

Position of Employability Priority Groups in Edinburgh –

Drug Misuse

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(this research project was compiled by Robbie Pye an intern with Capital City Partnership during 2010; if you require more information on this work or the work of the Job Strategy Team, please contact Capital City Partnership on 0131 270 6030)



Drug Misuse

Outline

There is a close link between unemployment and drug misuse - unemployed 16-29 year olds have the highest rates for drug abuse compared to other age groups and employment status (British Crime Survey, 2001). Addiction to drugs can cause social and health problems that create difficulties staying in employment and re-entering employment, often leaving the user to find alternative sources to fund their habit. Research has also shown that entering employment plays a central role in aiding recovery by providing former drug misusers with an alternative peer group, a path to re-integration with the wider community and a sense of self-worth (Effective Interventions Unit, 2003). Helping drug misusers back into employment benefits both the individual and the community.

There are some problems estimating the amount of problem drug users due to people not seeking help or self reporting. The capture-recapture method is used by some of the sources here. It draws on a variety of sources such as social enquiry reports, the police force, Health Protection Scotland and the Information Services Division Scotland (SDMD).

Most research and reports on drug misuse also recognised that it tends to be closely related to alcohol abuse. Although not illegal, alcohol addiction can cause similar problems and barriers to employment as drugs. Therefore some of the statistics that follow include alcohol.

Research also shows an increase in the amount of alcohol consumed by ethnic minorities in the UK. Although rates of alcohol problems are generally still lower for ethnic minorities than for White British, Indian and Sikh men are overrepresented in areas such as alcohol related mortality and liver cirrhosis. Furthermore, support and services are often less accessible to ethnic minorities due to cultural barriers (Hurcombe, Baylay and Goodman, 2010). Although this should be taken into account, the small size of the ethnic minority population in Edinburgh means this poses less of a problem than in other, more diverse cities.

Scope

Information Services Division Scotland (2009) estimates that there are **5,315** drugs misusers in Edinburgh, whilst Edinburgh Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (n.d) put the figure at **5,667**. **2,432** of these drug abusers are injecting drugs. It is thought that the vast majority of these people are adults. Only 4% of 15 year olds have reported taking drugs in the past week, with the most common drug being cannabis.

In 2008/2009 **1,419** new individuals in Edinburgh were reported to SDMD – an increase of just fewer than 300 from 2006/2007. **20%** of new individuals also reported having an alcohol problem. It should be noted that this number is only those reported to SDMD, so does not take into account drug misusers who remain hidden. The Edinburgh Drugs and Alcohol Partnership reports that the number of episodes of treatment for drugs has increased to **2,207** clients, with clients concentrated in 4 postcodes: EH4, EH6, EH11 and EH14.

Table 5: Breakdown of new individuals drug misuse by type, as reported to SDMD.

Drug Type	Reported Use
Total	1419
Illicit drug use	1185
Heroin	793
Methadone	186
Dihydrocodeine	121
Other Opiates	10
Diazepam	455
Other Sedatives	25
Amphetamines	31
Cocaine	104
Crack cocaine	128
Ecstasy	30
Cannabis	359
Other	22

(Information Services Division Scotland, 2009)

Note: The total figure includes prescribed drugs.

Individuals could also specify more than one drug.

A growing trend is emerging in which users take a combination of drugs, often including alcohol. Therefore figures for individual drug use tend to overlap.

Employment

Of the 1,311 new reported users in 2008/2009, only **12%** were employed. **74%** were unemployed and **14%** were listed as other (student, in prison etc). 62% claimed they funded their drug addiction using benefits and 32% by crime (Information Services Division Scotland, 2009). If this employment rate is true for all problem drug users, then only about **650** are in employment and **793** fall into the 'other' category.

Benefits

Estimates available for England show that 8.22% of JSA claimants, 8.13% of Income Support claimants and 4.42% of Incapacity Benefit claimants were problem drug users in 2006. It is also thought that these figures are slightly higher for Scotland (Harris, 2008). Using claimant counts from the DWP, estimates for the amount of people claiming each benefit due to drug abuse is shown in the table below (Nomis, 2010).

Table 6: Benefit claims due to drug abuse

Job Seekers Allowance	Income Support	Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance
817	1247	1000

(Harris, 2008; Nomis, 2010)

However, these figures do not add up to the 62% figure for people funding their drug addiction by benefits, as stated above. According to Harris (2008), many more people claim IB/ESA for health problems associated with drugs, but do not state drug addiction as their primary reason. As claimant information only tends to cite the primary health problem, the exact number of additional claims is unknown. However, as 62% of addicts claim to use benefits to fund their addiction, it is estimated that an additional 450 drug misusers are claiming some form of benefit.

Barriers to Employment

- Stigma associated with drug or alcohol addiction
- Chaotic lifestyle
- May have a criminal record
- Higher chance of addicts having low educational qualifications
- Lack of work experience
- Funding addiction may leave users in the benefits trap
- Lack of motivation to seek employment

Overlaps

- Out of 11,342 known drug abusers in Scotland only 84 (0.7%) were from any ethnic minority group in 2009
- Edinburgh Council reported 386 homeless presentations with a drink or drug problem, out of 4,762, with up to 233 of these presentations having slept rough.

- 1,190 (21%) of known drug misusers are ex-offenders
- 139 psychiatric hospital discharges in Edinburgh had a diagnosis of drug misuse

(City of Edinburgh Council, 2008; UK Drugs Policy Commission, 2007; Information Services Division Scotland, 2009)

Employability Services

***Action for Children** – The Youthbuild project assists young people who face additional barriers entering and sustaining employment. It focuses on care leavers, ex-offenders and alcohol and drug abusers. It pays participants a weekly allowance and provides work placements, as well as a number of different training workshops.

***Four Square** – A person centred guidance, learning and employability support service for vulnerable people that provides long term support. It is focused on those with poor mental health, homeless, drugs or alcohol abusers, ex-offenders and care leavers.

Access to Industry –Provides a programme called Transition to help people move on from substance misuse to progress into employment, training or education. Its services range from basic skills and help finding employment to aftercare to ensure participants' jobs are sustained.

Turning Point Scotland – Runs the Community Addiction Recovery Service that provides help to substance abusers to aid recovery and improve employability. The service combines one to one support, group therapy and holistic therapies.

Issues arising from research

- Lack of data available on employment rates