



**STOP SMOKING
WITH AN
E-CIGARETTE
IN 2018**

Search 'Smokefree'.



Reducing the Cost of Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking-



#EatPacePlan

SUPPORTED BY
MAYOR OF LONDON



Political Interest and Resources

- A View from the U.K.

- It has always been a challenge to get political interest and financial investment in effective drug, alcohol or smoking policies.
- I am going to look at my experience from the drug, alcohol and smoking sectors.
- Identify what factors allowed investment and progress.
- Reflect on what lessons can be learnt and, possibly, applied elsewhere.

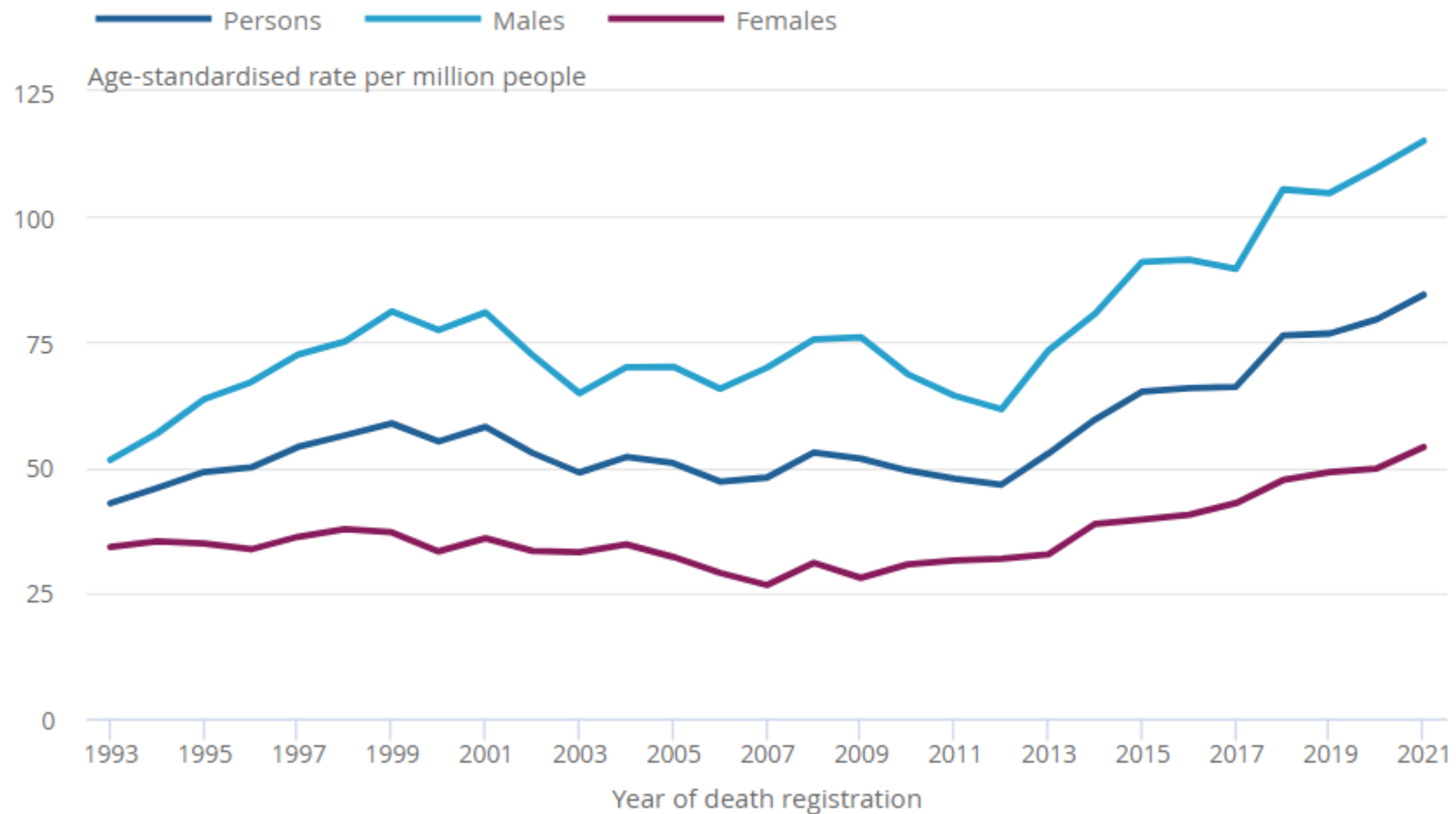
Drugs -HIV/AIDS – Harm Reduction to the Rescue

- The 1980's saw a major increase in the use of heroin and of injecting.
- At the same time massive concern over the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- Projections for number of infections and resulting deaths required action.
- Local initiatives/pilots began (Liverpool).
- Senior politicians supported pragmatic public health based approaches.
- Harm reduction became a nationally supported approach.
- Benefits seen in infection rates.

Drugs - Crime Reduction and Communities – Treatment works

- In the 1990's focus began to shift away from health towards crime.
- 1997 a new Labour Government. New Drugs Policy – new focus on crime. “Half of all property crime committed by drug addicts”.
- Government spending £1bn plus per year dealing with addiction
- Huge investment in drug treatment. £1 spent saves £3.
- Did it work??? Maybe... Over the period access to treatment improved and crime rates fell.
- However, loss of investment & leadership = increase in drug related deaths.

Age-standardised mortality rates for deaths related to drug poisoning, by sex, England and Wales, registered between 1993 and 2021



Hepatitis C – 20 years of Frustration!

- Major contrast between responses to HIV & HCV.
- Limited public information or testing campaign.
- Struggle to maintain let alone extend needle exchange.
- Activists and lobbying, health inequality issue.
- Lack of political interest.
- Game changer new antiviral treatments (2014) and costs addressed.
- Now - race to elimination & an emerging success story.

Alcohol – A Popular British Problem

- Every government has acknowledged that alcohol causes too much death, illness and crime. Costs society £27bn (£12bn in tax) per year.
- No investment on the scale seen with drugs after 1997, nor a comprehensive strategy (- also an international issue).
- Under investment in alcohol treatment for those with dependency.
- Reluctance to introduce significantly higher taxes or introduce minimum unit pricing (except Scotland).
- Harm Reduction services remain under developed – but have grown (licensing, NTE and Treatment).
- Increasing interest in Managed Alcohol Programmes (Not Just VFM).

Smoking

- UK has done relatively well in reducing smoking rates (England 13%).
- But still some 75000 deaths & over 2 million serious illnesses per year.
- Major element in health inequality.
- Government target smokefree 2030.
- Explicit role for harm reduction.
- Return of political leadership!
- April 2023 “Swap to Stop”

So How Do We Reduce the Costs?

- Pilot projects and activists prepare the ground.
- Human stories help overcome prejudice.
- Evidence and science is essential.
- Identifying gains for individual and public health provides traction.
- A value for money argument is very attractive.
- Convincing policy makers of what can be achieved allows the big wins.

Thank you

David MacKintosh