
**Abstract**

In spite of a considerable evidence base suggesting the benefits of participation in Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step fellowships, most studies have been conducted in the United States. Preliminary studies have suggested that clients in addiction treatment in the United Kingdom may be more ambivalent about 12-step groups, and the current article examines barriers and pathways to engagement in 12-step recovery support groups for 125 drug and alcohol users (84.5% of the total sample) attending an inpatient detoxification unit in Birmingham, England. Two-thirds (69.4%) reported prior attendance at 12-step meetings, but current levels of affiliation were low and significant barriers to 12-step meeting attendance were identified. Barriers to participation include the perceived religious components of 12-step meetings, prior negative experiences in 12-step meetings, failure to identify with group members, and difficulties simultaneously participating in both 12-step meetings and structured treatment.

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