



What this first phase of UKDPC's 'stigma' project involves:

1. Expert commentary

- To provide a research paper drawing on a wide range of publications to locate stigmatisation of problem drug users within the wider context of theoretical understanding and experience of stigma
- To provide evidence on what we know about the stigmatisation of drug users (historically and today) and what can be done to combat stigma

This 10,000 – 15,000 word paper will draw on a wide range of publications to locate the stigmatisation of problem drug users within the wider context of theoretical understanding and the experience of stigmatisation by other groups in society – including those with mental health problems. It will address what we know about the stigmatisation of drug users, the possible causes of stigmatisation and what might be done to combat stigmatisation. Proposed content includes:

- 1) Definition and derivation
- 2) Sociological/psychological/biological understanding of stigma
- 3) How stigmatisation has been understood and applied in other fields
- 4) History of the stigmatisation drug users
- 5) Current public perceptions
- 6) Counteracting stigmatisation

Other issues that may be covered:

- What surveys tell us about different attitudes / tolerance eg welfare scrounger (low educational attainment) or educated middle class city worker (including age/income/wealth/class/religion/geographical location)
- How stigma gets challenged in relation to legislation (how laws are framed) limits of legislation aimed at tackling prejudice (disability/homosexuality/poverty)

2. Public attitudes – omnibus survey

- To establish hard evidence of public attitudes towards recovering and problematic drug users
- To make the comparison between public attitudes to this group and those with mental health (and other) problems over the past 10-15 years

The public attitudes survey (TNS-BMRB) will provide one strand of the evidence needed to highlight the need for longer term action to tackle stigma. This survey will also provide a baseline for monitoring trends over time and the impact of any action taken to tackle the issue.

It will consist of a survey of about 1800 individuals across the UK involving 10 questions based on the '*attitudes to mental illness survey*' conducted annually (TNS-BMRB) with funding from the Department of Health (DH). UKDPC's survey will be carried on the TNS-BMRB omnibus survey and a small pilot will be conducted to test changes to the questions and any new questions that emerge from consultation with stakeholders (UKDPC seminar 11 Feb 2010). However, changes will be limited due to the need for comparisons with people with mental illness but there will be (some) new issues to be addressed, in particular the need to explore the issues from the perspective of young people.

3. Qualitative study – experiences of stigma

To establish the evidence on range of ways sigma and discrimination is experienced by different groups - drug users and their families

- To establish how stigma impacts on users engagement and experiences of services, including how this helps/hinders recovery and social reintegration
- The study will use focus groups, a web-survey and in-depth interviews to capture the experience of stigma from as many perspectives as possible. This work will be conducted by UKDPC with ethical approval from the Institute of Psychiatry (Kings College) Research Ethics Committee.

It is envisaged that 8-10 focus groups will be held with a range of different groups to identify the main types of stigma and the range of ways they impact on people. These will be followed up with a web survey and 10-15 in-depth interviews (probably by telephone unless additional funding becomes available) with users to explore particular examples in more detail and develop some illustrative case studies.

4. Media analysis

- To show how recovering drug users are portrayed in the print media and how this varies for different sub-groups of the population, eg younger versus older drug users - race, class, religion
- To show how media reporting (print) has changed over time
- To show how media reporting (print) compares to the other stigmatised groups (eg mental health, HIV, disability, homosexuality)

The research will involve analysis of a large representative sample of national newspaper articles. The analysis will cover issues such as the context, the language used, the tone, the 'actors', etc The sample will be drawn to allow comparative analysis over three time periods and qualitative comparisons with other stigmatised groups.

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