

Addressing Stigma & Public Trust

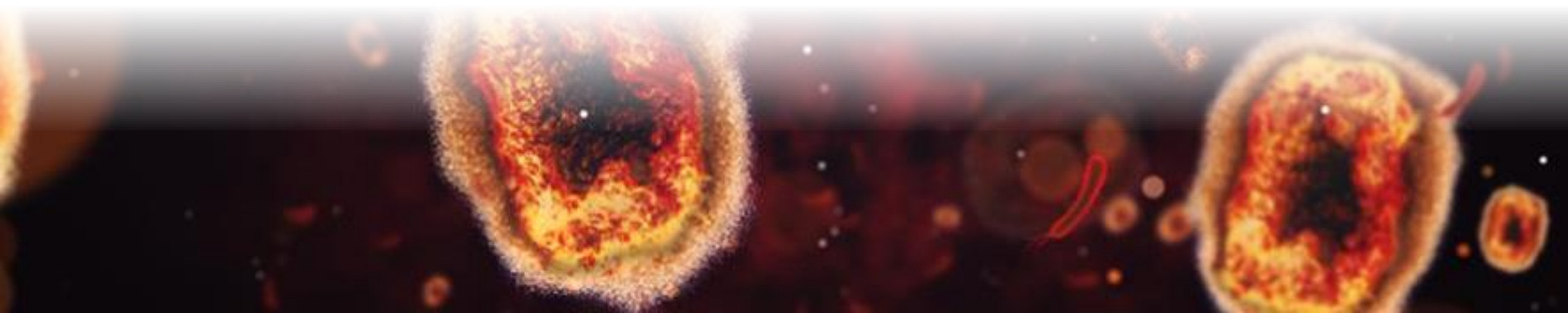
Lessons from the 2022 UK MPox Outbreak

Dr Charlotte Hemingway [Co-I]

Dr Colette Pang Biesty [Co-I] & Professor Miriam Taegtmeyer [PI]

Background

- **MPox** (Monkeypox) virus
- Until 2022 the disease was largely **limited to regions in Africa**
- Since **May 2022**, MPox cases have been reported from non-endemic countries
- **Clade IIb** lower morbidity and increased human transmission compared to Clade I
- **3,777 cases** in the UK 2022-2023 disproportionately affecting gay, bisexual, queer, and other men-who-have-sex-with-men (GBMSM) community
- **Sexual health services** were key in the identification and prevention of MPox in the UK



History repeating...

Concerns raised over public reporting & commentary surrounding the 2022 MPox outbreak

- Language & imagery that reinforce homophobic and racist stereotypes
- MPox associated with sexual behaviour & sexuality
- Stigma and blame undermine trust and capacity to respond effectively during outbreaks



News > World News

OUTPOXXED Monkeypox: Inside dreaded outbreaks as virus first found in brain test lab monkeys leaves humans covered in blisters

[Imogen Braddick](#)

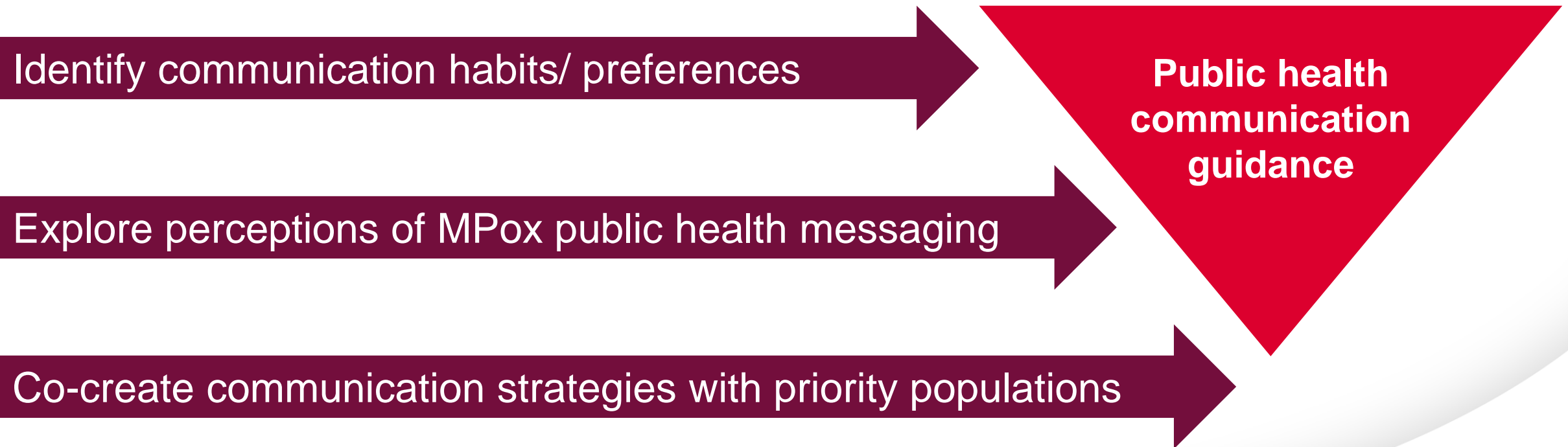
Published: 12:57, 11 Jun 2021 | Updated: 9:16, 19 Jul 2021



A RARE virus which leaves humans with a raging fever and covered in oozing blisters was first found in dozens of monkeys in a lab in Denmark more than 60 years ago.

Project Aim

To contribute to the prevention and treatment of emerging infectious diseases among GBMSM in England through improved communication strategies that are non-stigmatising and equitable.



Methods



Key informant interviews

Key Informant Interviews (N=11):

- 4 Infectious disease clinicians
- 2 Sexual health clinician
- 2 Community organisers
- 2 UKHSA employees
- 1 Previous sex worker

GBMSM Workshops (N=13):

- Migrant and global majority (N= 6)
- Sex positive group (N=5)
- 2nd sex positive group (N=2)
- 18-25yo (tbc)



Participatory design workshops



Analysis

General inductive approach, Health and Discrimination Framework



Stakeholder consultation

FTC Conference > Liverpool City Council > Publish Guidance

Emerging Themes

Impact of HIV Communications

Anti-Paternalism in Communications

Importance of Honesty in Communications

Reduced Public Trust in Governmental Bodies

Impact of Recent Covid-19 Measures

Role of Community Champions and 3rd Sector

It generated flashbacks to HIV in the 80s. And it was almost like those sensationalist newspapers, something they could leap on, and it took away all the hard work that people put into HIV communication for the past 30 odd years...and put a massive dent in the ship, and now it's in for repairs.
- *GBMSM workshop, sex positive*

The association with higher prevalence within gay communities and all of that kind of that history that we have there, it's a it's a difficult one to unpick and I think it's always going to be troublesome, especially with that shared history around the 80s and how HIV was handled.
- *key informant, community organiser*

125
YEARS
1898 - 2023

LSTM
LIVERPOOL SCHOOL
OF TROPICAL MEDICINE

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More likely to listen to advice and suggestions. Warnings can be too, telling people what to do, and it should be more like a guide. Sometimes human nature is more likely to rebel against [messages that say] don't do this etc.

-GBMSM workshop, migrant

It's OK to say that you don't know, because that is better in the long run than saying that things are more definitive than they are, in case they change.

- key informant, UKHSA

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For central government, I don't trust and don't use [them as a source of information].

- GBMSM workshop, migrant

Unfortunately [trust] its just damaged, and it leads onto other things. Because if then the government is trying to get out a health message, it's how much do you trust what they are now saying.

- GBMSM workshop, sex positive

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Role of Community Champions and 3rd Sector

Up until the pandemic, I've had active skepticism towards what they're saying... But after what happened with Covid... When it comes to Government now, unfortunately they've damaged themselves... They say they've done the best they can, they've saved all these people. Yet you hear in other the headlines that the prime minister at one point alleged to have said 'let the bodies pile high.'
-GBMSM workshop, sex positive

Post Covid, people are much more aware of outbreaks, aware of transmission. But then the conspiracy theories go hand in hand with it. And so I think you're even more acutely aware of how anything you say could be taken and spun, or a clip put on Twitter or something like that and so I think you are even more cautious about speculating.
- key informant, clinician

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Role of Community Champions and 3rd Sector

We [UKHSA] used a lot of the local organisations and how they communicated out with their partners to get that message through... the most effective way was to use those local channels and use the the organisations themselves to give that message in the right way to their relevant communities.

- key informant, UKHSA

One thing I've learned massively with monkeypox was the power of that patient voice through social media. It was, 'I demand my monkey pox vaccine', 'where is my prevention that you must give me to keep me safe'. Whereas for the last 30 years, we've been desperately trying to get people to use condoms and protect themselves from HIV...We were having people banging on our doors demanding prevention and protection.

- key informant, clinician

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Co-Creation Communication

Vaccine Conversations

Embrace an attitude of empathy and collaboration

Ask permission to discuss vaccines

Motivational interviewing

Respond to questions about vaccine health or mental health

Discuss vaccine option that may alleviate concerns about side effects

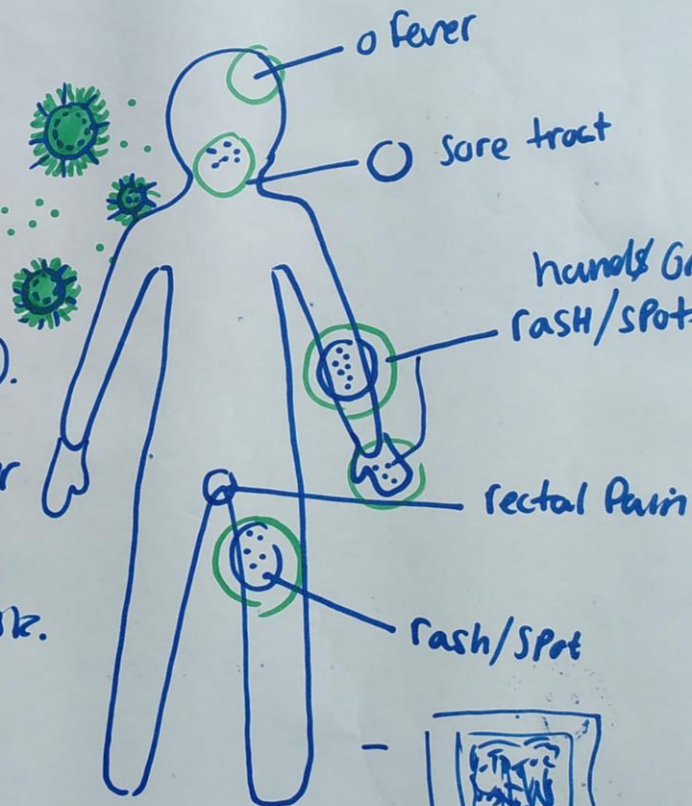
NHS

DON'T MONKEY AROUND ABOUT

WHEN ~~POX~~ IS AROUND

Any one can get
mPox in the U.K.:

- Skin to skin contact
Towels + sheets (Bedding).
 - Sores, Blisters, cold/fever
 - Avoid contact and stay
covered, wear face mask.
- SPOT it. STOP it



#MPOX. NHS/INFORMATION MPOX



Preliminary Recommendations

1. Honest and clear communication - do not over or understate risk or certainty
2. Co-develop messaging with close to community organisations and priority populations.
3. Reflect on historical influences that have shaped current public perception of disease and the health system.
4. Continue evaluating the effectiveness and accuracy of messaging and adapt based on emerging evidence.
5. Ensure resources match what public health messaging promotes.
6. Leverage existing and established frameworks and networks, avoid working in disease silos and duplication of effort.

Scan to have your say...



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With special thanks to:

- Interviewees and workshop participants, for their engagement and sharing their stories with us.
- James Woolgar - Advanced Public Health Practitioner (Sexual Health), Liverpool City Council
- Katrina Taylor – Community Engagement Worker, Sahir House
- Dr Victoria Watson – Senior Research Associate, LSTM