

# What prevents substance misusing parents from engaging with social workers?

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the factors that will aid substance misusing parents to utilise social services more effectively.

Using a literature review done systematically, this study argues that practitioner attitudes, support for practitioners, parental attitudes, comorbid/co-existing factors, resource and multi-disciplinary working prevents substance misusing parents (SMPs) from engaging with social workers (SWs). Practitioner attitudes as well as parental attitudes played a crucial part with effective engagement in social work practice with substance misusing parents and their families. Limited resources in the form of inconsistency in care and the lack of seamless interventions for parents affected by substance misuse were additional barriers to engagement when working with substance misusing families.

For effective engagement with parents and families affected by substance misuse, effective training must be available for social workers, and social work courses should educate students on substance misuse in preparation for their future practice.



Fig 1

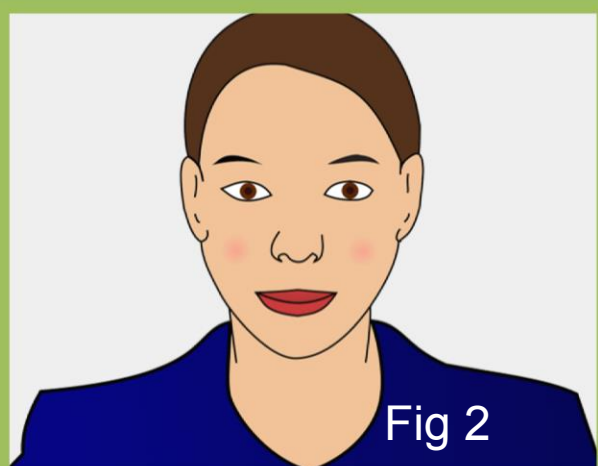


Fig 2

## Introduction and Rationale:

Parental substance misuse is increasing in the United Kingdom (JRF 2015). It has been identified as one of the key reasons for social work involvement as it sometimes hinders the safety of children (Galvani et al. 2014, Kroll and Taylor 2007 and 2014). This is supported by anecdotal evidence from my previous practice placement in the Family Support Team (Oxfordshire) where I observed the difficulty professionals faced when engaging parents with substance misuse. SWs play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of children who are under a child protection plan or in need (HM Government 1989) and effective engagement of parents who are involved in social services can play a crucial role in addressing the risks parental substance misuse poses to a child, and provide appropriate interventions to ensure a child's safety. There is a growing body of literature that recognises and support the importance of **partnership working** with parents that can only be achieved through effective engagement with services (Bain 2009 and Children's Commissioner 2010).

**Method:** Using a literature review done systematically, ten articles were reviewed and analysed.

## Road map to barriers

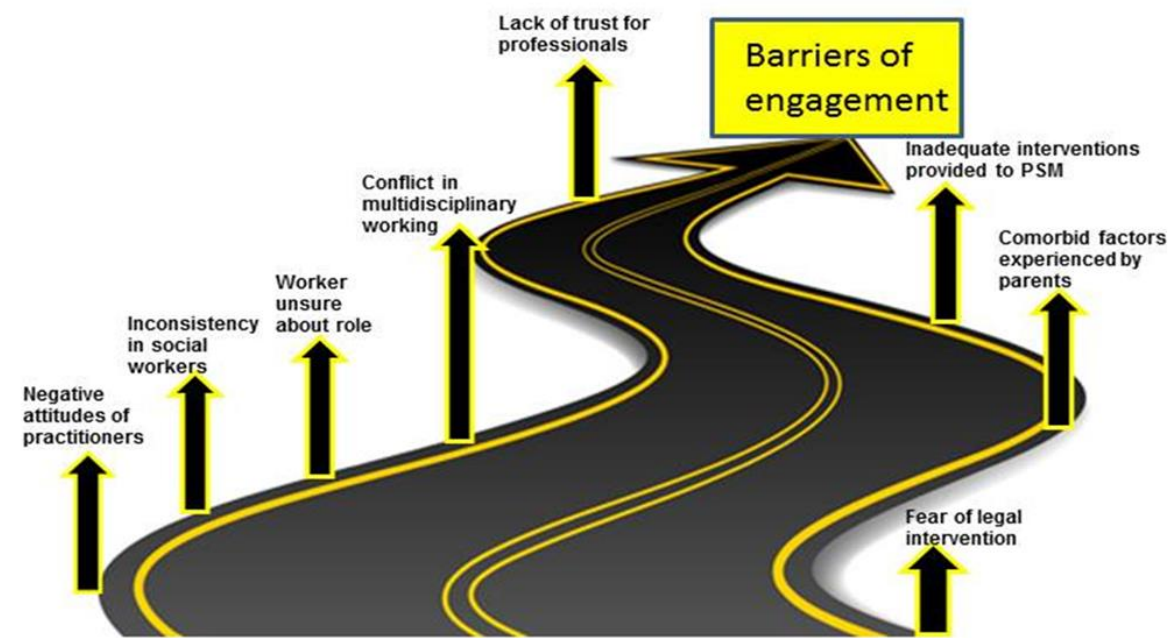


Fig 3

## Conclusion/Summary:

The research highlighted that along with attitudes of SMPs, poor engagement of SWs, negative attitudes of professionals and structural barriers to service provision, played a major role in preventing SMPs from engaging with SWs. Although it could be disputed that negative attitudes of SWs is a coping mechanism developed due to the high risk cases they manage daily; it is important for SWs as a discipline, as part of their reflective practice, to constantly question the extent to which the assumption they make about service users are well grounded. The literature review proposes there is a significant amount of evidence concerning the impact of a parent's substance misuse on their child. Nevertheless, there is limited research into what prevents SMPs from engaging with social workers. The evidence to which the writer refers to in this dissertation reveals significant inadequacy in social work practice with SMPs. ***In the writer's review and from her experience as a trainee social worker, this is an issue of grave need which requires addressing.***

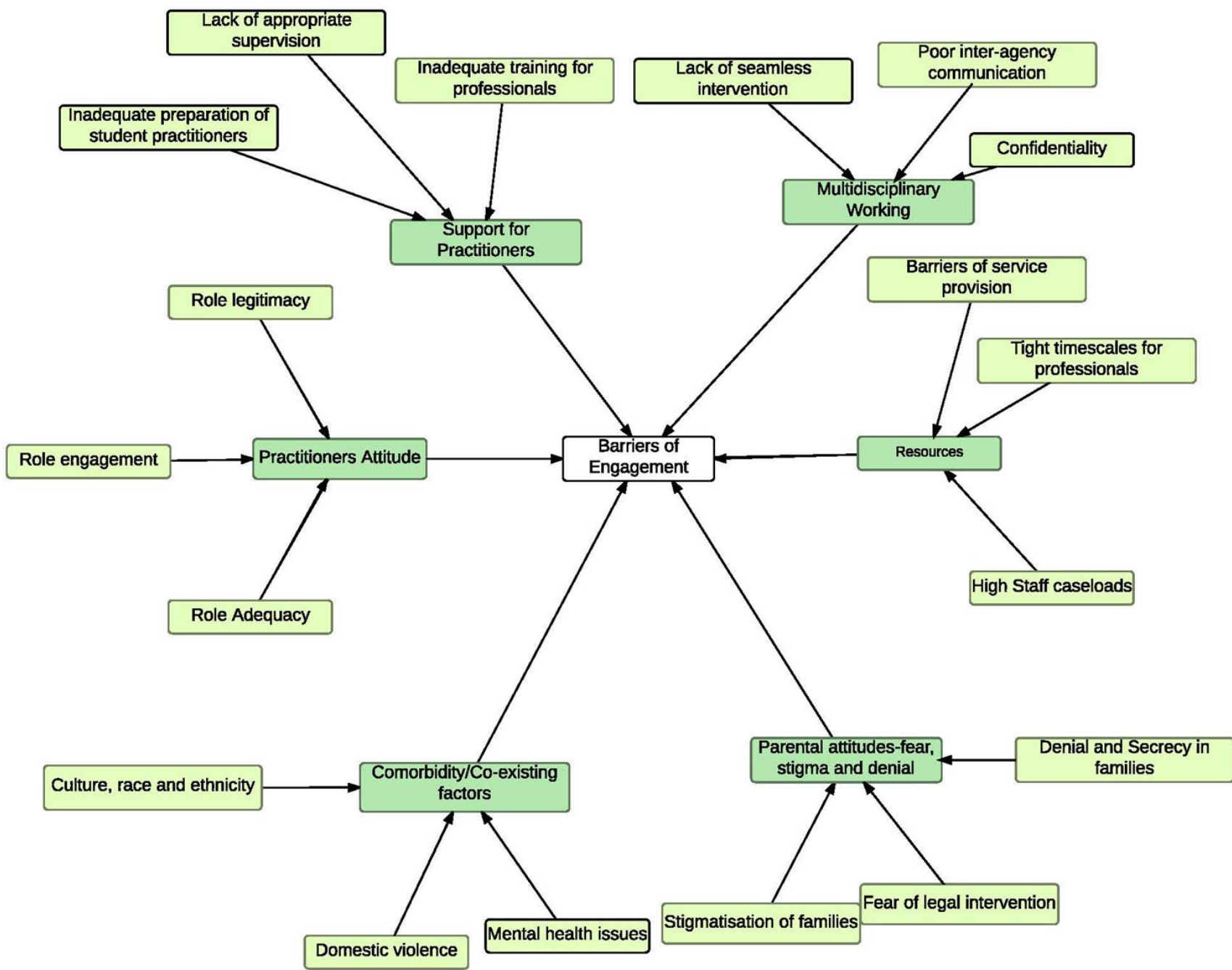


Fig 4

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