

# Holding Pattern: An exploratory study of the lived experiences of those on methadone maintenance in Dublin North East.



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# Research Aim

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- The research aimed to situate client experiences of methadone maintenance along a continuum of recovery, with particular attention devoted to stabilisation experiences, vocational training needs and identified avenues for progression.
- The researchers utilised a mixed method approach using focus groups with the Client forum representatives of the Special Community Employment schemes, and a series of in- depth interviews with individuals attending the Special Community Employment schemes in the Dublin North East Drug Task Force area.

# Data Analysis

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- All focus groups and interviews were fully transcribed and supplemented by researcher held field notes and memos.
- Thematic and content data analysis commenced with several reads of the resultant narratives by both researchers, with periodic briefing sessions between both researchers assisting in the identification of emergent themes and categories of data, within an inter-rater system of corroboration, comparisons and interpretations of the data.

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# Interview Narrative Analysis

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- 11 females and 15 males partook in the interviews, with an age range of 28 to 49 years.

## **Part I: Experiences of Methadone**

- *Methadone Access*
- *Methadone related Knowledge, Information and Informed Choices*
- *Methadone and Control*
- *Stigma*
- *Drug using Pathways and Addiction Displacement*
- *Detoxification and Treatment*

# Interview Narrative Analysis

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- **Part II: Experiences of Recovery, Progression and Special Community Employment Schemes**
- *Perceptions of Recovery and Rehabilitation*
- *Community Level Encouragement and Support*
- *The Special Community Employment Scheme*
- *Progression Pathways*
- *Client Forum*

# Recommendations

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- *Clients*
- Development and distribution of an information leaflet in conjunction with the Client Forum, with regard to what services are available as it relates to methadone maintenance and progression pathways;
- Development and distribution of information leaflets in conjunction with the Client Forum, advising pre methadone entrants of health side effects, addiction potential and typical pathways for methadone maintenance;

# Recommendations

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## *Stigma*

- Development and implementation of community and family awareness interventions in conjunction with the Client Forum, on methadone maintenance and Special Community Employment schemes in order to reduce community and family related stigma;
- Development and implementation of awareness training for medical, clinic and pharmacy staff in the Dublin North East Drugs Task Force area;

# Recommendations

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- *Supports*
- Provide client support for those experiencing difficulties with doctor prescribing and long term methadone maintenance, and set up a system, where key support workers can attend client-doctor meetings to advocate on behalf of methadone maintenance client for treatment progression.
- Develop women specific drop in and additional female specific counselling and childcare assistance in the Dublin North East Drugs Task Force area;
- Develop more drop in and counselling for those on methadone maintenance and considerate of both those partaking and not partaking in Special Community Employment Schemes;
- Develop an aftercare pathway of counselling, treatment, vocational and employment related supports for those on completion of the Special Community Employment schemes;

# Recommendations

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- *Special Community Employment scheme*
- Revise Special Community Employment scheme goals in each project, and identify whether the project is dedicated to therapeutic and relapse prevention supports; or dedicated to specific vocational training and employment initiatives;
- Improve each Special Community Employment scheme in relation to the development of timely assessment procedures in order to provide individual care planning, specific vocational training and employment related skills base, provision of work placement or volunteering supports and assistance in curriculum vitae and interviewing skills;
- Ensure Special Community Employment workers adhere to confidentiality protocols;
- Create a network of potential employers or volunteer placements with local employers in order to reduce instances of Special Community Employment stigma.

# Recommendations

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- *Client Forum*
- Increase client awareness as to how Client Forums operate and its relationship with the Dublin North East Drugs Task Force;
- Create greater transparency for Client Forum members in terms of the Dublin North East Drugs Task Force remit, terms of reference and capacity to create change;
- Select Client Forum participants to act as forum advocates at Dublin North East Drugs Task Force meetings;
- Allow the Client Forum to select its own participants, which should include those currently using, those on methadone and those in full recovery.

# Questions?

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