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Exploring the potential for Managed Alcohol Programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland: Findings from a mixed methods study

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BE THE DIFFERENCE

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Study team

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- Dr Hannah Carver (University of Stirling)
- Professor Catriona Matheson (University of Stirling)
- Professor Bernie Pauly (University of Victoria)
- Dr Wendy Masterton
- Dr Hazel Booth
- Dr Peter McCulloch
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Managed alcohol programmes (MAPs)

- Managed Alcohol Programmes (MAPs) are a harm reduction intervention providing regular doses of alcohol throughout the day alongside a range of other support
- Research from Canada highlighted a range of positive benefits of MAPs
- Benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic: reducing alcohol-related harms, facilitating isolation/quarantine, reducing need for hospital admissions.



Methods

- Case note review (n=12), data analysed in Excel using descriptive statistics.
- Interviews (n=40):
 - External stakeholders (n=19)
 - Salvation Army service managers (n=8)
 - Salvation Army frontline staff (n=7)
 - Potential beneficiaries (n=6)
- Notes from team meetings – research team and TSA strategic staff/service managers.
- Interviews audio recorded, transcribed in full and analysed in NVivo using Framework Analysis, informed by the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR), along with meeting notes.
- Creation of art work

Ethical approval granted by University of Stirling and The Salvation Army



Findings – Case note reviews

- 11/12 reported physical health problems
- All reported mental health problems and 10/12 reported more than one
- High levels of alcohol use and harm:
 - Daily drinking (50%);
 - Most consuming 20-40 units/day;
 - Drinking for more than 20 years;
 - Mean AUDIT score of 30;
 - Daily withdrawal symptoms experienced by all 12;
- All used illicit drugs
- 9/12 broke lockdown rules in order to consume alcohol

Findings – interviews

1. Potential for MAPs in context of COVID-19
2. The changing culture of alcohol harm reduction



Potential for MAPs in the context of COVID-19

I reckon it would reduce it vastly. Aye because you are mixing with people, you are looking for opportunities to raise some money there or maybe a bottle will be on the table and then you are drinking out of the same bottle.

(Potential beneficiary participant)

It's enabling people to keep themselves safe but also to prevent their need for running around to access alcohol, or funds for alcohol, which would put them at risk in terms of (being) unable to actually maintain social distancing. A MAP in that context has a double benefit, both in terms of the individual, reduced risk of COVID and alcohol-related harm, but also a public health benefit to others in less likely onward transmission of any infection.

(Stakeholder participant)



The changing culture of alcohol harm reduction

There was a worry that there is a risk here that lots of people could die if we don't really start thinking and acting out the box and doing things a bit differently. And just because it's such unusual circumstances that nobody has had to deal with before, it's given a bit of freedom to try out things that maybe people would have been worried about before.

(Stakeholder participant)

It's a relatively new idea. If you don't work in this field, it is kind of counter-intuitive, the way that we are going to help people with addiction problems is by providing them with their substance of choice.

(Stakeholder participant)



Conclusions

- There are high rates of alcohol and drug use, mental and physical health problems and associated harms.
- There's a lack of appropriate services for people experiencing alcohol dependence and homelessness and MAPs would directly address this gap.
- MAPs require significant buy-in and resources, including long-term funding, to provide well-staffed and well-run services with appropriate clinical input.



Article

Exploring the Potential of Implementing Managed Alcohol Programmes to Reduce Risk of COVID-19 Infection and Transmission, and Wider Harms, for People Experiencing Alcohol Dependency and Homelessness in Scotland

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Article

The Potential for Managed Alcohol Programmes in Scotland during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Qualitative Exploration of Key Areas for Implementation Using the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research

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