

**Title:** Co-design of a substance use intervention: Using a community based participatory approach

**Author details:** Karen McGuigan<sup>1</sup>, Emma Loudon<sup>1</sup>, Amanda Morse<sup>1</sup>, Áine Brady<sup>1</sup>, Ciarán Hargey<sup>2</sup>, Fionntán Hargey<sup>2</sup>, Siobhán McDonnell<sup>2</sup>, Anne Campbell<sup>3</sup>, and Kathryn Higgins<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Queen's Communities and Place, Queen's University Belfast, UK

<sup>2</sup>Market Development Association, Belfast, UK

<sup>3</sup>School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work, Queen's University Belfast, UK

**Background:** There is a current public health crisis driven by the growth in substance use. The rise in substance use reflects an increased demand for aligned supportive services, with more people seeking and engaging with services presenting with more complex issues, for example, co-occurring mental health concerns along with drug and alcohol misuse. Evidence suggests that research should focus on development of interventions that empower individuals and communities, reduce risk, or prevent harm. This study aims to co-design a substance use intervention using a community based participatory approach.

**Methods:** The sample comprised 25 residents from a local community in Northern Ireland. Community based participatory co-design was used to address community level challenges to generate a tailored intervention focussed on supporting unmet substance use information needs (e.g. stigma reduction, help-seeking, mental health, prevention, and health promotion) from identification of need, through to intervention (prototype) design. The research team employed an adapted, evidence-based 6-step co-design model.

**Findings:** Results highlighted key themes and categories to inform substance use intervention content, including: 'Begin with the basics', identifying supports, understanding addiction, mental health, family cycles in families, stigma, and 'what works'? Programme format and tailored delivery mechanisms were also co-designed.

**Discussion:** This study underlines the importance of lived experience as a key resource to engage and empower communities to tackle and address complex health issues. The findings provide a 'place-based' framework by which communities, academics and policy makers can generate collaborative, lasting solutions to persistent health challenges.