Spotlight on... Drugs and Alcohol

10th July 2013

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You’ve had your say: the Topic Portal Evaluation 2013

Six topic portals were launched on Social Services Knowledge Scotland (SSKS) in May 2012; care for older people, criminal justice, drugs and alcohol, early years, learning disabilities and support workers. Users advised that they would like to browse material on SSKS by topic and so the portals were created providing legislation, guidance, key links, news feeds, evidence summaries and more relating to each of the topics listed above.

After 10 months online, the SSKS Topic Portal Evaluation questionnaire was published on Questback in order to gather user feedback on the usability and usefulness of the topic portals. Responses to this questionnaire will be used to inform the future development of the topic portals and how portals are promoted. There were 59 responses to the SSKS Topic Portal Evaluation questionnaire between 18th March and 30th April 2013.

The questions were designed to establish the most popular portals, the most popular resources and how useful/usable users find the topic portals. Respondents were asked to choose one topic portal which they use most frequently and to consider this when answering the questionnaire.

The most frequently used SSKS topic portals are care for older people and early years. 14 respondents selected the care for older people topic portal as the one they use most frequently and 15 selected early years. Nine users selected the drugs and alcohol topic portal as the one they used most frequently.

Respondents were also asked to select how often they use each type of resource available in the topic portals. The results were as follows:
Did you know all this was available? Why not explore the Drugs and Alcohol topic portal now to find all of the types of resources listed above?

Analysis

The results of the SSKS Topic Portal Evaluation questionnaire can be used to inform planning and development of the SSKS site as a whole, each of the topic portals and the promotion of the site. The most popular resources can be identified by the respondents’ answers to question four which asked them to select the reasons they most frequently visit the SSKS topic portal. The reasons users most frequently visit the topic portals are: legislation and government publications; keeping up-to-date; learning and development; guidance and policy. In future portal developments, it should be ensured that these types of resource are kept up-to-date, featured prominently on the site and promoted to new users.

Literacy, numeracy and study skills and information literacy skills were identified as the least frequent reasons for visiting the SSKS topic portals. These resources should also be promoted to make users aware of them.

You can read more about the development of SSKS in the SSKS Blog.
NEW to journal articles available FREE from SSKS

Remember, you will need an Athens username and password to access subscription material, such as journal articles on SSKS. Register HERE.

From Sociology of Health and Illness:

Social network influences on smoking, drinking and drug use in secondary school: centrifugal and centripetal forces

Adam Fletcher and Chris Bonell (2013) vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 699-715

Abstract: We explore how school experiences and social networks structure young people’s substance use in different institutional contexts. The concepts of ‘selection’ and ‘influence’ are situated within the context of bounded agency, counter-school cultures and Bourdieusian notions of capital. We employed individual and group interviews, network-mapping, and observations at two contrasting English secondary schools. Both schools were characterised by extended social network structures that appeared to influence patterns of substance use, although the mechanisms via which this occurred varied according to school context. At Grange House school (suburban context) a minority of students from disadvantaged families were alienated by the attainment-focused regime, marginalised by a strong peer-led centrifugal force pushing them outwards, and substance use was an alternative source of bonding and identity for these students. In contrast, at North Street a centripetal force operated whereby the majority of students were pulled towards highly-visible, normative markers of ‘safe’, ‘road culture’, such as cannabis use and gang-involvement, as they attempted to fit in and survive in an inner-city school environment. We conclude that health inequalities may be reproduced through these distinctive centrifugal and centripetal forces in different institutional contexts, and this should be the focus of quantitative examination in the UK and elsewhere.

From Critical Social Policy:

The good, the bad and the vague: assessing emerging Conservative drug policy


Abstract: New Labour came to power promising to offer a new, evidence based approach towards drug policy. However, despite early promise, the latter years of the Labour government descended towards tabloid led criminal justice populism. During the same period, the Conservative opposition often gave contradictory messages on policy, although they increasingly appeared to veer towards a hard-line, abstinence based approach. In power they have moved quickly to produce a drugs strategy that promises a move towards a ‘recovery’ agenda. This article reviews and evaluates the evolving Conservative Party policies on drugs misuse and explores whether the strategy lives up to its ambitious rhetoric and its stated aim to follow evidence based policies. It finds a mixture of laudable aims; vague and sometimes contradictory statements; proposals that are unsupported, and sometimes contraindicated, by evidence; and policy goals that are often at risk of being undermined by a wider policy agenda that threatens to marginalize people with drug problems still further.
From **British Journal of Social Work:**

**Teaching research in social work: capacity and challenge**

*Gillian MacIntyre and Sally Paul (2013) vol. 33, pp. 685-702*

**Abstract:** This paper presents the findings of an audit of research teaching in UK-qualifying social work education. The audit was part of a wider ESRC-funded study that provides baseline data for setting progress objectives towards building research capacity in the discipline and profession. This paper offers observations from the audit, based on a survey of undergraduate and postgraduate (Masters) qualifying social work programmes across all four countries, with in-depth enquiry into a smaller sample from each. The survey examined what research methods were taught, how, where, when and by whom. Most importantly, it considered why these choices were made, and the challenges and possibilities were presented for building research capacity and research-mindedness at qualifying level. The audit highlighted a range of factors that contributed to the marginalisation of research teaching. These included not only lack of time, staff skill and resource, but also more fundamental reservations and resistance on the part of educators, students and practitioners towards engaging with research. It is suggested that at the heart of such ambivalence lies a fundamental debate about the nature of the social work discipline, and the relationship between research and practice.

**Relationship-based social work and its compatibility with the person-centred approach: principle versus instrumental perspectives**

*David Murphy, Maria Duggan and Stephen Joseph (2013) vol. 43, pp. 703-719*

**Abstract:** In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in social work towards relationship-based practice. In this article, we discuss the conceptualisation of relationship-based practice from a person-centred point of view and its applicability to contemporary social work. It will be shown that the person-centred point of view has a meta-theoretical basis that makes it incompatible with modern statutory social work practice. First, we outline the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the person-centred approach and argue that a potential conflict lies at the heart of the contemporary social workers’ capacity to truly accommodate person-centred theory. Next, the resurgence of interest in relationship-based practice, paying particular attention to the person-centred approach, is considered within the context and influence of risk management, managerialism and consumerism on social work. We then challenge the assumption that relationship-based social work founded on the person-centred approach legitimately supports service users’ ability and capacity towards self-determination. Our challenge is based on the premise that the person-centred approach is defined by principled non-directive practice. On this basis, we conclude that a person-centred relationship-based approach to contemporary social work is untenable.

Remember, you will need an [Athens username and password](http://www.sks.soton.ac.uk) to access subscription material, such as journal articles on SSKS. Register [HERE](http://www.sks.soton.ac.uk).
SSKS training

Details of the online training sessions are provided below. If you would like to attend a training session, if you have any questions or if you would like to arrange a training session for your organisation please contact: knowledge@nes.scot.nhs.uk

On line training is provided via WebEx, BT's online conferencing software. In order to take part, you will require access to a computer connected to the internet and a telephone. Each session lasts about half an hour and is completely free to attend.

A Brief Tour of SSKS
This session is a 'conducted tour' around Social Services Knowledge Scotland, briefly visiting the tools and functions available.

Dates:
Friday, 2 August 2:00 - 2:30pm
Thursday, 29 August 10:00 - 10:30am
Monday, 2 September 11:00 - 11:30am

Search Tips and Hints
This session is intended for those new to or inexperienced in, information searching. The session includes brief demonstrations of truncation, Boolean searching, filters and shows the effects of these on your search results.

Dates:
Tuesday, 13 August 12:00 - 12:30pm
Tuesday, 10 September 1:00 - 1:30pm

SSKS Search Tools
This session is a follow-on from the Search Tips and Hints session and covers the various search tools available through SSKS, showing the ways these can be used to improve your search results.

Dates:
Thursday, 25 July 10:00 - 10:30am
Thursday, 8 August 10:00 - 10:30am
Friday, 13 September 2:00 - 2:30pm

To register for any of the above training sessions, please contact knowledge@nes.scot.nhs.uk with your name, e-mail, job title and the session you wish to attend.

NHS Health Scotland Library and Knowledge Services

The Library and Knowledge Services team at NHS Health Scotland provides a full range of information support for the Social Services workforce, specifically in areas relating to health improvement and the reduction of health inequalities, such as drugs and alcohol, early years, older people and criminal justice.

The following services are available and completely free of charge:

- A literature searching service to help you find quality-assured evidence and research
- Topic-specific current awareness alerts to keep you up to date with new reports and journal articles in your field of interest
- A book lending service (we will post books out to anywhere in Scotland and provide a Freepost return address)
- A DVD lending service
- Advice and training in the identification and use of information resources
To make use of this service, or to find out more about us, simply visit our website:
www.healthscotland.com/knowledge

You can contact us at nhs.healthscotland-knowledge@nhs.net or 0141 414 2762

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