DRUG & ALCOHOL RESEARCH NETWORK

Queen's University
Belfast

DARN
Drug & Alcohol Research Network

OUR MISSION

To provide a leading edge one stop venue for all researchers, policy makers and practitioners in Northern Ireland who together aspire to make a difference in developing an informed research agenda on alcohol and drug use.

CONTACT US

Co-directors: Dr Anne Campbell & Dr Kathryn Higgins
Administrator: Louise Moss

School of Sociology, Social Policy & Social Work
Queen's University Belfast

6 College Park
BELFAST BT7 1LP
T: 028 9097 5922

W: http://go.qub.ac.uk/DARN15

Find us on Facebook f

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To develop a crosscutting interdisciplinary research culture among academics in Queen's University interested in the areas of drug and alcohol research alongside policy makers and practitioners through collaborative action.

- To provide an innovative, supportive and high quality environment whereby project ideas may be nurtured and developed with the emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach to methods, and exchange of knowledge to maximise evidence informed practice.

- To work with local and national statutory and voluntary organisations in order to identify current research needs and provide a response to local issues and concerns.

- To further develop international links with colleagues from research centres and universities who have a strong interest in alcohol and drug issues and thereby promote the international standing of network members.

- To enhance relevant UG and PG teaching in associated areas, to attract PhD students, scholarships, interns and to support reciprocal secondment opportunities for those in the sector.

DARN
Drug & Alcohol Research Network

OUR
RATIONALE

The drug and alcohol sector comprises clinicians, practitioners and researchers from a number of different disciplines; including public health, psychiatry, psychology, pharmacy, social work, nursing and specialist addiction practice. It is recognised that practitioners, strategists and researchers largely work in silos where there is little cross fertilisation of research findings and ideas and how they may be operationalised within practice.

QUB has the reputation for producing the most rigorous academic research and forging links and developing innovative partnerships with public systems, relevant institutions, and programmes from the voluntary, private and statutory sectors that are in a position to best deploy that research. Cumulatively, this broad perspective and commitment to working in partnership formed the cornerstone our network.

D A R N
Drug & Alcohol Research Network

LEVERAGING CAPACITY

QUB has a strong research tradition of research in drugs and alcohol across a range of disciplines. As a group of individuals interested in the broad areas of drug and alcohol research, we have generated almost £2 million income in research grants in recent times. Many members of the research network have significant direct service experience that informs and enriches their research. Furthermore, we actively collaborate on individual and team levels with faculty members in a number of UK and international university departments and professional schools.

Our researchers are committed to ensuring that their work has maximum relevance and impact. We have mechanisms for ongoing liaison with a wide range of local and national policy makers, agency directors, philanthropic organisations, and community groups relevant to the drug and alcohol field. Our aspiration is that DARN will help even more to ensure that important findings are firmly and cohesively placed directly in the hands of those who can best use them. New partnerships created in such a way often raise new questions for researchers and suggest fresh areas of inquiry for interdisciplinary research bids.

A NETWORK THAT WORKS

Only by producing internationally relevant and quality research responding to local and national needs can the network take its place among key research initiatives in this subject area. DARN is located within Queen's University Belfast, one of the 20 leading Russell Group research intensive universities in the UK. Network members have strong connections with Voluntary, Community and Statutory organisations in the drug and alcohol field, spanning a range of professionals in Northern Ireland. Recent examples to give a flavour of our work include a successful NIHR award on variation and determinants of Novel Psychoactive Substance (NPS) use, led by QUB with colleagues from University of Glasgow. In addition, we are active members of the project team convening an ESRC funded seminar programme along-side colleagues from University of Durham; Liverpool John Moore University and University of Leicester. Queen's are also part of the team conducting the Steps towards Alcohol Misuse Prevention Programme (STAMPP): a school and community based cluster randomised controlled trial along with colleagues from Liverpool John Moore's University and Oxford Brooks; and a comparative study of access to and use of drug and alcohol treatments in the US, Sweden and Northern Ireland.

We are also privileged to have the support of our international committee. The group is comprised of Tim Hartnett (CODA), Mark McGovern, Dartmouth University, Dennis McCarty, Oregon Health Science University and Tim Condon, University of New Mexico (former Deputy Director of US National Institute Drug Abuse)

The international advisory group helped oversee the development of the QUB drug and alcohol research network and continue to advise on matters related to strategic and operational development with a specific emphasis on the future translation of research findings at individual, collective and structural levels. These international partners have been invaluable in supporting the ongoing QUB student International Exchange Programme, which provides short professional placements in University of Portland, USA. This aims to give students interested in alcohol and drug use treatments, opportunities to develop skills and awareness for their future professional practice. The first DARN QUB visiting research fellow exchange will also take place in 2015.

DARN has also been invited to become a member of the newly formed Cross National Addictions Research network, which will comprise representatives from a number of European and US based universities. The inaugural meeting is due to take place on April 16th, 2016 in Barcelona.

ORGANISING OUR RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Our research agenda reflects a focus on contemporary challenges in the drug and alcohol field across our range of disciplines as well as signifying our collective methodological expertise. Currently the themes include

1.   Alcohol and drug use across the life course

2.   Emerging Drug Trends

3.   Drug and Alcohol Intervention Studies

4.   The interface between drugs, alcohol and mental health

Work is already under way on these areas and we have a number of research awards and proposals based on collaborations across the university.

For an up to date list of research activity carried out by DARN network members see our current research portfolio at http://go.qub.ac.uk/DARN15

REPOSITORY OF RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE

It is proposed that we provide a portal for current research findings in Northern Ireland to make available information and identify the current gaps in research which may add to the current body of knowledge and impact directly on service provision in Northern Ireland and on an international basis.

CONSULTANCY

Staff from the proposed Drug & Alcohol Research Network have had experience of consultancy work in partnership with a number of organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland. They are familiar with the tendering process and work in a competitive market to ensure their expertise is recognised and utilised efficiently by partner organisations.

The current research network membership has a wide and varied range of knowledge and expertise in drug and alcohol issues, specific methodologies and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions.

We hope to offer expertise in a range of methodologies including health, research, evaluation, systematic reviews, surveillance, audit, epidemiology and statistics relevant to the addictions field.

DARN
Drug & Alcohol Research Network