The concept of “**community-based**” is vague - services may be situated in communities without being community-based
- PBIs **can vary greatly** with respect to community involvement
- **Many services are targeted** without being place-based
- **Very recent** diffusion of PBIs – recent publications may not have been indexed or cited

# EXTENSIVE LITERATURE SEARCHES

- We used several bibliographical **databases** (Embase, Social Care Online, Social Sciences Citation Index, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Scopus, Criminal Justice Abstracts, HRB, LitSense, Semantic Scholar) and numerous **websites**
- **40,929** potentially relevant records – **27,060** after de-duplication – **3,406** after rapid screening - subjected to double independent screening on title and abstract – **102** records were screened on full text – citation searches for **32** documents, leading to the identification of **9** more
- Risk of bias assessment carried out on **41** documents

# RELEVANT INITIATIVES 1

- **PROSPER**
- **Communities that Care (CTC)**
- **Icelandic Prevention Model (IPM)**
- **HEALing Communities Study (HCS)**
- **Smaller initiatives:**
- Pulling Levers, *Salut als barris*, Community Collective Impact Model for Change (CCIM4C), Second Chance or Else (SCORE), Cherokee Nation programme, the Martinsburg Initiative (TMI)

## RELEVANT INITIATIVES 2

- What evidence do we have regarding **impacts**?
- Only PROSPER and CTC have demonstrated **significant impacts** on drug-related harms (among youth) using well-designed controlled trials (Van Horn et al., 2014) – these are “**Tier 1**” trials (Flanagan et al., 2018) but were confined to rural US towns, young people, mainly prevention
- Researchers have **failed to find evidence of impacts** on past month or past year drug use after participants leave school (e.g. CTC participants at 19, 21, 23 years of age, PROSPER participants at 19, 23 and 25 years of age (Oesterle et al., 2015, 2018; Spoth et al., 2017, 2022))

# RELEVANT INITIATIVES 3

- **IPM has not been subjected to rigorous assessment**
- Pulling Levers and SCORE – **no clear evidence** of impacts
- *Salut als Barris* – **no significant effect** on drug-related crimes
- Other initiatives are still at the **design stage**
- Distinction between **primary** and **secondary** aims of PBIs
- HCS is a promising programme, situated at the research frontier – and in many ways, **the future of PBIs** to tackle drug-related harms rests on the outcome of this study. Rarely are expensive programmes evaluated so carefully using such a powerful research design

# PROSPECTS 1

- More research is needed on **mechanisms** linking places and drug-related threats (weakness of US research)
- The role of **locality** needs to be studied (PBIs as a universal delivery mechanism or spatially targeted programme?)
- It is necessary to tackle the **complex legacy** of disadvantage and discrimination (e.g. exposure to trauma, cultural differences)
- We need to think about **synergies** between programmes – we cannot have distinct PBIs for a host of outcomes
- Appropriate models of **governance** need to be developed, which specify the role of local people, stakeholders, statutory bodies, funders etc.

# PROSPECTS 2

- Could this kind of initiative be implemented in **Ireland**?
- Adopt an **existing initiative** or develop a new one?
- Basic model: **Framework + Interventions**
- Framework: external support and governance, spatial targeting, community ownership, social innovation, use of local data to guide decisions, cross-sectoral collaboration, multi-pronged programme
- Interventions – “**proven**” or **bespoke programmes**?
- Importance of **research, monitoring and impact assessment**



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