



Manchester  
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University

# Substance Use and Addictive Behaviours: European Annual Conference

Long-term Recovery and Identity

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Thursday 28 March 2019, INNSIDE Manchester

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# Agenda

**9:00am – 9:30am** – Registration

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**9:30am – 9:45am** – Welcome from Professor Sarah Galvani, Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, England

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**9:45am – 10:15am - Long-term recovery: a 10 year follow up study. Timing of help and follow-up services from a life course perspective.** Mr Thomas Svendsen, Centre for Drug and Alcohol Research, Stavanger University Hospital, Stavanger, Norway

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**10:15am – 10:45am - Working at the SHARP end: Reflections on recovery and identity when providing a peer-led, 'relational' health and harm reduction intervention.** Mr. Michael Roy, Peer Navigator, SHARPS Study/Salvation Army, The Orchard, England, and Dr Tessa Parkes, Director, Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services and Research, University of Stirling, Scotland

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**10:45am – 11:15am** - Coffee break

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**11:15am – 11:45am - Long-term recovery and work.** Dr Evelien Brouwers, Tilburg University, Netherlands

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**11:45am – 12:15pm - 'Better safe than sorry': women's and men's stories about sex and intimate relationships in long-term recovery from problematic drug use.** Anette Skårner, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

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**12:15pm – 12:45pm - Long-term recovery identities at the intersection of religion, spirituality and the secular.** Dr Wendy Dossett, University of Chester, England

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**12:45pm – 1:45pm** - Lunch and networking

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**1:45pm – 2:15pm - Self-management rather than abstinence: how 'non-problematic' drug takers negotiate substance use over the life course.** Dr Rebecca Askew, Senior Lecturer, Sociology Department, Manchester Metropolitan University, England

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**2:15pm – 2:45pm - How important is identity in understanding long-term recovery?** Dr Jo Ashby, Head of Department, and Mr Paul Cornwall, Psychology Department, Manchester Metropolitan University, England

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**2:45pm – 3:15pm - What counts as 'recovery'? Promoting change amongst harmful drinkers.** James Morris, Editor of Alcohol Policy UK, PhD student, London South Bank University, England

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**3:15pm – 3:45pm** - Discussion and Q&A. Professor Sarah Galvani, Manchester Metropolitan University, England

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**3:45pm – 4:15pm** - Final comments and close

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# Meet our Speakers

**Thomas Solgård Svendsen**  
**Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research,**  
**Stavanger University Hospital**

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Long-term help efforts are often required when individuals with substance use disorder desire changes in substance use, cognitive functions and psychosocial areas. Systematic feedback on data results that provide information on status and changes in cognitive and psychosocial functions are not commonly used tools internationally in long-term change work. Ethical aspects of dissemination of data results on individual and aggravated levels are not widely discussed internationally.

In-depth interviews with 30 individuals with full recovery from substance use disorder were completed. The study participants shared information on participation in a longitudinal, prospective follow-up study that use systematic monitoring and feedback on data results as part of the study's methodology.

Study participants reported that systematic monitoring and feedback on data results was useful in several aspects, from baseline assessment to five years in full recovery. Systematic monitoring and feedback on data results on cognitive and psychosocial aspects was perceived as interesting and useful support tools, both in periods of using and not using substances, and in all phases working toward full recovery.

Systematic monitoring and feedback on data results provides significant amounts of low-cost data, was not perceived as too demanding to follow up for study participants, and was described as interesting and useful supportive management tools in several phases of working toward full recovery from substance use disorder. Treatment, health-and social services could benefit from using systematic monitoring and feedback as supportive tools to work long-term with individuals that desire changes in substance use, cognitive and psychosocial areas. Ethical aspects of data results dissemination on individual and aggravated levels should be discussed in substance treatment and follow-up services, as well as in all other treatment, health-and social help areas internationally.



## Michael Roy Salvation Army

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Michael is a Peer Navigator for the NIHR funded study SHARPS, supporting harm reduction through peer support. He works at The Orchard, Bradford, which has 56 beds for people who are homeless to reside and receive support. There is also a day shelter, which people can access on a daily basis.

Michael has an NVQ Level Two in Progression with Change, Grow, Live, and an NVQ Level Three in Advice and Guidance with St Giles Trust. He previously volunteered with Humankind. He took different substances for 28 years and experienced chronic addiction for 16 years which led to homelessness and numerous spells in custody.

Michael has now been abstinent for four years. He wants to give people the support they deserve by building a relationship and rapport. He believes in recovery but also recognises that this is their choice. He sees the main aim of his job as keeping people as safe as possible. He tries to rebuild confidence, motivate and empower people to reflect on the choices they make. Supporting people through a harm reduction approach takes a holistic approach to their lives.



## Dr Tessa Parkes

University of Stirling  [tessaparkes](#)

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Tessa is Director of the Salvation Army Centre for Addiction Services, and Research at the University of Stirling where she leads a number of research and knowledge exchange projects focused on the reduction of harms and promotion of health for people with alcohol and drug problems. She sits on the Partnership for Action on Drugs in Scotland Executive Group, the Dundee Drugs Commission, and is Deputy Convenor for the Drugs Research Network for Scotland. She also sits on Research England's Research Excellence Framework Equality and Diversity Panel.

Tessa has experience in the statutory and non-statutory health, social care and housing and homelessness sectors as a front-line support worker, team leader, and mental health nurse, and has provided consultancy and training to a wide variety of organisations focused on service improvement.

Tessa's research activity centres on enhancing the experience of people who use health and social care services, with a clear commitment to social justice, health equity and advocacy for poorly serviced groups, including people who use drugs. Tessa is Principal Investigator for the Supporting Harm Reduction Through Peer Support (SHARPS) study funded by NIHR's Health Technology Assessment programme.

### **Working at the SHARP end: Reflections on recovery and identity when providing a peer-led, 'relational' health and harm reduction intervention.**

Our National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) research study (SHARPS) involves Peer Navigators providing a 'relational intervention' consisting of practical and emotional support for people who are experiencing homelessness with significant substance use issues. As Peer Navigators, we have lived experience of homelessness and/or problem substance use and explicitly draw from this to support study participants to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce harms. We are based in third sector hostel and outreach settings in Scotland and the North of England.

We know from many projects in the UK, and internationally, that peer workers offer valuable support to people with a range of different challenges, yet this support has not been systematically studied in the field of substance use. SHARPS is a feasibility study to address this gap and is investigating the potential and challenges of providing this intervention using a framework called Normalisation Process Theory (NPT).

As Peer Navigators we are also using NPT to make sense of our new roles and the dynamics we encounter. In this presentation, we share some early reflections, using NPT, on our identities as peer workers, and how these develop and shift in such roles.

**Evelien Brouwers**  
**Tilburg University, School of**  
**Social and Behavioural Sciences,**  
**Department Tranzo**  [EvelienBrouwers](#)

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Evelien Brouwers (PhD) is a senior researcher at Tilburg University (The Netherlands). Being interested in recovery processes, her research focuses on psychosocial factors that hamper or facilitate work participation of people with addiction and/or mental health problems.

One of Evelien's main areas of interest is social stigma in the work environment as a barrier to sustainable employability. She currently supervises six PhD students and one postdoc researcher, and is the project leader of several large research and knowledge exchange projects. She is chair of the Guideline Revision Committee looking at the guidance of workers with mental health problems by occupational physicians, of the Netherlands Society of Occupational Medicine, and has initiated the National 'Working group against stigma in the workplace'.

**Long-term recovery and work.**

The concept of recovery has been described in different ways. Viewed from a traditional, biomedical perspective, it refers to prolonged abstinence. However, nowadays the meaning of recovery refers to it a much broader and holistic meaning, and includes aspects as functional, personal and societal recovery. Indeed, studies have shown that, for instance, employment is crucial to the process of rebuilding a life after substance use, as it can have many benefits for wellbeing. These include learning new skills and self-esteem, building social contacts at work, taking up new roles, changes in identity, and financial independence.

However, substance use is one of the highest stigmatized conditions, and people who are in recovery do not only have to deal with their own condition, but also with the prejudice and discrimination that accompanies it. The current presentation will focus the importance of employment for wellbeing and recovery of people with substance use problems, and especially on how social stigma in the work environment can act as a barrier. It will conclude with recommendations for practice and for future research.



## Anette Skårner

### University of Gothenburg

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Anette Skårner (PhD) is an associate professor of Social Work at the University of Gothenburg. She has worked as a social worker in the field of drug treatment and psychiatric care.

Anette has conducted several research projects in the area of drug use and addiction and applies an interactionist perspective in her research. Common for her research is an ambition to highlight the role of the social relationships for people on their way into, or out of, drug use.

Anette focuses on the following themes: social networks and social support, treatment and clientship, affected family members and young people and drugs.

Anette's particular research interest in recent years is sexuality, intimate relationships and drug use in the context of the exit process from drug abuse.

#### **'Better, safe than sorry': women's and men's stories about sex and intimate relationships in long-term recovery from problematic drug use.**

The aim of this presentation is to present an analysis of the role of sexuality and intimate relationships during women's and men's exit processes from problematic drug use. Drawing from qualitative interviews with 35 Swedish women and men with a history of problematic drug use, the presentation focuses on how their sexual practice is played out both during drug use and in the new drug-free life situation.

The interviewees comprise a heterogeneous group in terms of both drug use history and life circumstances in general. The conflictual transition process evolves around the individual's attempts to adapt to various sexual scripts made available to them. An element of shame regarding past sexual experiences is enforced by a strong desire to create a new identity as 'ordinary'. The safest option then is to abstain from sex even if it may lead to frustration and longing. To some, toning down sexuality is a welcome respite, to others a meaningless wait. Why does the beautiful, lovely sexuality never come?



**Dr Wendy Dossett**  
**University of Chester,**  
**Department of Theology and**  
**Religious Studies**



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Dr Wendy Dossett is Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Chester. She has published in the fields of Buddhist Studies, Religious Education and Recovery Spirituality, and her research seeks to expose the constructed and intersecting nature of the categories of 'religion', 'spirituality' and 'the secular'.

Wendy is Principal Investigator of The Higher Power Project; a large qualitative project exploring spirituality amongst people in twelve-step recovery from addictions. Her most recent publications in this field are 'Twelve Step Mutual Aid: Spirituality, Vulnerability and Recovery' in S. Harvey, S. Steidinger, & J. Beckford (Eds.), 'New Religious Movements and Counselling: Academic, Professional and Personal Perspectives, Routledge, 2018'; jointly with Cook, C.C.H., 'Addiction and Forgiveness', in Hance, S.(ed) 'Forgiveness – Personal, Professional, Political'. Jessica Kingsley, 2018; 'A daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.' *Addiction*, 112, 6, 2017 and 'Addiction, Spirituality and the Twelve Steps' in *International Social Work*. May, Vol. 56, No.2. 2013.

**Long-term recovery identities at the intersection of religion, spirituality and the secular.**

Much recovery spirituality, both within and outside of twelve-step fellowships, taps into the 'Spiritual but not Religious' (SBNR) identity. This paper examines the nature of spirituality as a 'floating signifier' (Lévi Strauss, 1950) in recovery discourses.

Drawing on data from the Higher Power Project, a large qualitative study of twelve-step spirituality involving participants in Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Al-Anon Family Groups and others, the paper analyses some of the ways in which notions of spirituality are contingent and subject to flux over long-term recovery trajectories.

# Dr Rebecca Askew

## Manchester Metropolitan University

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Rebecca is a criminologist with a broad interest in substance use, drug policy and illicit drug markets. Her previous research has included drug treatment evaluations, substance use over the life-course and the benefits and functions of illicit drug consumption. Rebecca is currently Principle Investigator for an ESRC grant entitled; 'Does UK drug policy require reform? Engaging Drug Takers into the debate'.

Rebecca has undertaken various methodologies within research, but more recently, her work has taken a critical discourse studies approach.

### **Self-management rather than abstinence: how 'non-problematic' drug takers negotiate substance use over the life course.**

This presentation is based on interviews conducted with 40 participants who had taken drugs for a variety of reasons, which included spirituality, self-discovery, creativity, productivity and to alleviate health issues. A critical discourse studies approach was used to trace how the participants spoke about substance use over the life-course.

The narratives challenged dominant discourses related to abstinence and recovery. Participants spoke about reducing and/or switching consumption behaviours in order to overcome issues of dependence and/or dysfunctional use. The presentation concludes by reflecting on the implications these findings could have for treatment and policy.

# Dr Jo Ashby and Paul Cornwall Manchester Metropolitan University



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## Dr Jo Ashby

Jo is currently Interim Head of the Department of Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her research interests are based within the field of social and health psychology within the applied setting. Jo has a specific interest in problematic substance use and community treatment. Specifically, how treatment programs have the potential to bring about positive behaviour change.

Jo's recent work aimed to understand more about the relational aspects of behaviour change and how this may facilitate those in long-term recovery from problematic substance use.

## Paul Cornwall

Paul has worked with Jo researching the field of substance use for over three years and has worked extensively in support and treatment settings for over five years. Paul has recently secured a PhD scholarship from Manchester Metropolitan University in order to explore mechanisms of long-term recovery, specifically in relation to identity. Paul is supervised by Jo, Dr Lucy Webb and Dr Joseph Keenan at Manchester Metropolitan University.

## How important is identity in understanding long-term recovery?

It is well established that the move towards long-term recovery from addiction involves identity shifts, from a 'substance user' to an 'ex-user'. The role of identity in this instance can be considered reasonably unambiguous in that a person who was doing something morally bad, is now, as an 'ex-user' engaging in morally acceptable behaviour by choosing not to 'use'. However, when understanding maintenance of sobriety, or, long-term recovery, the interplay between social identity and self-identity in forming new ex-user identities is layered with many complexities that surround self and social identity.

This paper draws on narrative psychology and dialogical theory in order to present insights into the stories of long-term recoverees and poses questions around the importance of understanding identity. Our research reveals stories of behaviour change that do not fit conventional narratives of positive behaviour change, yet are considered success stories for the individuals concerned. How to work with unconventional narratives and what can be useful for practitioners will be considered as part of the presentation.



## James Morris

London South Bank University  jamesmorris24

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James Morris is a third year PhD student at London South Bank University and also Director of the Alcohol Academy. He is editor of the news and analysis blog, Alcohol Policy UK.

James has worked in the alcohol field for 15 years including as a trainer, consultant and commissioner. He has had a keen interest in alcohol brief interventions and sat on advisory groups, including for the Department of Health and World Health Organization. In his spare time he mainly enjoys cooking, golf and dog walking.

### **What counts as 'recovery'? Promoting change amongst harmful drinkers.**

Most harmful drinkers do not have levels of alcohol dependence associated with help-seeking or treatment engagement, thus tend not to identify themselves as having a 'problem'. Harmful drinkers often point to other drinkers and rely on stereotypes of 'alcoholics' such as those at 'rock bottom' to justify their non-problematic drinking identity. As such, harmful drinkers may be considered to fall in between the needs of at-risk drinkers suitable for brief interventions, and dependent drinkers who access treatment or recovery groups.

This talk will explore harmful drinkers and how their beliefs about alcohol problems can influence opportunities for problem recognition and 'early recovery'.



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