

The Village Project

Information for stakeholders

Children of parents with mental illness (COPMI) are more likely to experience negative long-term outcomes, and are less likely to receive supports they need to lead a healthy and happy life. This four-year research project aims to increase identification and strengthen formal and informal supports around children at-risk when their parents have a mental illness.

This project will be co-developed with stakeholders and will implement and evaluate two practice approaches, focused on the child and on principles of collaborative care. The project uses mixed-methodologies, involving numerous data collection methods including: literature reviews, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and observations.

We are aiming to enhance the existing practice approaches to caring for children of parents with a mental illness in Austria. The first stage of this work is to build an understanding of what care is available for these children and their families, and what some of the challenges may be in providing services to these vulnerable families and children. Through a hybrid design, we are applying innovative research methods to co-develop practice approaches for health professionals, communities and families to enhance the identification and support offered to children of parent with a mental illness.

1. Understanding the current situation

We begin this first step by seeking to understand and explore the issues facing support services in Austria, to identify and provide support for children of parents with mental illness and their families.



We are particularly interested in understanding what services may interact with vulnerable children and/or their families, whether formally or informally to identify, refer or support. Following on from this, we would like to explore in interviews or focus groups what might help this practice develop further or what challenges are faced by both formal and informal support providers to assist the child and their family.

From April-June 2018, interviews will be undertaken with representatives from mental health and also child protection and other child focus services to reflect on the current practice to support children of parents with mental illness and/or the child's voice (if any), what you think works well about what is happening at the moment, and what more services can do to support COPMI/ the child's voice (if possible).

2. A co-design and participatory approach to developing the intervention

We also aim to work directly with interested stakeholders to develop an approach to the early identification of COPMI, and to creating collaborative care approaches to support these children and their family. As part of this, we are particularly interested in understanding how an approach can be developed to encourage listening and responding to the child's voice in directing their support.



This part of the project will work with interested stakeholders through a series of co-design workshops to develop the intervention, drawing on evidence based reviews of the literature and the experience of interested stakeholders participating in these series of design workshops.

During Oct- March 2019 – we are seeking your participation in approx 6 x 2-3 hr workshops held monthly. The aim of these workshops is to present information obtained in the earlier stage of the project above (mapping, evidence reviews, and interviews/focus group) and to workshop or co-design an identification and support approach involving the ‘village facilitator’ and informal and formal care approaches. We are particularly interested in people who understand the challenges of the systems they are involved with to identify and work with children, and have a willingness to commit to work alongside us design an enhanced or new way of working.

3. Training and Implementation

We want to partner with interested professionals wanting to be trained and supported in the new co-designed approach. Training is expected to be conducted face to face for 1-2 days in September 2019, and this will follow with a supportive mentoring approach to support the delivery of the approach in practice for a 12-18 month period.

4. The evaluation of the new approaches in practice

There will be two component to the evaluation – a process evaluation examining the impact of the village project activities and an outcome evaluation examining the impact of the new practice approaches. The process evaluation is expected to involve qualitative interviews/focus groups and surveys with participants, as well as formal and informal meetings with stakeholders to understand how the project has been implemented along the way.



5. How to get involved?

We are asking interested stakeholders to get involved in any part of the project. Depending on your time that you have available, we hope to consult with a wide range of stakeholders throughout any of these processes listed above.

6. To find out more information about the project

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