

Informing Policy to Minimise the Harms Associated with Drug Use in the Isle of Man: A Research Proposal

April 2022

1. Introduction

Work is currently underway in the Isle of Man to inform the development of new policy and action in order to minimise the harms associated with controlled drug use (herein drug use). The Public Health Institute (PHI), LJMU, has been asked to develop a proposal to conduct research that will provide evidence-based recommendations to inform the policy development. The research will have a specific focus on cannabis, but will provide evidence that can be used to inform broader aspects of drug policy in the Isle of Man.

In summary, the research will provide an overview of the prevalence drug use in the Isle of Man, and indicators of drug-related harm. Based on previous academic work undertaken by PHI and others for stakeholders such as the States of Guernsey and the Irish government, we will examine the interaction between health and criminal justice systems with respect to drug use, and how alternative approaches to possession offences, including non-punitive approaches, could be used to promote the health and wellbeing, and safety, of people who use drugs, and of the wider community.

The research will include summative analysis of existing datasets, a community survey to assess understanding of current provision of drug related support and support for alternative approaches, and a stakeholder engagement workshop-based to discuss and prioritise policy options.

This research will complement additional work being undertaken in the Isle of Man which involves public attitude surveys on substance use, including attitudes towards the decriminalisation of cannabis (to be implemented in February 2022) and domestic violence (to be implemented in September 2022).

2. Study Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to review indicators of substance use and related harms in the Isle of Man, with a specific focus on cannabis. Based on this review and findings from earlier work on alternative approaches to drug-related offences, the study will explore public attitudes towards current and other treatment and criminal justice approaches to substance use. The study has three core objectives:

1. To provide an overview of the drugs situation in the Isle of Man, including review of substance use prevalence, harms, and treatment and criminal justice activity,
2. To understand public understanding and support for responses to cannabis and other drug use, including existing approaches and other (non-punitive) policies designed to reduce drug related harm),
3. To carry out public and stakeholder engagement to inform the development of drug policy in the Isle of Man.

3. Proposed Methodology

A mixed-methods approach will be used with findings triangulated to address the core research objectives. We would recommend developing a project Steering Group to support with the design and coordination of the study; this would comprise the study commissioner and other relevant stakeholders (to be determined upon commencement of the work).

Work package 1: Analysis of existing data, and report on international policy developments

A secondary analysis of existing substance use indicators, including drug treatment, drug-related offending and imprisonment, and summaries of recent drug use prevalence and opinion surveys. The extent of analysis will be determined by the extent of data availability. PHI will liaise with the Steering Group to identify the data available for analysis and to facilitate secure data sharing. The analyses will provide data summaries, commentary and interpretation.

Work package 2: Population survey

An online survey will be designed by the research team (in collaboration with the Steering Group) and hosted on the Qualtrics survey platform. The survey will assess public attitudes and support towards drugs policy actions (with a specific focus on cannabis). Questions will guide respondents through assessments of current policy and legislative actions, before assessing support for (non-punitive) policy proposals that have been introduced internationally, including the UK. To incentivise participation in the survey, all participants who complete the survey will be entered into a draw for one of three £30 shopping vouchers. We propose a representative household survey, and the inclusion criteria will be: resident of the Isle of Man, aged 18 years or over, who provide informed consent.

The commissioners are experienced in delivering household surveys, and so LJMU will design and analyse the survey, with input from relevant stakeholders. Briefly, households will be selected from a national address database (e.g. Postcode Address File), with support from survey coordinators in the Isle of Man (to be identified with support from the project Steering Group). Survey coordinators would send out a participant information sheet to selected households along with the link to the online survey¹. Implied consent would be taken from participants who follow the link and complete the survey. Where there is more than one eligible resident at a sampled household, the 'next birthday method' approach will be used to recruit participants. Based on an anticipated response rate of ~16%², sampling 7,000 households would result in around 1,120 completed surveys.

Work package 3: Qualitative insights into drug market changes

We will undertake up to 10 individual interviews with key stakeholders. The sampling frame will be developed in collaboration with the commissioners but is likely to include informed representatives from the police, health and social care, DAT, prison services, and the third sector. Interviews will examine participants' perceptions of the changing nature of the Isle of Man drug market, with a particular focus on how these changes have impacted on groups already considered vulnerable, and the identification of groups that may be at heightened risk as a result of market changes. Participants

¹ All costs for sampling households and survey distribution would be incurred by commissioners.

² Based on a similar survey implemented in the Isle of Man (Butler et al., 2019).

will be also asked to consider how they think alternative approaches to drugs offences could reduce vulnerability and harm. This work will complement data analysed in Workpackage 1.

Work package 4: Public and stakeholder workshops

Engagement workshops will be undertaken to inform the development of proposals to inform drugs policy in the Isle of Man. This would involve a small cross-section of the community, and include representatives from key organisations responding to people who use drugs or who have experienced drug-related harms. Due to likely differences in (professional) experiences, preferences and topic knowledge, it may be useful to hold two separate workshops involving i) the public; and ii) professionals, although cross-group dialogue is informative.

The event will be informed by a ‘citizen’s jury’ approach, whereby representatives are asked to consider drug-related issues that affect them and their communities. The diversity of views will be discussed, before the evidence from Work Packages 1 to 3 are presented. Community representatives will be asked their views on policy and action, and to prioritise preferred objectives that respond to their concerns. This approach will help participants understand the available evidence, and to understand the types of policy approaches that might address their preferences and concerns. The event will be facilitated by LJMU. Although not part of this research proposal, the Steering Group may wish to consider production of short videos and other dissemination materials which summarise the key discussions arising from the workshops in order to respond to wider public interest and potential concerns they might have related to policy change.

Final report

The final project report will include all findings, and a summary and interpretation of other reviews that have examined the outcomes of legislative change (decriminalisation, depenalisation or legalisation of controlled drugs) in other countries/territories. A brief review of the key strategic priorities of the 2021 UK Drugs Strategy *From Harm to Hope* of relevance to the project and IoM drugs policy will also be provided.

The report will not make specific recommendations on which legislative approaches should be adopted, but will include evidence to support decision making. This will be summarised as a set of options on relevant legislative responses that are not currently available in IoM. Information will be tabulated and will describe each approach, identify (new) resources that may be required for delivery, summarise key process points, and lists outputs and potential outcomes identified in the international literature.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval will be sought from Liverpool John Moores Research Ethics Committee. Research study permissions will also be obtained from the Isle of Man and relevant individual services, as required.

4. Timeframes and Outputs

Table 1 provides an overview of our anticipated project timescale. We have based our proposal on an assumed project start date of 1st May 2022 and duration of 9-months. All times are subject to change dependent on the project’s actual start date.

The study will result in a number of outputs delivered across the project period, including:

- Draft report for commissioner review ;
- Final report for publication;
- Study infographic.

The study lead (Prof Sumnall) and team members will also be available to discuss project findings as part of policy development and other dissemination activities. All outputs will be reviewed and agreed by the study Steering Group before publication. To fulfil the knowledge exchange and educational mission of LJMU, we will discuss with commissioners opportunities for publication of study findings (survey, workshop), co-authored by relevant colleagues from the PHI and commissioning team (not included in project timescales or costs). Findings may also be used within teaching and learning materials delivered by LJMU.

Table 1: Estimated project timescales

	Month									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Project Inception Activities										
Confirm study design	■									
Confirm data sharing arrangements	■	■								
Ethical Approval		■								
Work Package 1 - data analysis										
Obtain relevant data		■	■	■						
Data analysis		■	■	■						
Write-up of findings			■	■						
Work Package 2 - household survey										
Survey design		■	■	■						
Implementation		■	■	■	■					
Analysis					■	■				
Write-up of findings						■	■			
Work Package 3 - stakeholder interviews										
Interview design		■	■	■						
Implementation		■	■	■	■					
Analysis					■	■				
Write-up of findings						■	■			
Work Package 4 - public/stakeholder workshop										
Recruitment to event					■	■	■			
Event								■		
Write-up of findings								■		
Final reporting										
Triangulation of findings							■	■	■	
Report writing							■	■	■	
Development of recommendations								■	■	
Delivery of final report								■	■	■

5. The Public Health Institute and Project Team

The Public Health Institute is a research and teaching community working at local, regional, national and international level. The Institute specialises in applied research, public health intelligence and educational programmes addressing health issues at all levels from policy development to service delivery. The Institute's multi-disciplinary expertise includes epidemiology, systematic literature review, programme evaluation and the development of public health intelligence. Key subject expertise includes alcohol consumption, drug use, gambling, smoking, sexual health, mental wellbeing, environmental health and violence prevention. We are a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Violence Prevention and works closely with WHO at both European and national levels to support the public health approach to violence prevention. The Institute is committed to a multi-disciplinary approach to public health and works in partnership with health services, local authorities, judicial bodies, environmental services and community groups.

The project will be led by Professor Harry Sumnall (Professor in Substance Misuse), who will lead on Work Packages 1 and 2, and inform the approach to WP 3 and 4. Professor Zara Quigg (Professor in Behavioural Epidemiology) will provide project support across all Work Packages 1-4. Work Package 3 and 4 will be led by Ellie McCoy (Research and Project Manager, PHI).

Full staff details are available at: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/research/centres-and-institutes/public-health-institute>

Four specific recent examples are provided here to evidence our experience in analysing and reporting on large public health surveys and conducting health needs assessments.

- **States of Guernsey: evidence review, options appraisal, stakeholder engagement**
Harry Sumnall provided a review of the international evidence-base on health-orientated approaches to the possession of small amounts of drugs for personal use. The review examined the interaction between health and criminal justice systems with respect to drug use, and how alternative approaches to possession offences could be used to promote the health and wellbeing, and safety, of people who use drugs, and of the wider community. Internal report delivered February 2020 <https://www.gov.gg/Sunallreport>
- **Isle of Man Gambling Survey 2017: Prevalence, methods, attitudes**
Zara Quigg managed the team of PHI researchers (including Nadia Butler) who analysed and reported on a population based household survey exploring the prevalence of gambling and at-risk and problem gambling on the Isle of Man, and associations with sociodemographics, health indicators, health harming behaviours, and family gambling. Report due to be published summer 2019.
- **Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Hertfordshire, Luton and Northamptonshire**
Zara Quigg managed the team of PHI researchers (including Nadia Butler) who developed, analysed and reported on a large population based household survey exploring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in Hertfordshire, Luton and Northamptonshire, and associations with health harming behaviours, chronic disease and mortality.
http://www.cph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-in-Hertfordshire-Luton-and-Northamptonshire-FINAL_compressed.pdf
- **A targeted health needs assessment of the Eastern European population in Warrington**

Hannah Timpson managed the team of PHI researchers (including Becky Harrison) who conducted a targeted needs assessment to understand the health and wellbeing needs of Eastern European migrants who live in Warrington.

http://www.cph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Eastern-European-Health-Needs-Assessment_Final-Report.pdf

6. Data Protection and Sharing

LJMU is registered as a Data Controller with the Office of the Information Commissioner (ICO) as required under the Act (registration number Z5616967). LJMU processes personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and for the purposes notified to the ICO. We would develop a Data Sharing Protocol detailing secondary data to be shared for evaluation purposes. We would work with project Steering Group to identify key intelligence/analysts to provide data. Data for inclusion will be scoped during the '*Audit of routine enquiry data collection*'. All data transferred to PHI would take place in a secure SSL certified SharePoint environment, abiding by statutory and legal principles which provide the framework for the governance of data exchange. This includes the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and complies with all legal, professional and contractual requirements. Access to data will be restricted to named individuals and stored on secure servers in a locked environment. All PHI staff are required to complete the Data Protection E-Learning Module on an annual basis and to read, agree to and sign our IG Agreement <http://www.cph.org.uk/governance/>

7. Resources

The estimated resources to undertake Work Packages 1-4 would be xxxxxx. This includes an approximate breakdown of activity as follows:

Days per activity:

Project Inception Activities	Days (est.)
Confirm study design	2
Confirm data sharing arrangements	0.5
Ethical Approval Application	1.25
Work Package 1 - data analysis	
Obtain relevant data	4
Data analysis	15
Write-up of findings	6
Work Package 2 - household survey	
Survey design	5
Implement survey	3.5
Analysis	9
Write-up of findings	8.5
Work Package 3 - stakeholder interviews	
Interview design	2.5
Implementation	11
Analysis	8
Write-up of findings	10.5
Work Package 4 - public/stakeholder workshop	
Recruitment to event	2
Event	7
Write-up of findings	8
Final reporting	
Triangulation of findings	11
Report writing	17
Development of recommendations	2
Delivery of final report	4
Total days	137.75

7.1 Contracting arrangements

Confirmation of the contracting process will be agreed; if Peel are happy to use a standard LJMU agreement for the project our usual opening position in terms of IP is below, but this can be negotiated if required.

- All Background Intellectual Property Rights and all title to the same shall remain with the original owner of them. The Client (being the owner of Background Intellectual Property Rights required to enable LJMU to carry out the works) hereby grants to LJMU a royalty-free non-exclusive licence of these Background Intellectual Property Rights to the extent required for the purpose of enabling LJMU to carry out the Work under this Agreement.*

- *All Intellectual Property Rights in or arising out of or in connection with the Work (other than the Background Intellectual Property Rights of the Client) (“Arising IP”) shall be owned by and shall vest in LJMU absolutely and the Client hereby assigns to LJMU by way of present assignment of all current and future rights, all right, title and interest which the Client and / or any member of the Clients personnel may have in any Arising IP.*
- *LJMU hereby grants to the Client or shall procure the direct grant, a fully paid-up, worldwide, non-exclusive, royalty free licence during the term of the Agreement to use the Arising IPR for the purpose of receiving and using the Work and any deliverable relating to the Services during the term of the Agreement (but excluding any right to commercially exploit or sub-licence the Arising IP). Where any Background Intellectual Property Rights of LJMU is needed by the Client following expiry of the Agreement, a licence shall be negotiated between the parties on fair and reasonable terms and an equitable royalty fee payable to LJMU shall be agreed with the parties acting reasonably.*

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