

TAILORING HARM REDUCTION SERVICES TO THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

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Background:

Within the population of PWUD, young people who use drugs (YPWUD) are some of the most vulnerable, and their needs tend to be the most left behind in the global response while they face additional barriers in accessing services. As there is growing recognition that the health and human rights of PWUD need to be upheld in the progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, & Universal Health Coverage and as the harm reduction approach gains broader acceptance as the key approach to eliminating the harms associated with drug use, we must ensure that the nuanced needs and requirements of YPWUD are not overlooked. Young people who use drugs, like all young key populations (YKPs), are complex and have multiple and intersecting identities, and face compounded stigma and discrimination, including in health services.

Methods: summary of existing and evidence-based research to inform policy, including definition of policy problem, highlighting of relevant audience, and identification of possible course of actions and recommendations.

Results:

The additional and intersecting barriers faced by YPWUD in accessing harm reduction and other health services in various contexts, including age of consent, are laid out. Pursuant to these barriers, a set of practical examples are reviewed, also discussing how YPWUD can be meaningfully involved in services and policies that affect them. The importance of addressing intersectional risks, comprehensively integrating harm reduction, health and social services, improving data, research and analysis, and addressing stigma and discrimination is also discussed.

Conclusion:

Young people who use drugs face additional and considerable barriers in accessing harm reduction services. However, there are good-practice examples on how to fully involve young people in the design and implementation of harm reduction services tailored to their needs and in efforts towards policy reform, which can be learned from and adapted to other contexts.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

The conference collaborators recognise the considerable contribution that industry partners make to professional and research activities. We also recognise the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in publications and presentations.