

Peer researchers: bridging the gap to better evaluate alcohol and other drug services

Stacey Wilson,

on behalf of the **evaluation team:** Brannelly T, Boulton A, Wilson S, Murray B, Thompson J, Flintoft A, Senior J, Tait, J and Palmer J.



Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

The presentation

- Peer participation in research
- The Multisystemic therapy services evaluation
- Engaging young people in research who are potentially difficult to engage – the experience of peer researchers
- The benefits of and challenges to peer involvement in research

Brief overview of service user involvement

Service user involvement in the design and delivery of mental health research has been identified as essential because it:

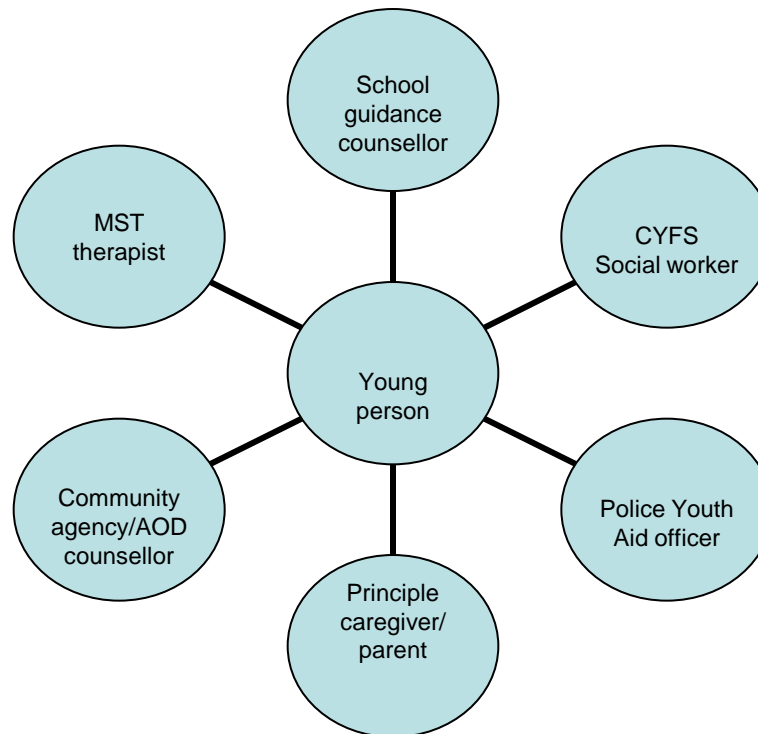
- Levels the power imbalances present in research relationships (Warren and Cook 2005)
- Enables partnership working (MOH, 2005; MHF, 2004; Crowe, O'Malley & Gordon, 2005)
- Is key to developing and delivering responsive services (Department of Health 2006)
- Maintains ethical research (Faulkner 2004).

Multisystemic Therapy

AoD services Evaluation

- Funded by Hutt Valley DHB
- Services covered lower North Island
- MST is a systemic therapy model
- Young people usually at risk of placement out of home and mainstream school, attending activity centre, contact with justice services, co-existing AoD use mental health problem

Interview cluster model



Evaluation of Multisystemic Therapy

Services findings

- Across the two teams, 73 families/whānau received MST from June 2007 – July 2009
- Of the 23 families/whānau who participated in the evaluation, 19 reported positive outcomes
- The programme was found to be effective with Māori and non-Māori service users

Experience of peer researchers as told by peer researchers

- “Ah bro! You whakama about it?”
- Identifying concerns and priorities of participants
- Learning about another way of working
- Power of personal stories
- Privilege of hearing another’s story
- Seeing how other researchers work

Challenges to peer involvement as told by peer researchers

- Getting research participants to open up
- Staying in the researcher role
- Balancing sharing and influencing the data
- Over-relating or interpreting feedback
- Possibility of triggering the researcher's stuff
- Boundaries and rescuing
- Being a researcher on top of everything else
- Long and stringy project

Benefits of peer involvement

- Improving access by telling young people they would be interviewed by peers
- Use of language, body language and perspectives
- Tweaking the interview questions
- Knowing how to ask questions
- Wider research team – strengths from several disciplines – the MDT experience

References

- Crowe, M., O'Malley, J. & Gordon, S. (2005). Meeting the needs of consumers in the community: A working partnership in New Zealand. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 35(1), 88-96.
- Department of Health (2006), *Reward and Recognition, the principles and practice of service user payment and reimbursement in health and social care, a guide for service providers service users and carers*, Care Services Improvement Partnership, London, Department of Health.
- Faulkner A (2004), *The ethics of survivor research, Guidelines for the ethical conduct of research carried out by mental health service users and survivors*, Bristol, Policy Press.

References

- Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (MOF), (2004). *Respect costs nothing: A survey of discrimination faced by people with experience of mental illness in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Wellington: Author
- Ministry of Health (MOH), (2005). *Te Tahuhu: Improving mental health services. The second New Zealand Mental Health and Addiction Plan*. Wellington: Author
- Warren L and Cook J (2006), 'Working with older women in research, benefits and challenges of involvement,' in Lowes L and Hulatt I , (Eds), *Involving Service Users in Health and Social Care Research*, Oxford, Routledge.

Evaluation interviewees Number of interviews

• Interviews with MST NZ	4
• Interviews with MST supervisors	6
• Interviews with MST therapists	16
• Interviews with Te Whatuiapiti Trust and Richmond NZ Managers	2
• Interviews with young people and rangatahi receiving the MST service	12
• Interviews with family/whānau	26
• Interviews with stakeholders involved with the young person/rangatahi	22
• Interviews with young people/rangatahi receiving comparison site service	5
• Interviews with family/whānau comparison site	5
• Interviews with service providers comparison site	6
	Total 104

Outcomes as told by families/whānau

Outcome	Number
• Improved family/whānau functioning	20
• Building parental/caregiver strengths	20
• Living at home	18
• Decrease in drug use	18
• Decrease in alcohol use	17
• Decreased violence in family/whānau	17
• No further criminal charges	16
• Increased attendance at school or activities centre or employment	15
• Pro social peers	10
• Ongoing service involvement	9
• Decreased violence in the community	6
• Removal from 'at risk' registers such as for suicide	1