



KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE
IS ONE THING.

USING DRUGS IS ANOTHER.

SOMETIMES THEY'RE CONNECTED

AND SOMETIMES THEY'RE NOT.

Redefining Drug Treatment For Mothers who use drugs

HR M2M – Harm Reduction Mother 2 Mother

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FICTION ACCEPTED AS FACT

- **THE SAINT: MARY POPPINS MOMMY**
- **THE SINNER: TRAINSPOTTING TRAINWRECK!**

- **SHE HAD CHOICES & CHANCES**
- **SAFEGUARDING IS CONSISTENT**
- **THIS IS NOT GENDERED**
- **BIAS and CONDITIONING**
- **MOTHERS ARE NOT PUNISHED**

UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTHS

- 2009 - 2022 114% increase in drug related deaths for women compared to men 54%¹
- In 2022, over 2,000 women in the UK died of drug related causes¹
- Women* who use drugs experience gender-based violence at up to 25 times the rate experienced by women in the general public²
- - Women who used substances or with mental health problems accounted for 40% of maternal deaths that occurred within a year after pregnancy in 2018-2020⁴
- Over 96% of adoptions in England & Wales were 'forced' according to data from 2014⁵
- There has been a sharp increase in Child Protection Plans(CPPs) issued by local authorities (+95% from 2008-2017) and an even more dramatic increase in CPPs issued due to emotional harm (+164%)⁶ but what's really behind these numbers?

1. Office for National Statistics (ONS) Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2022
2. Drug Policy Network SEE: Campaign to Eliminate Violence Against Women Who Use Drugs, Nov 2023
3. Gilmour, L., Honeybul, L., Lewis, S. et al. Scoping review: mapping clinical guidelines and policy documents that address the needs of women who are dependent on drugs during the perinatal period. BMC Pregnancy Childbirth 24, 84 (2024)
4. Knight M et al 2022, Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care Core report: Lessons learned to inform maternity care from the UK and Ireland Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths and Morbidity 2018-20
5. Adoption without consent – Study for the Policy Dept Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament, 2015
6. Bilson A. Future Emotional Harm The Statistics, Univ. of Central Lancashire

Hidden Harm – facts?

- By accepting that not all drug use is incompatible with being a “good parent” (the inference being that most parents who use drugs will be bad parents), the report invokes a rationality that links (mostly) harmful drug use with (mostly) bad parenting
- 11 out of the 48 recommendations in Hidden Harm pertain specifically to the treatment of women who use drugs, pregnant women and mothers. None specifically target men, fathers, or fathers-to-be.
- **Safeguarding = the 3 Ms**

MISUNDERSTOOD, MISREPRESENTED & MISUSED

How is this effective drug treatment?

- **The demonisation of medication maintenance**
- **Abstinence – where is the line?**
- **It is not working – because it does not work**
- **Unique aspects**
- **You cannot recover something you never had!**
- **Coercive control?**
- **Stripped motherhood**

The Structure that can work

- I DON'T believe Women Only Services are the answer or provide a fast response to need
- This is not a hallmark movie
- Assertive outreach
- Reconfiguring current services
- Specific strong multi-agency links
- Bridge builders vs Peers



TIME TO FLIP THE NARRATIVE

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery