

# What does harm reduction mean for recovery?

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# Overview

- Harm reduction definitions and recovery
- Harm reduction and recovery now
- Harm reduction and recovery in the future

# Harm reduction definitions and recovery

- Referencing used in this paper

# Cliff J (1972), Kingston University, Jamaica

“Many rivers to cross  
But I can't seem to find my way  
Wandering, I'm lost  
As I travel along the white cliffs of Dover”

Cliff, J (1972) The harder they come:  
Synthesising a definition of harm  
reduction and recovery approaches in a  
post-industrial, globalised society,

Unpublished PhD thesis



# ACMD harm reduction hierarchy

- Reduce the incidence of sharing injecting equipment
- Reduce the incidence of injecting
- Reduce the use of street drugs
- Reduce the use of prescribed drugs
- Increase abstinence from all drugs

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (1988) Drug Use and AIDS, Part 1

# UK Harm Reduction Alliance

## Harm Reduction :

- Supports those who seek to moderate or reduce their drug use, it neither excludes nor presumes a treatment goal of abstinence
- Recognises that short-term abstinence oriented treatments have low success rates, and, for opiate users, high post-treatment overdose rates
- Seeks to maximise the range of intervention options that are available

# International Harm Reduction Association

- Harm reduction *complements approaches that seek to prevent or reduce the overall level of drug consumption*...harm reduction can often be arranged in a hierarchy with the more feasible options at one end (e.g. measures to keep people healthy) and less feasible but desirable options at the other end. *Abstinence can be considered a difficult to achieve but desirable option for harm reduction in such a hierarchy.*

<http://www.ihra.net/what-is-harm-reduction>

# Conclusions 1

Harm reductionists:

- Supporting people's aspirations to become drug free is part of our job
- Often we have not done this as well as we could
- We should be searching out ways to increase the effectiveness of the support we give those drug users who have this goal
- We can be valuable critics of misguided attempts to reduce use that may increase overdose deaths and other harms and be poor value for money



Harm reduction and recovery now

# Harm reduction

- An international public health movement that underpins much of the treatment system across Western Europe and beyond

# Cook, N (1998)



Cook N (1998) Harm reduction: the first twenty years (a critical evaluation)

International Journal of Made Up Drug Research

# A long way?

- Extraordinary increase in the number of people who
  - Have contact with services:
  - Stay in treatment
  - Stop/decrease offending
  - Don't become HIV +ve
  - Are immunised against Hepatitis B
  - Find pathways to hepatitis C treatment
  - Receive naloxone and save lives
  - Decrease or stop using drugs

# Pharmacotherapy assisted recovery

- **National Alliance of Methadone Advocates (NAMA)**
  - methadone patients and health care professionals who support quality opiate agonist treatment
  - <http://www.methadone.org/>
  - Now known as **National Alliance for Medication Assisted Recovery**
- **Recovery Orientated Methadone Maintenance**
  - William White and Lisa Mojer-Torres (2010)
  - <http://www.williamwhitepapers.com/papers/>



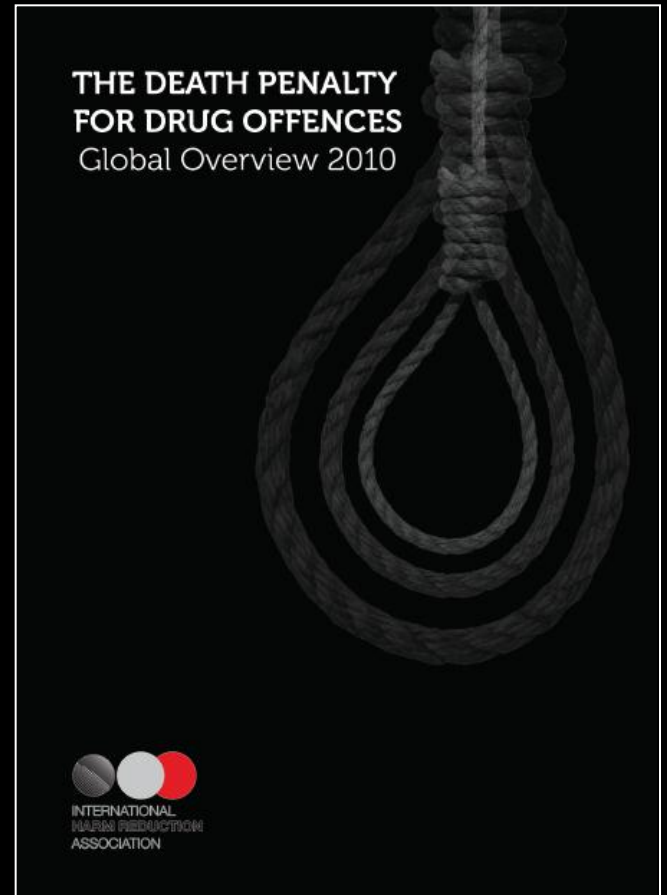
# Needle and syringe programme ratio

	IDUs	HIV%	NSPs	IDU/NSP
Russia	1,815,500	37.15%	70	25,935
Ireland	6,289	5.8%	33	190
UK	156,398	2.3%	1,523	102

Data taken from "Global State of Harm Reduction (2010) IHRA

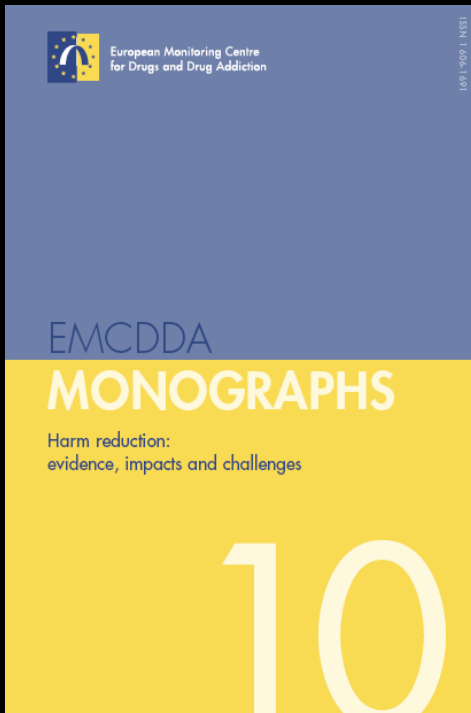
# Harm reduction

- As a force for human rights and opponent of stigma and discrimination



# Harm reduction

- As a current and former drug user-centred philosophy



User involvement and user organising in harm reduction

Neil Hunt, Eliot Albert and Virginia Montañés Sánchez



FAT BOY SLIM

I'M  
#1  
SO WHY  
TRY HARDER

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

PARENTAL  
GUIDANCE  
EXPLICIT LYRICS



# Blair, A C L (1997)

“Things can only get better”



Blair A C L (1997) Harm reduction and recovery: A third way?  
Proceedings of the First Conference of the Society for  
Shattered Dreams and Broken Promises

# Harm reductionists

- A huge workforce of potential allies and advocates for recovery

What do academics from the NW of England say about the harm reduction workforce as a resource?

# Lennon J and McCartney P (1969)

“He wear no shoeshine he got toe-jam football  
He got monkey finger he shoot Coca-Cola  
He say "I know you, you know me"  
One thing I can tell you is you got to be free  
*Come together right now*”

Lennon J and McCartney P (1969) Soft drink injecting,  
hallucinogen-induced psychosis and schizophreniform  
thought disorder: the need for integrating harm reduction  
and recovery approaches,

Journal of Rather Too Many Psychoactive Drugs



# Final conclusions

We need a mature collaborative treatment, care and recovery community rather than a polarised one.

We will benefit by developing closer, joint positions on policy and practice between recovery and harm reduction advocates.

By collaborating we will deliver the highest achievable level of health, well-being, civil rights and citizenship for current and former drug users”

Neil Hunt, Dublin, 2010 (Right here, right now)

But the last word should go to a more local academic...

# Moore, C (1989)

Life is an ocean and love is a boat  
In troubled water that keeps us afloat  
When we started the voyage, there was just me and you  
Now gathered round us, we have our own harm reduction  
and recovery crew

Together we're in this relationship  
We built it with care to last the whole trip  
Our true destination's not marked on any charts  
We're navigating to the shores of the heart

Moore, C (1989) Harm reduction and recovery: an uneasy but essential  
voyage

Journal of Entirely Fantasised Addiction Research and Theory

# Thank you

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