

# Engaging opioid-dependent men in a whole family parenting and child welfare intervention: lessons learned from the PuP4Dads study.

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# Parents Under Pressure (PuP)

Developed in Australia (Sharon Dawe & Paul Harnett)

**Theoretical model:** Social-ecological-developmental understanding of child development, child welfare, parenting and family functioning. Strengths-based approach. Studies in Australia, UK & Ireland.

Focus on parental emotion regulation (emotional availability and attachment), parenting confidence (self-esteem and self-efficacy), and parental stressors (socio-economic circumstances), parenting skills (interaction with children), to improve caregiving environment.

**Integrated Assessment Framework** - case formulation  
12 'modules' (delivered flexibly), parent workbook, video feedback, standardised assessments, online database/guidance.



# Rationale for study

- **Health & social inequalities** in families affected by parental addiction – often have multiple & complex needs, marginalised, stigmatised, ‘hard to engage’ (for good reasons!)
- **Literature review** - effectiveness of community-based early years’ parenting programmes within context of parental addiction.
- **Limited studies** - focused on mothers & mothering, fathers excluded or ignored, zero evidence on ‘whole family’ approaches.

# Research questions about Dads

Systematic review (Panter-Brick et al 2014), recommended a 'game change'.

- **Identified seven key barriers:** cultural, institutional, professional, operational, content, resource, and policy considerations in study design and delivery.
- **Three research priorities:** engage fathers and coparenting couples; disaggregate process and impact data by fathers, mothers, and coparents; pay greater attention to issues of reach, sustainability, cost, equity, and scale-up.

Panter-Brick C., et al (2014) Practitioner Review: Engaging fathers – recommendations for a game change in parenting interventions based on a systematic review of the global evidence, *J Child Psychology & Psychiatry*; 55:11, 1187–1212.

# Study Design

## Mixed methods feasibility study (for a future trial of PuP4Dads)

- Staff training in PuP
- **Recruit 24 families** with father on OST (caring for at least one child aged 0-8yrs), include mothers where possible
- **Deliver PuP** and assess implementation e.g., deliverability, uptake, retention, acceptance etc
- **Outcome Measures** at 0, 6, 12mths: parenting, child welfare, couple & family functioning, substance use
- Data for a future **economic evaluation**
  
- **Qualitative interviews** with parents, PuP practitioners, PuP supervisors, Service managers, Policymakers/commissioners
- Focus groups with referrers

# Lessons learned so far...

## Implementation data...

- Deliverability of the intervention?
- Recruitment and engagement – think family, think father! Not evident in drug services, maternity, child health, and primary care.
- Child protection agenda – help or hindrance?



Father-inclusive practice –  
from rhetoric to reality

# Challenges ahead

- Fathers want to be included, mothers keen too, how to ensure all are given an opportunity?
- Many different family constellations – can programme/services accommodate?
- Meeting individual needs of dads/men and mums and children
- Acceptability of PuP high and retention good – how to improve?
- Some topics sensitive for fathers (e.g., income, trauma, violence, dealing)
- Housing and prison/criminal justice agenda – potentially counter-productive?



# Fathers – essential or optional?

- Addiction and the family – are we ready for a game change?

