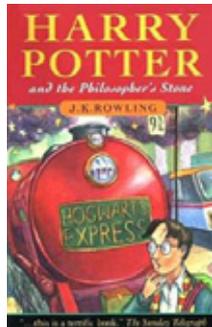


# UK DRUG SCENE TIMELINE: 1995–2014

Concluding our two-part timeline, taking us up to date.

Compiled by **Harry Shapiro** and **Geoff Monaghan**.

PREVENTION,  
TREATMENT AND  
REHABILITATION



**1995**

Launch of *The National Treatment Outcome Research Study* (NTORS), a study carried out by the National Addiction Centre in England and Wales between the years 1995 and 2000 – the largest UK drug treatment outcome study.



**1995**

Delegates attending the ACPO National Drugs Conference recommended increasing the provision of mobile and outreach needle and syringe programmes (NSPs) to service rural areas.

**1996**

The Department of Health Task Force to Review Services for Drug Misusers published its *Report of an Independent Review of Drug Treatment Services in England*. The report highlighted the need for drug treatment to be assessed against a set of outcome measures.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

**1995**

Publication of *Tackling Drugs Together: A strategy for England 1995-1998*.

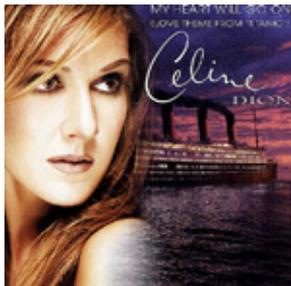
The strategy had these key strands:

- Increase the safety of communities from drug-related crime;
- Reduce the acceptability and availability of drugs to young people;
- Reduce the health risks and other damage related to drug misuse.

**1996**

ACPO National Drugs Conference delegates called for section 9A of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) 1971 to be amended to allow drug services to supply injecting paraphernalia (e.g. swabs, sterile water, filters) to drug injectors.

DRUG POLICY



The government also announced its intention to create:

- Local Drug Action Teams (DATs);
- Drug Reference Groups (DRGs) to provide a source of local expertise to DATs.

LEGISLATION  
AND CASE LAW



**1995**

Death of Leah Betts (age 18). Because of the 'Sorted' campaign, hers became one of the most highly publicised MDMA-related deaths.

**1996**



DRUG TRENDS



**1997**  
Appointment of UK Anti-Drugs Coordinator (aka the Drug Czar), Keith Hellawell (former Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police) and his Deputy, Mike Trace, to head up the Anti-Drugs Coordination Unit (ADCU).

**1998**  
The Labour Government launched its 10-year drugs strategy *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*. The strategy had four elements:

- Young people;
- Communities;
- Treatment;
- Availability.

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) published *Drug Misuse and the Environment* – the first official document to publicly acknowledge the link between drug use and deprivation.

**1999**  
Reducing drug-related deaths became a target within the National Drugs Strategy.

**1999**  
English and Welsh Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (NEW-ADAM) Programme was established to research the levels of drug misuse among arrestees relying on interviewing and voluntary drug testing.

**1997**

**1997**  
**Crime (Sentences) Act 1997**  
Introduced a minimum sentence of 7 years' imprisonment following a third conviction for a drug trafficking offence involving a Class A drug.

**1998**

**1999**  
Peak year for estimated total population of heroin/crack users at around 450,000 – with only around 50,000 in treatment.

**1999**

**1999**  
Peak year for estimated total population of heroin/crack users at around 450,000 – with only around 50,000 in treatment.





PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION



**2000**  
Drug Treatment and Testing Orders (DTTOs) introduced.

**2000**  
The National Intelligence Model (NIM), piloted in the early 1990s, was rolled out to law enforcement agencies across the UK.

**2000**  
ACMD published *Reducing Drug Related Deaths*.

The Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act published its report: *Drugs and the Law* (also known as the Runciman Report). The report made 81 recommendations, including:

- The classification of drugs in the MDA should be reviewed to take account of modern developments in medical, sociological and scientific knowledge;
- Section 9 (offences relating to opium) and 9A (offences relating to supply of 'drug paraphernalia') should be repealed;
- The possession of cannabis should not be an imprisonable offence.

**2001**  
Audit Commission report *Changing Habits* highly critical of the treatment system.

The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) was established to improve the availability, capacity and effectiveness of drug treatment.

**2001**  
The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Lambeth Cannabis Warning Scheme (LCWS) was introduced as a six month pilot project. Those found in possession of small quantities of cannabis for their personal use: (i) had the drugs confiscated; (ii) were given a warning – a modification of existing MPS and ACPO guidance.

**2001**  
The Home Office published *Middle market drug distribution*. The report was influential among law enforcement officers and triggered in-service additional research into drug prices and purity, the identification of 'middle market' traffickers and led to the creation of specialist units to tackle middle market traffickers.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

DRUG POLICY

**2000**

**2001**

LEGISLATION AND CASE LAW

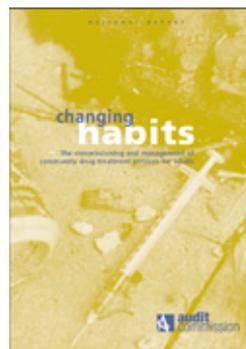


**2000**  
'Wintercomfort case'. Two charity workers from Cambridge convicted of allowing premises to be used for the supply of heroin. Their convictions were upheld on appeal, however their appeals against sentence were allowed.

**2000**  
PMA first detected in tablets sold as 'ecstasy'.

**2001**  
Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (CJCSA) 2000 amended the Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) Act 1984 to allow for the taking of a sample of urine or a non-intimate sample from a person in police detention for the purpose of ascertaining whether s/he has any specified Class A drug in his/her body.

**2001**  
Forensic Science Service noted that data from police and Customs heroin seizures showed that – unlike cocaine – the purity of heroin was almost identical. This strongly suggested that heroin was not being 'cut' at street level.



DRUG TRENDS



**2002**

The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (HAC) published *The Government's Drug Policy: Is It Working?* The recommendations included:

- Cannabis to be reclassified to C;
- Ecstasy to be reclassified to B;
- A new offence of 'supply for gain' to distinguish it from social supply;
- Pilot study on drug consumption rooms.

The Government's *Updated Drug Strategy* was launched. Its measures included:

- A 'tougher focus on Class A drugs';
- Further expansion of treatment services;
- A National Crack Action Plan.

The ACMD published its report *The Classification of Cannabis under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971*. The ACMD recommended the reclassification of all cannabis preparations from Class B to Class C.

Keith Hellawell resigned as 'Drug Czar' ostensibly over decision to reclassify cannabis. But the Anti-Drugs Coordination Unit had already been abolished in 2001 and control of the drug strategy passed back to the Home Office.



**2003**

The ACMD published *Hidden Harm: Responding to the needs of children of problem drug users*.



**2004**

Start of UK heroin prescribing trial.

**2002**

**2002**

**Proceeds of Crime Act 2002**

The Act provided for the confiscation or civil recovery of the proceeds from crime and contained the principal money laundering legislation in the UK.

A case under the European Convention on Human Rights decided that: A right to private life did not involve or include a right to self intoxication, nor the right to possession or cultivation of cannabis, whether for personal consumption within one's home or otherwise.

**2003**

**2003**

**Anti-Social Behaviour Act (ASBA) 2003**

The ASBA enabled the police and local authorities to deal with 'crack houses'.

**Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2003**

Made provision for lawful provision of a range of articles (e.g. citric acid, swabs and filters) to injecting drug users.

4-Hydroxy-n-butyric acid (commonly known as 'GHB' [gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid]) controlled as a Class C drug.

**2004**

**2004**

Cannabis reclassified from Class B to Class C.

Customs and Excise attempted to levy VAT on retailers of 'magic mushrooms'.



PREVENTION, TREATMENT  
AND REHABILITATION

LAW ENFORCEMENT

DRUG POLICY

LEGISLATION  
AND CASE LAW

DRUG TRENDS



**2006**

BBC claims of an ineffective treatment system kick start a major debate in the sector concerning the relative merits of harm reduction v abstinence and how the sector should address the issue of treatment outcomes and the definition of recovery.

Publication of new clinical guidelines for treating drug dependency.

**2006**

April: The Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) became operational.

**2006**

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee published *Drug Classification: Making a Hash of It?*

The report concluded that the classification system under the MDA was not fit for purpose.

Having been asked to look at cannabis again, ACMD recommended continuation of cannabis as a Class C drug.

Home Office rejected Joseph Rowntree Foundation recommendation on establishing pilots for drug consumption rooms.

The ACMD published its report *Pathways to Problems: Hazardous use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs by young people in the UK and its implications for policy.*

**2005**

**2005**

**Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) 2005**

Section 1 of SOCPA established the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA).

**Drugs Act 2005**

Amended PACE 1984 in relation to intimate drug searches and enabled the police to take X-rays and ultrasound scans to detect the presence of Class A drugs. Also amended the MDA 1971 to include fungi containing psilocin as a Class A drug.

**2005**

First article in *Druglink* about 'herbal highs'.

First news item in *Druglink* about crystal meth on the gay scene.

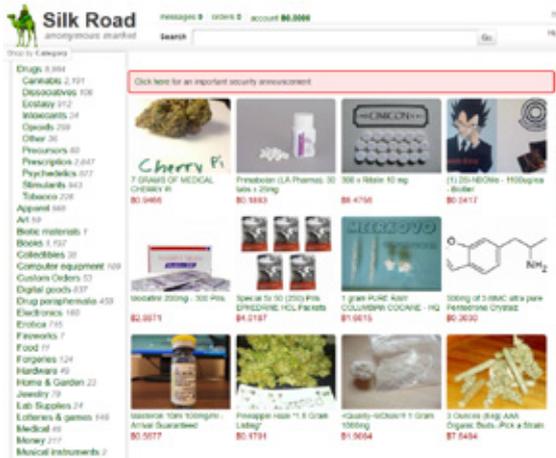
**2006**

**2006**

Ketamine is controlled as a Class C drug.

Home Office published plan to introduce threshold quantities to distinguish 'possession' from 'possession with intent to supply'. However, after widespread consultation, the plan is shelved.

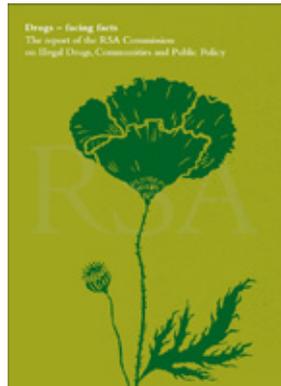




**2007**  
The independent UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC) was set up to 'provide objective analysis of the evidence concerning drug policy and practice'.

The Royal Society of Arts published its drug commission report whose headline conclusions were:

- Misuse of Drugs Act not fit for purpose;
- Drug strategy lead should pass from Home Office to Department of Communities and Local Government.



**2009**  
ACPO issued guidance on the policing response to possession of cannabis and cannabis resin for personal use. The enforcement model is as follows:

- First offence: 'cannabis warning' issued;
- Second offence: £80 Penalty Notice for Disorder;
- Further possession offences: Arrest for possession of a controlled class B drug.

**2009**  
The ACMD published *The Primary Prevention of Hepatitis C Among Injecting Drug Users*.

Professor David Nutt dismissed as Chair of the ACMD.

**2008**  
Revised drug strategy published *Drugs: protecting families and communities*.  
ACMD recommended – and government accepted – control of 15 additional anabolic steroids.

**2007**

**2008**

**2009**

**2007**  
Ketamine is controlled as a Class C drug. Methylamphetamine reclassified from Class B to Class A.

**2007**  
First article in *Druglink* about cannabis 'farms'.

*Druglink* street drug survey highlighted the existence of a two-tier market in cocaine.



**2009**  
Cannabis reclassified from Class C to Class B.  
First NPS (Legal highs) controlled – BZP and Spice.

**2009**  
Outbreak of anthrax among heroin users in Scotland.





PREVENTION, TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION

LAW ENFORCEMENT

DRUG POLICY

LEGISLATION AND CASE LAW

DRUG TRENDS

**2010**

The Coalition Government published its drug strategy: *Reducing demand, restricting supply, building recovery: supporting people to live a drug-free life.* The strategy has two overarching aims:

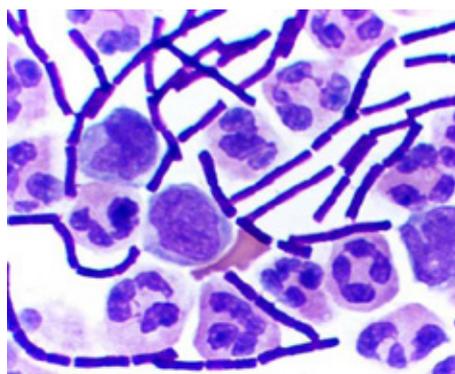
- Reduce illicit and other harmful drug use;
- Increase the numbers recovering from their dependence.

ACMD first recommended that treatment services should be allowed to legally distribute foil. Three years later, the government finally agreed.

**2010**

**2010**  
4-Methylmethcathinone (popularly known as Mephedrone) controlled as a Class B drug.

**2010**  
Heroin drought in the UK.



**2011**

**2011**  
**Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act (PRSRA) 2011**  
Section 151 of the PRSRA inserted section 2A into the MDA 1971 which allows for specified substances to be placed in a 'temporary class'.

**2011**  
Figures published for 2009-2010 reveal serious outbreak of anthrax among Scottish heroin injectors and smokers.

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) said there were 119 cases of anthrax and a total of 14 deaths during the outbreak.

By comparison with same figures from 1999, total heroin/crack population down to 250,000 with about 150,00 in treatment.



**2013**  
NTA folded into the newly created Public Health England

**2013**  
The National Crime Agency (NCA) became operational, replacing the Serious Organised Crime Agency.

**2012**  
The ACMD published its report: *Novel psychoactive substances*.

The UKDPC published its final report *A Fresh Approach to Drugs*

- There is a widespread view that current drug policy is not working well;
- New challenges are putting further pressure on the ability of existing drug policies to reduce the harm that drug use can cause;
- Evidence-based approaches can provide a more effective policy that offers better value for money.



**2013**  
The ACMD published *Ketamine: a review of use and harm*.  
The ACMD recommended that ketamine be controlled under the MDA as a Class B drug.

**2014**  
The day after the legislation came into force, police in Hounslow, west London, were the first in London to issue a 'khat warning' and a 'khat £60 penalty notice'.

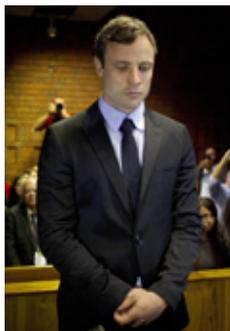
**2014**  
ACMD Recovery Committee rejects the ideas of time-limited treatment.

**2012**



**2013**

**2013**  
**Crime and Courts Act 2013**  
The Act created a new offence of driving, or being in a charge of, a motor vehicle with concentrations of specified controlled drugs in excess of specified levels.



**2014**

**2014**  
Khat controlled as a Class C drug.



2010s