

Legal Services - Expert evidence on drug valuations, personal consumption, drug effects etc. We offer a comprehensive case analysis, involving detailed consideration of all relevant documentary evidence, detailed reports and oral evidence at court, over 2000 cases since 1991

Research Services - Drug User Surveys: We conduct annual surveys of drug users, monitoring changes in consumption patterns, attitudes, prices and the illicit drugs market. Have conducted comprehensive searches and reviews of scientific, governmental & sub-cultural literature on a range of specific issues.

Forensic Evidence - Familiarity with common forensic techniques in drugs analysis, examination of laboratory case notes for additional detail & raw data, comment on validity of conclusions in witness statements.

Inspections of Exhibits (findings of fact)

Quality/identification of cannabis/cannabis resin. Whether cannabis resin is part-used (surface characteristics), Grades of herbal cannabis (leaf, imported, 'skunk'). Yields and phenotype of cannabis plants. Weight within items. Quality/purities of Amphetamine, Heroin, Opiates, Cocaine, Ecstasy. Can arrange purity/potency determinations by third-party laboratories.

Witness Statements - When and where items seized, continuity, Police/Customs valuations, drug purities etc.

Interview Transcripts - Comment on claimed consumption levels, prices paid, circumstances of offence

Significance of paraphernalia - Comment on evidential significance of paraphernalia e.g. sensitivity of scales, interpretation of 'dealer lists' and mobile-phone messages. Wraps & packaging materials etc.

All Illegal Drugs - We can provide authoritative reports on a very wide range of drugs, including cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine/crack, ecstasy, LSD, heroin, ketamine, GHB, steroids, tranquillisers, designer drugs, opium, methadone, and prescribed medications.



Independent Drug Monitoring Unit

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MONITORING UNIT
(I.D.M.U. Ltd)



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for
Criminal Proceedings**



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Cannabis Cultivation - Requires inspection of plants, equipment & photographs. Estimates of yield (from sample/bulk plants or past-case survey data), lengths of growth cycles in one-off or continuous productions, weekly/annual production capacity, growing methods, consumption, valuation, paraphernalia, cost of equipment etc. A comprehensive one-stop service.

Possession with Intent - Valuations (purchase and street level), comment on consumption/purchase patterns (where a given level of use falls within the overall spectrum of use), evidential significance of paraphernalia. Cannabis/resin cases normally require inspection of exhibits. Inspections rarely necessary in 'pills/powders' cases.

Drug-Driving Cases - Original research on records of over 2000 drug-using drivers. Whether case to answer – interpretation of impairment and whether drug test results prove recent use/intoxication. Comprehensive review of effects on driving-related abilities for most abused drugs. IDMU has provided consultation to the Transport Research Lab and Northants Police re drug-driving enforcement procedures.

Drug Testing (Workplace/Prison/Sports) - Comment on drug test results, methods, threshold levels, detection times, false positives & passive exposure etc. Review of effects on performance/safety.

Medical Necessity (Cannabis) - Note – Medical Necessity has not been a defence in law since R-v-Quayle [2005], but may provide mitigation for sentencing. Requires medical evidence (doctors report, medical records or DSS assessments) to confirm a relevant condition. Comprehensive literature reviews, analysis of medical records, side effects of prescribed drugs.

Fitness for Interview/Mens Rea - Requires custody and/or medical records. Effects of opiate withdrawal, persons under the influence of ecstasy or stimulants when interviewed. Effects of drugs including on memory/cognitive function, libido, aggression etc.

Matthew J Atha BSc MSc LLB (Drug Expert Witness)

Qualifications

2nd MB, ChB, 1st LRCP, MRCS
(Pre-clinical Medicine)Sheffield University 1979/80
Bachelor of Science (Psychology)
2(1) Hons Sheffield University 1983
Master of Science (Psychology)
Research Thesis, Birmingham University 1987
Bachelor of Letters (Law)
2 (2) Hons, Wolverhampton University 1999

Research & Publications

Quantitative Assessment of Illicit Substance Use
(Birmingham University) 1987 First surveys of illicit drug consumption (1982-1984)

Regular Users - Self-reported drug consumption patterns and attitudes to drugs among 1333 regular cannabis users (©IDMU Publications 1997). Co-authored with Sean Blanchard (research associate).ISBN- 0-9537182-0-4

Regular Users II - Atha MJ. Blanchard S & Davis S (©IDMU Publications 1999). 1997 survey results inc. further data on price & purchasing ISBN - 0-9537182-1-2

IDMU submission to House of Lords Science & Technology Committee enquiry on Cannabis. (published in HoL paper 151-I), includes analysis of differences between medicinal and recreational cannabis users, literature reviews etc.

Taxing the UK Drugs Market – commissioned by the BBC for 'If – Drugs were Legal' – cost-benefit analysis of regulation and taxation of the UK Drugs Market.

Further analyses with detailed specifications can be arranged with the Forensic Science Service or private analytical laboratories.



Other Relevant Experience

Uniquely qualified to comment on illicit drug consumption and valuation via original survey research providing extensive & quantitative information on drug prices & consumption patterns, derived from the accounts of over 20,000 drug users in non-threatening situations. Annual surveys of UK & regional Drug Prices at different market levels.

Familiar with scientific, social science, political and sub-cultural literature concerning consumption and effects of cannabis and other illicit drugs, including reviews of most cannabis cultivation guides now available in the UK.

Observed and interviewed informally drug users from all walks of life over the past 25-30 years, and is in regular contact with drugs squad officers, forensic scientists, Home Office. and other drugs researchers.

Contributor to numerous press articles and books, television and radio programmes as a drugs expert, regularly briefs journalists, politicians (all parties) and other researchers. Oral and Written evidence given to Parliamentary Select Committees.

Speaker at various national and international conferences.

Advised drugs squad officers and other professionals on good practice in evidence-gathering techniques in cases of alleged cannabis cultivation, investigation of drug driving offences, and drug valuation criteria.

Over Eighteen years experience as expert witness in criminal trials, has given evidence or advised on over 2000 Crown Court or Scottish Sheriffs Court cases involving illicit drugs, including instruction from defence solicitors, police, customs and the CPS.

Substantial experience of the issues involved in the supply of illicit drugs (e.g. paraphernalia, whether cannabis resin used or unused), and of the potential yields of cannabis plants grown by different methods.

Listed on the UK Register of Expert Witnesses, a founder member of the Expert Witness Institute, practising associate of Academy of Experts.

Specific experience and knowledge of scientific evidence concerning therapeutic uses of cannabis & cannabinoids, provided written evidence at invitation of House of Lords and House of Commons Cannabis enquiries.

A deserved reputation for impartiality, a thorough analysis of the case and attention to detail, including reports with fully-referenced source material and based on inspection of exhibits where appropriate.

“One-Stop Shop” Authoritative comment on most aspects of criminal drugs cases (consumption, forensic evidence, yield of plants, paraphernalia, valuations, effects etc) otherwise requiring instruction of several different experts.