



‘Spicing up the subject’

The recorded experiences of prisoners and prison staff on the subject:

New psychoactive substance use in a North West Prison

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Her John Sunley Prize winning masters dissertation

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Abstract

Part of a wider research endeavour, this dissertation focuses on investigating the effects of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) in a North West Prison. The qualitative data was collected from twenty two interviews conducted with both staff and prisoners from the establishment. The findings from this data can be clustered in three distinctive categories. The first outlines the scale of the NPS problem in this facility, highlighting that 'spice' has become a disease in the prison with a large proportion of prisoners smoking this substance. The second key finding documents the effects and implications of NPS on staff, prisoners and the prison estate. Data in this section has shown that NPS use has increased cases of violence, debt and incidents of self-harm. The third key finding evidences the way in which this prison has responded to the NPS problem, with a significant focus being placed upon the effectiveness of the NPS basic wing - a model of practice which has been criticised by prisoners. Recommendations for future policy and practice also form a central part of this thesis.

Abbreviation list

Glossary	
Abbreviated Terms	Description
28 Day Recalls	Prisoners may be recalled if they commit and/or are charged for a further offence. In the majority of cases, (excluding crimes of a violent or sexual nature), a fixed term recall system operates imposing a further 28 days in custody
Black Mamba	Another form of a widely used Synthetic Cannabinoid
'Burn'	Tobacco
C1 Wing	NPS Basic wing
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
EWS	Early Warning System
FEWS	Forensic Early Warning System
'Mambalance'	This is what prisoners refer to when someone is taken away in an ambulance
Mamba Basic	What prisoners refer to as the NPS basic wing
'Mamba Challenge' / '50 Bong challenge'	A game which challenges prisoners to smoke £50 worth of NPS through a bong
MDT	Mandatory Drug Testing
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NPS	New Psychoactive Substances
NPS Basic Wing	A wing dedicated to house those prisoners found in possession or under the influence of NPS
Oscar 1 (Job Role)	Responds to NPS related incidents in the prison
SC	Synthetic Cannabinoids- the most detected substance by the Early Warning System
Spice	A main form of synthetic cannabinoid
'Subbie'	Slang name for Subutex

Introduction

In society there has been a growing influx of a new breed of drugs known as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS). Often misleadingly referred to as 'legal highs', these drugs have dominated the media in recent years, and pose a significant challenge to the government, local authorities, healthcare services and the criminal justice system (Public Health England, 2014). Recent figures have indicated that the government has controlled over five hundred NPS through either group of generic definitions (Home Office, 2015). However, it is evident that much of the existing literature is concerned with investigating and documenting young people's experiences of mephedrone, with this being at the forefront of media headlines and public debate. Despite much of the focus being placed on this substance, The Early Warning System (EWS) run by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) have recorded that the largest group of drugs detected by the EWS are synthetic cannabinoids, with a total of 102 being detected between 2005 and 2013 (Gov.uk, 2014). Due to mephedrone and young people dominating academic interest, it is evident that the experiences of marginalised groups in society have gone under researched. Likewise, it appears that the effects and impacts of using synthetic cannabinoids have been somewhat neglected despite being the most detected substances by the EWS. Therefore, this dissertation intends to contribute new findings to the identified gap in existing knowledge. This will be achieved by considering staff and prisoners experiences and opinions of synthetic cannabinoids in a North West Prison.

The following dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter one will begin by reflecting upon some of the existing literature surrounding NPS use, both in wider society and within the prison estate. The review will consider previous legal considerations that have been implemented in England and Wales with specific emphasis on NPS policy. It will also document the prevalence of drug use in custody and the physical, mental and behavioural effects associated with SCs. Towards the later part of chapter one, the limitations of Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) will be highlighted in addition to discussions relating to the validity and reliability of the sources used to form this literature review. Chapter two will outline the key questions of the project and will document the process undertaken to carry out this primary research venture. The role of ethics will also be considered in this methods chapter in addition to the strengths and limitations of qualitative research, semi-structured interviews and the usefulness of focus groups. The analytical framework adopted to examine the data, namely grounded theory will also be discussed.

Due to the large volume of data gathered, the key findings have been clustered into three distinctive categories. The first findings chapter, (chapter three of the dissertation), will document staff and prisoners perspectives of the 'scale of the NPS problem' in the researched prison. Some of the core themes include prevalence of

NPS use, accessibility and availability of these substances and the impact the drug market has in this Prison. Chapter four outlines the effects and implications synthetic cannabinoid use has on prisoners, prison staff and the prison estate. Key quotes will demonstrate that factors such as self-harm, violence and debt are all negatively impacted by NPS use in this prison. The complex relationship of prisoners either spiking one another or concealing each other's NPS use will also be explored. The last findings chapter (chapter five of the dissertation) will outline some of the key changes this prison has made to tackle the NPS problem including the implementation of the NPS basic wing. It will evidence models of good practise, in addition to considering some of the limitations of current interventions.

To conclude, chapter six will provide a detailed analysis of some of the key findings outlined in the previous chapters. Discussions will be centred on the increases in self-harm incidents, the effectiveness of the NPS basic wing and the role of MDTs in custody. This chapter seeks to bridge a gap between what has already been discovered in existing literature, and new information which has emerged from the research. In the closing stages of this chapter, recommendations for future policy and practise will be provided, including solutions to tackle boredom in prison and the negative implications of twenty eight day recalls and shorter sentences. The dissertation will conclude by detailing suggestions and considerations for future research.

1. Literature review

Increasing numbers of new drugs commonly referred to as 'legal highs' are causing harm to individuals in prisons and wider communities across England and Wales. These substances have dominated the media, generated public concern and have been seen to cause serious health implications, with numerous deaths being linked to these lethal substances (Drugscope, 2014). Much of the research has focused on young people's experiences of stimulants, namely mephedrone. However, this dissertation seeks to uncover some of the ways in which synthetic cannabinoids (SC's-the most detected substance by the Early Warning System) impact upon other marginalised groups in society who may be vulnerable to these substances, namely prisoners.

This literature review will begin by outlining the definition of key terms that will be referred to throughout the remainder of this dissertation such as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and 'spice'. It will then highlight some of the legal considerations surrounding NPS, followed by a more specific focus on SCs. The chapter will then discuss NPS and prison policy and the decline of other illicit drugs. A key aspect of the literature review will assess the prevalence of 'spice' and how this is affected by Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT). To conclude the review will document the apparent psychological, psychical and behaviour effects of using SC.

Definition of new psychoactive substances

Existing literature has sought to explain the notion of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) but for the purpose of this research the definition adopted by The Home Office's expert panel review will be used, they define NPS as: "psychoactive drugs, newly available in the UK, which are not prohibited by the United Nations Drug Conventions but which may pose a public health threat comparable to that posed by substances listed in these conventions" (Gov.uk, 2014:4). In addition, it is thought NPS are drugs which have been deliberately designed to mimic the effects of 'traditional illegal drugs' such as cannabis, cocaine, amphetamine and ecstasy. The key feature of NPS is that they are psychoactive, meaning that they stimulate or depress the central nervous system, cause a state of dependence and have a comparable level of potential harm to internationally controlled drugs (Public Health England, 2014). NPS can be sub-divided into at least three distinct categories namely, Hallucinogenics such as 25i-NBOMe and ketamine-like methoxetamine, Stimulant-type drugs including BZP, mephedrone and Benzo Fury and finally Synthetic Cannabinoids traded under names such as Clockwork Orange, Black Mamba and Spice (Drugscope, 2014). Corazza et al (2013:82) state that "the production and distribution of these products is 'out of control". At the present time, NPS have been found to be legally sold worldwide through the internet and are also readily available in 'head shops', pubs, petrol stations, take-away food shops and herbal 'shops, especially in the north of England (Neptune, 2015).

Definition of synthetic cannabinoids: 'Spice'

The above section outlines that NPS can be clustered into three distinctive categories. However, it is also important to note that since the banning of mephedrone in April 2010 and the setting up of the EWS, over 350 NPS's have since been identified (Home Office, 2014), but for the purpose of this research the focus will be on one group, SCs often generically referred to as 'spice' or 'mamba'. Centre for Social Justice (2015) argue that 'spice' is increasingly becoming the 'drug of choice' for prisoners in today's society and is commonly used as a legal alternative to cannabis (Neptune, 2015). In addition, Drugscope (2015) highlight that spice, also referred to as 'spice Gold' and 'Solar Flare', is frequently used as the generic term for a wide variety of products containing synthetic cannabinoids (Centre for Social Justice, 2015). According to Hardwick (2014) 'spice' is formed from a collection of herbs or plant material which has been sprayed with synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists. It is perceived to produce similar effects to cannabis when smoked, but is often found to be significantly stronger.

Schwartz et al (2015) outline that SCs are marketed as 'herbal incense' and labelled 'not for human consumption', both terms suggesting legitimacy. However, Centre for Social Justice (2015) observe that despite the fact they are coined 'legal' this does not mean they are safe or approved for human use; a common misconception in society. Existing research has indicated that SCs have the potential to be more dangerous than the illegal drug they are seeking to mimic; this is because the user is often unsure of the contents in each specific batch. Similar findings have been proposed by Neptune (2015) who emphasise that the level of cannabinoid constituents and dosage vary significantly between products, batches and even within the same packaging. However, it is thought these substances continue to be used because they evade current drug testing capabilities and are therefore extremely difficult to detect (Cave, 2014). Walker (2015) outlines that they are also easily accessible in prisons and can circulate throughout the estate with relative ease in comparison to other drugs. Furthermore, Walker (2015:18) states spice is "odourless and can be smoked in the presence of officers, disguised as a rolled cigarette and sometimes used to mock officers and their authority". Likewise, Neptune (2015) outline that based on user reports, the primary way spice is administered is through inhalation, either by smoking the 'herbal mixture' as a joint, or by utilising a vaporiser or bong, however, snorting of the compounds have also been described.

Legal considerations

Despite New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) being a relatively recent phenomenon these substances are emerging more quickly than can be outlawed. Various legal provisions have been introduced and amended to control the growth and spiralling effects of these substances. When a new substance is identified in the drugs market, scientific advisory bodies such as the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

(EMCDDA) are requested by legislators to conduct a risk assessment. These governing bodies establish what level of harm is associated with a particular substance which then determines the legal classification of the drug (Winstock and Ramsey, 2010). Drugs which have been controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act include mephedrone and 2-DPMP (sold as ivory wave) (Public Health England, 2014). By 2010, over 350 NPS had been controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act. In addition, temporary banning orders have been used to remove a product from the market before having the chance to result in significant harm (Winstock and Wilkins, 2011).

When considering existing literature it becomes evident there are several issues surrounding current drug laws. The most recent legislation in the UK to combat NPS use is 'The Psychoactive Substances Bill 2015', which was introduced in the House of Lords on 28 May 2015. This blanket ban of so-called legal highs makes it automatically illegal to produce or supply any new psychoactive substance (NPS) intended for human consumption. Sumnall and Atkinson (2015) indicate that although the bill does not make possession for personal use illegal, possession with intent to supply, import or export any substance capable of producing a psychoactive effect is encompassed within this bill. It is thought the blanket approach is intended to prohibit the recreational use of substances designed to be distinct from drugs currently deemed illegal (Pharmaceutical Journal, 2015).

Although it is thought the blanket ban will address issues of new emerging substances and will eliminate confusion over legality, numerous concerns have been raised in regards to the UK government's new risk-based approach. Walker (2015) highlights that at the centre of any drug control regime the core aim must be to protect the population's health and wellbeing. It is increasingly recognised that there are inadvertent consequences associated with criminalisation as the primary approach for drug control. Sumnall and Atkinson (2015) identify that in this approach, the bill will create an illicit market and force people who wish to continue to take drugs to access it. This is in line with arguments raised by Hammersley (2010) who identified that there is a large demand for legal highs which will continue to be satisfied by suppliers, regardless of the punitive sanctions employed by the government if caught (Hammersley, 2010). Other literature also indicates that a serious risk of imposing a generic ban is that relatively less dangerous chemicals will be replaced by more dangerous ones (Hammersley, 2010). Drugscope (2014) argue that once a substance is banned, it can easily be repackaged and appear like an allegedly 'legal' product despite containing more harmful compounds. Likewise, Hammersley (2010:105) conveys that "a generic ban may not make criminological sense, as there is a real risk that it will make the herbal high market more dangerous, not safer". It is important to note that Hammersley was referring to spice when relaying this point. In addition, it is noteworthy that much of the existing discourse has centred on debates about the legal status of these substances, for example, findings suggest that it is the presumed legality and availability of these

substances what drives their current popularity. This a key focus of this dissertation, therefore it will be interesting to see if these arguments are reflected in discussions with staff and prisons regarding motivations for use in custody.

Legal considerations: Synthetic cannabinoids

In August 2009, the government announced that spice would become a Class B drug (Drugscope, 2015). Spice was one of the first NPS to be banned in the United Kingdom (UK), however, Drug Prevention (2014) highlights that this government ban did not cover many newer and often more potent versions of the chemical. Since then, it has been documented that on 23 December 2009, SCs were classified alongside cannabis as a Class B drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Hardwick, 2014). However, the term 'spice' is still widely used in the prison establishment to describe any form of SC. It is also thought that in recent years their range, potency, profile and availability has increased through developments of global-web based marketing and distribution networks which has created further challenges for existing supply reduction strategies (Winstock and Ramsey, 2010). Subsequently, it has been recognised that the Government has failed to assess the safety of SC quickly enough to keep up with the ever changing of molecules which are tweaked to circumvent the law (Pharmaceutical Journal, 2015). Likewise, Drugscope (2014) report that both the ACMD and the EMCDDA acknowledge the misuse of drug legislation is not enough to deal with the problem of NPS due to the rapid rate in which new substances are being developed and sold. Additionally, the terminology used when referring to substances, particularly in the media, has been identified as problematic. It is thought the term 'legal highs' implies that these substances have no punitive sanction which is often misleading, especially to young and vulnerable people who are not always aware of new drug legislation (Corazza et al, 2013).

NPS and prison policy

Legislative changes that have targeted the use of NPS in custody include, The Courts and Criminal Justice Bill which was passed on Wednesday 21 January 2015. Gov.uk (2015) outlines that new additional powers in the Criminal Courts and Justice Bill will give prisons the power to specify non-controlled drugs, including legal highs, which can be tested for as part of the MDT programme. Within penal establishments across England and Wales, numerous punishments will be introduced to respond to the increasing levels of NPS use amongst prisoners. It is thought prisoners found abusing 'legal highs' or other NPS substances in prison will face a new crackdown by prison authorities. Gov.uk (2015) outline that any prisoner who is suspected of being involved in smuggling prohibited items into prison will face serious consequences. These punitive sanctions will include, 'closed visits' where no contact is allowed with partners or children, loss of privileges such as access to television, higher rates of pay, own clothing and extra time out of cell for up to 42 days, being confined to their cell for up to 21 days with no association time and having up to 42 days added to their time in prison/ prison sentence (Gov.uk, 2015).

Although it is too premature to assess the effects of these new legislative changes, some arguments that have circulated are in line with those put forward by Djemil (2008). It is thought the Government is more concerned with managing the problem as opposed to eradicating it, thus, their approach is reactive and will not work. Djemil (2008) outlined that previously, focus has been placed upon prescribing substitute drugs rather than stopping addiction and despite resources attempting to eliminate the supply of drugs in prisons, there are probably more drugs in prison today than ever before. This generic ban does not address and respond to the reasons why prisoners and the wider population misuse drugs, nor does it prohibit the usage of potentially more dangerous substances such as alcohol.

NPS and the decline of traditional drugs

Existing research has also indicated that the prevalence of illicit drug use has declined in recent years in favour of these new breed of drugs including spice and mamba. Drugscope (2014) observe that since 2000, the general picture of drug use has been one of stabilisation and decline across all established drugs such as heroin, cocaine and cannabis. Similar correlations have been identified by Palamare and Acosta (2015) who conducted a study amongst 11,863 students and found that those who had already used drugs previously now used SCs as an alternative to other illicit drugs. It was reported these 'legal highs' were favoured because use would be less likely to result in arrest thus, implying that illicit drugs are now replaced by new substances merely to circumvent drug laws. Contrastingly, Public Health England (2014) illustrate that the reported use of NPS remains lower than use of many traditional illicit drugs like powder cocaine and cannabis. In addition, it has been observed that usage of the most common NPS, mephedrone, has significantly decreased illustrating that use of these drugs is lower than more established drugs. Likewise it has been found that NPS are not that popular with early twenties recreational drug using clientele (Drugscope, 2014). Similarly, Neptune (2015) suggests that the use of synthetic substances in the UK is limited although in recent years it is acknowledged that the prevalence of these products has increased, especially amongst the prison population (Neptune, 2015).

Prevalence of spice in custody

The prevalence of drugs, not only in society, but also within penal establishments is a widely debated topic. Through exploring the existing literature around this notion, it could be argued that drugs are widespread in British prisons and form a fundamental part of prison life (Djemil, 2008). Likewise, Centre for Social Justice (2015) suggest that drug use has become a normalised and accepted aspect of prison life with an alarming amount of drugs permeating throughout prisons in England and Wales each year. Similar arguments have been presented by Drugscope (2015) who highlight that since 2008, there appears to be a significant increase in the interest and use of a new breed of drugs, namely New Psychoactive Substances. It is thought the emergence of these substances undermines any attempt to recover prisoners from pre-existing addictions and greatly increases the chances of

recidivism (Djemil, 2008). Equally, Centre for Social Justice (2015) perceives NPS use to be the dominant issue across many prisons. It has been argued that prison does not just contain addiction; it creates it. James McDermott, the founder of Recovery Is Out There (RIOT) told Centre for Social Justice (2015:23) that “legal highs are tearing the system apart”. In their review they concluded that prisons in England and Wales are awash with drugs, and in particular, NPS use has boomed over the past five years.

When considering the prevalence of spice specifically, similar arguments have emerged. Drugscope (2015) indicate there are no figures detailing the use of spice, however, the number of websites that were selling spice, prior to its legal classification, suggests a substantial user-base in the UK. Likewise, Centre for Social Justice (2015) acknowledge that it is difficult to know what proportion of prisoners are regularly taking spice, however, after speaking with prisoners they suggested it was as many as 90 per cent of the prison population who were regularly taking it. One prisoner described the situation as ‘*worse with spice in here than it is with weed on the streets*’. (Centre for Social Justice, 2015:25). In line with this research, Drug Prevention (2014) found that ‘spice’ is a growing problem in UK prisons, with serious consequences on prison regimes. Evidence to demonstrate this dramatic increase in the use of spice, has been highlighted by Centre for Social Justice (2015) which notes that in 2010, there were just 15 seizures of spice in prison across England and Wales. However, in the first seven months of 2014, there were a staggering 430 seizures, thus indicating a larger population are favouring these substances. Alternatively Hardwick (2014) writes that the prevalence of spice in prisons is not widespread. Yet it is recognised this conclusion may be a result of inadequate testing methods.

Djemil (2008) has claimed that it is not possible to quantify the size or extent of the prison drug market with existing intelligence. It is argued that the cost, purity and the types of drugs consumed are often unknown to the user, thus is it hard to gage a true perception of drug use, amongst both users in prison and in wider society (Djemil, 2008). Furthermore, Djemil (2008) argues that particularly within a penal establishment, a better knowledge of the system that underpins the drug market is needed. Intelligence should include an in-depth understanding of communication within the drug market, supply routes, distribution within prison, payment mechanisms, drug storage, sales methods within the prison and specific knowledge about how it operates; all of which is currently unknown. However, it is important to emphasise that the gaps in existing knowledge recognised by Djemil (2008) are key areas of interest in this research project. Therefore, through discussions with staff and prisoners in the North West establishment, it is hoped this dissertation will be able to provide information on the areas identified by Djemil (2008) and contribute to the current picture of NPS use in custody.

Mandatory drug testing (MDT)

It is important to acknowledge that the figures and arguments relating to prevalence and effects of drug use are solely based upon cases that have been recorded or identified through drug tests. According to Djemil (2008) there are three different types of drug tests in prison which are used to identify substances and assess patterns and trends of use. The most common test- a key part of the Government strategy- is Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) whereby prisoners are required to give a urine sample on a random basis. Voluntary Drug Testing (VDT) is where prisoners can volunteer to be tested in order to qualify for rewards within the penal establishment, such as consideration for privileged prison jobs. Finally, Clinical Drug Testing (CDT) is a test which is usually carried out on admission in order to assess the dependency of the individual on substances. Of these three types of drug tests, only the figures from MDT are published despite being the least reliable of the three (Djemil, 2008). It becomes apparent when considering the usefulness of MDTs that they have faced much criticism in existing literature and have been found to be a fundamental reason why NPS use has boomed across prisons and wider society.

Although MDT provides an indication of drug use, one major flaw that has been identified in existing literature is that they do not reliably measure drug availability in establishments or detect NPS and some prescribed medications (Hardwick, 2014). Likewise, Hardwick (2014) emphasises that the list of drugs detectable under MDT has remained unchanged since Subutex was added in 2009, thus current testing methods do not detect spice and many other NPS. Additionally, Schwartz et al (2015) denote that synthetic compounds are constantly being changed and developed in order to produce new substances which evade MDT testing. Due to the continuous emerging compounds which are being developed and marketed so rapidly, there are a large number of products currently on the market which lack confirmatory laboratory testing (Neptune, 2015). This makes it challenging to analyse and identify substances as current drug tests do not detect the substances which means adverse health effects cannot be appropriately linked or confirmed (Schwartz et al, 2015).

Neptune (2015) observe that SC receptor agonists do not give a positive result on routine urine screening tests and detection still remains complex for these substances. This major limitation in MDT means a low positive drug rate is reported, however this is not an accurate portrayal of the availability and prevalence of drug use in prison (Neptune, 2015). Likewise, Hardwick (2014) identifies that we have seen a general decline in the positive rates from MDT but this is a result of problems associated with the tests and does not represent a reduction in prisoner's drug use. In fact, Neptune (2015) has highlighted that the non-detectability of these compounds makes them more attractive for individuals undergoing regular drug tests, for example prisoners, mining workers and athletes. Equally, arguments have been put forward that MDT does not necessarily deter prisoners' use of illicit drugs, but instead inadvertently encourages greater Class A drug taking (Djemil, 2008).

This is because traces of lower classification drugs such as cannabis stay in the body for a longer period of time than more harmful Class A substances such as heroin. Therefore, in order to reduce the chances of being caught, users may be encouraged to select more dangerous drugs based on implications for impending drug tests.

It has also been reported that tests are not being completed on time or in some cases, they are not being conducted at all, Hardwick (2014) reported that this applied in 34 adult male establishments which the HMIP studied, which equates to 89% of those prisons inspected. Centres for Social Justice (2015) also found that the majority of prisoners will not be randomly tested and therefore face a small chance of being identified as a drug user. In summary, Djemil (2008:7) states “MDT results have become statistics that prisons publish in order to demonstrate the meeting of targets. They should not be considered as reliable indicators of drug use in prison”.

The unpredictable nature of synthetic cannabinoids

Although NPS use, in particular spice, has been perceived to mimic the effects of cannabis, it becomes evident through analysing existing literature that there is a wide range of effects that can occur after intoxication. These experiences often affect the physical, mental and behavioural state of an individual and can vary significantly in terms of severity. It has been observed that in some cases, SCs offer the desired effects, however other experiences have led to life-threatening situations when a sufficiently larger dosage has been used (Walker, 2015). Public Health England (2014) emphasise the catastrophic effects of NPS, they report that death rates involving NPS use have tragically increased from 52 in 2012, to 60 in 2013. Evidence indicates that SCs can be anything up to ten times stronger than the Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in cannabis plants (Drugscope, 2015). Likewise, Palamare and Acosta (2015) emphasise that spice is more potent than cannabis and often has stronger effects which have led to numerous adverse outcomes such as poisonings. Drugscope (2015) indicate that this is due to the way spice products have been manufactured and the compounds used which are inconsistent and vary in strength. Therefore smaller doses of many SCs often produce the same effects as larger quantities of cannabis, a factor that is often ignored or not considered when taking the substance (Neptune, 2015). It is thought the onset of action of SCs usually occurs within minutes of smoking because of the instant absorption via the lungs and redistribution into the brain. The length of the effect differs but most users demonstrate mild to moderate impairment which usually diminishes over six hours (Neptune, 2015).

Psychological effects of synthetic cannabinoids

When considering the effects of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), it becomes apparent that they can be divided into three clusters; physical frailty, psychological impairment and behavioural disturbances. Effects relating to psychological impairment have been reported as both a positive and negative experience. Some prisoners who admit to using spice describe the substance as a way to ‘clear the

mind', 'manipulate time', and 'escape the basic confines of prison life' (Walker, 2015). Likewise other users have described the desired effects of SCs, similar to those of cannabis intoxication such as relaxation, altered consciousness and a state of 'being energised'(Neptune, 2015). Despite this, a large proportion of users have experienced adverse effects. These include agitation, paranoia and increased anxiety (Gunderson et al, 2012) confusion, disorganisation, severe amnesia and nonsensical speech (Neptune, 2015). It has also been found that SCs are five times more likely to cause hallucinations and can be associated with temporary psychotic episodes such as suicidal and harmful thoughts (Palamare and Acosta, 2015). Centre for Social Justice (2015) report a prisoner who was found on the floor of an exercise yard believing that he was in a swimming pool. Other episodes have included serious injuries where prisoners have head-butted mirrors thinking they were being attacked. Thus, NPS can have damaging psychological effects, particularly upon those users with existing underlying vulnerabilities.

Physical effects of synthetic cannabinoids

The physical effects of taking SCs, namely spice, often vary depending on the mixture and dosage that is consumed. However, prisoners who have taken the drug can commonly experience seizures, loss of motor control, irregular heartbeat (Cave, 2014), nausea, vomiting, tremors and muscle twitching (Gunderson et al, 2012). Other effects that have been reported include dizziness, dryness in the mouth, lowering of inhibitions, loss of consciousness (Drugscope 2015), burning eyes, sudden increase in body temperature, decreased blood pressure, hyperventilation and internal organ toxicity (Schwartz et al, 2015). As a result of these substances, studies have indicated that the effects have been so severe that users have required medical attention. According to Drug Prevention (2014) "the recent annual Global Drug Survey which surveys thousands of drug users indicated that users of SCs were seven times more likely to need hospital treatment than users of the natural form of drug". Consequently, spice has been branded the drug "more devilish than weed" sweeping British prisons (Drug Prevention, 2014).

Behavioural effects of synthetic cannabinoids

Although research relating to the psychological and physical effects of drug use has been well documented in existing literature, the implications these substances have on an individual's behaviour is underdeveloped and somewhat limited. Nonetheless, it has been proposed that the increased prevalence of NPS use is in part responsible for increasing levels of violent behaviour in the prison estate (Gov.uk, 2015). This correlation has been supported by Walker (2015) who proposes that the influx of SC substances circulating throughout the prison can be linked with rises in violence and other problems across the prison estate. Similarly, Djemil (2008) argues that drug use in prison has caused the overall level of violence to increase, particularly among adult prisoners and violent episodes against staff. Hardwick (2014) argues adult male prisoners are becoming more violent each year. The number of serious assaults in adult male prisons dramatically rose by 38% in 2012-13 from 979 cases

to 1,351 in 2013-14, the steepest increase reported. Similar changes in behaviour were found in Guy Marsh prison where inspectors were concerned to find very high levels of violence amongst prisoners. It was thought “the violence was driven by the supply of drugs, particularly synthetic cannabinoids such as spice” (HM Inspectorate, 2015). They also reported that drug use had led prisoners to run up debts which were enforced by violence or threats of violence to prisoners or their family outside the prison. Therefore, not only was the behaviour of prisoners found to be more violent as an effect of taking spice, but also, violent behaviour was used as a means to recover debts that had been accumulated to fund drug use (HM Inspectorate, 2015).

According to the Centre for Social Justice (2015) the illegal trading of drugs, more increasingly NPS, brings with it a catalogue of other problems such as bullying, violence and more commonly debts. The greater prevalence in the use of ‘spice’ has meant that men are racking up debts to dealers within the prison which has consequently led to bullying and intimidation (Hardwick, 2014). It has been reported that, in times of desperation, inmates will ‘sell their clothes or shoes’ and in some cases will steal money from someone else in order to fund their habit of spice (Centre for Social Justice, 2015). Numerous reports have indicated the price of SC which provides an indication about what level of debt these prisoners can find themselves in. Drugscope (2015) observe that prior to the drug’s classification, spice was more expensive than regular cannabis, with a three gram packet (enough for about half a dozen joints) costing around £30. Centre for Social Justice (2015) report that at current market rates, £50 would buy a gram of spice. However, an inmate explained “it was selling for £100 a gram” (Drug Prevention, 2014). Here it becomes evident that there are contradictions in existing literature regarding the cost of these substances.

Previous literature also indicates a relationship between NPS and increased levels of self-harm incidents. The National Offender Management Service annual report 2014-15 suggested that a review needed to be commissioned into the increased cases of self-harm among male prisoners (Gov.uk, 2015b). Newcomen (2015) also emphasised that the merging evidence that NPS is affecting both the physical and mental health of prisoners, and there may in some cases be links to suicide or self-harm. In addition, it was acknowledged that for some people, NPS can be a trigger for self-harm.

However, when conducting a literature review, it is important to assess the validity of the information that is being used to facilitate your knowledge and understanding of a particular subject. Therefore, it is important to question how many people were involved in the research and if the participants were representative of a wider population. Other considerations relate to the appropriateness of the methods adopted in the study and reflections on whether the views expressed in the findings were authentic to the views and opinions expressed by the respondent. Within this literature review, findings from Walker (2015) have been used to build a picture of

current knowledge surround NPS. However, it is acknowledged that within this research, limited information is given about the prison, the respondents or the methodology used. Therefore, further research is needed to validate the arguments raised by this particular source.

After conducting this literature review it is evident that there are visible gaps in existing knowledge around NPS use in custody. Although some aspects of this topic have been explored, it appears there is a need for a more holistic overview of the NPS problem in prison estate. This being said, the dissertation will seek to provide a comprehensive discussion around the following research questions:

- 1) What substances are being used in the prison and to what extent?
- 2) How does NPS use impact upon on the prison estate?
- 3) Is there any evidence to suggest that cases of violence, debt and self-harm incidents have increased?
- 4) What solutions are in place to deal with the NPS problem in this prison?

2. Research methods

This chapter provides a holistic overview of the process undertaken for this research project. It will begin by outlining how participants were selected for this study with information detailing the various roles held by staff respondents. The chapter will then identify how access into the North West Prison was obtained, with specific emphasis placed upon the role of a 'gatekeeper'. Ethical considerations will then be discussed, including the significance and importance of confidentiality and informed consent. The nature of qualitative research will then be highlighted with considerations given for the strengths and weaknesses of conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Towards the latter end of the chapter, the analytical framework adopted for this approach will be discussed. To conclude, the chapter will reflect upon the chosen research methods utilised in this study.

Participant selection

This project formed part of a wider research and evaluation programme, therefore research was conducted alongside a staff member from Manchester Metropolitan University. The fieldwork consisted of twenty two interviews in total, with sixteen one-to-one interviews being carried out with staff in the prison, three one-to-one interviews with prisoners, and a further seventeen prisoners participating in three focus groups. We also participated in a restorative justice circle with three prisoners, which data has also been used in this thesis. The staff interviewed in this research had worked at the prison for varying amounts of time which spanned from three months to fifteen years. The prisoners who were interviewed were all aged 18 and over, and therefore no parental or guardian consent was required. We were able to interview a wide range of staff from various wings and positions within the Prison. A gatekeeper was initially responsible for identifying five staff who they believed would give us a good insight into NPS use at the prison. After conducting these original staff interviews we used a snowballing technique to identify other staff respondents who would be appropriate to speak to about the research. This 'snowball effect' was achieved by asking staff for suggestions of other staff members who they perceived had substantial knowledge and experience of NPS use and its effect in custody. However, frequently throughout the discussions, names of other staff members naturally emerged in relation to certain aspects of the interview schedule. Due to the volume and diversity of staff roles, these interviews were dispersed across numerous visits to the prison. This allowed us to review the interviews that had already been conducted and ensure that we had a good representation of staff with different roles and perspectives. The below table shows the roles of the various staff captured in the research:

Staff Roles	
Gateway mentors (usually ex-prisoners who support the recovery of others with substance misuse problems)	2
New psychoactive substance lead	1
Nurse manager	1
Operations	2
Oscar 1 (Responds to NPS related incidents in the prison)	1
PCO (Prisoner custody officer)	1
Programmes (devises and delivers courses for prisoners, for example building skills for recovery)	2
Recovery nurse	1
Recovery workers	2
Security	2
Visits manager	1

In terms of the prisoners who were involved in the research, participants predominately consisted of those based on the dedicated NPS basic wing giving the nature of the research topic. This provided us with the opportunity to speak to prisoners who had had some personal experience of NPS use such as having a bad experience or being caught in possession or under the effects of NPS. The focus groups were conducted on the NPS basic wing (C1) and also included the views and opinions of prisoners who acted as recovery peer mentors. Although we identified several prisoners from the focus groups to participate in one-to-one interviews, the selected prisoners were no longer held in the prison by the time arrangements could be made. Therefore, our point of contact sent requests to the recovery team asking them to propose names of prisoners who they thought would be suitable for one-to-ones. This meant that the one-to-one interviews encompassed the opinions of prisoners from different wings across the prison estate.

Gaining access

It is acknowledged that gaining access to a secure environment can be difficult. Gostin et al (2007) identify that penal establishments are closed facilities that are designed to confine and punish, and therefore not intended as a natural setting for undertaking research. Reiter (2014:421) also highlights the resistance academics and other agencies receive when trying to access information “Prison administrators not only resist public accountability by keeping civilians out, they also resist public accountability by keeping information in”. It is argued that data about prison operations, rates of violence and gang-affiliated activity are often not collected, therefore, “academics and researchers who do seek access to prison are often breaking new ground” (Reiter, 2014:421). In order to gain access, it has been recognised that a gatekeeper is required – an individual who essentially has the power to grant access and bridge the gap between the interviewer and the interviewees. Earle (2014) notes that gatekeepers will ultimately erect the barriers which researchers face when trying to gain access to a closed setting. For the purpose of this dissertation, access had been previously negotiated by staff at Manchester Metropolitan University as part of a wider research and evaluation programme. Their initial contact was the deputy director at the prison who acted as a gatekeeper.

Ethics

Abiding by a code of ethics was of the utmost importance when undertaking this research given the sensitive nature of the topic and the notion that “prisons are potentially dangerous settings” (Liebling, 1999:151). A code of ethics has been defined by Guthrie (2010:15) as “set principles of behaviour that professionals should apply to their work”. Ethics also seek to protect the individual rights of those participating in research. Therefore, prior to conducting the research, an ethics form was completed which covered issues relating to informed consent, risk factors, data confidentiality and interview conduct. Due to the fact that the prison is a privately run prison by Sodexo it was not required to go through the usual National Offender Management Service (NOMS) research boards. This meant that gaining approval to conduct the research was a quick process. Participants were also required to complete an ethical approval form. According to Guthrie (2010) the main ethical issues researchers are faced with when seeking to collect data is informed consent from participants.

Informed consent

Informed consent is essential when there is any prospect that harm could be caused to the participant. Bryman (2012:138) writes that “informed consent must be obtained when the risks of research are greater than the risks of everyday life. Where modest risk or harm is anticipated, informed consent must be obtained”. Although interviewees were not asked personal details, as researchers we were aware that all participants were over the age of eighteen and did not require consent from a parent or guardian. Therefore, on first meeting with the participants, a thorough debrief was

given regarding the aim of the research, why the research was being undertaken, what the research was about and what was expected of the participant. This debrief was tailored to each individual where possible, ensuring that the terminology used would be understood by all participants. All consent forms were completed, signed and dated before any questions were asked to the respondents. Bryman (2012) emphasises that the advantages of using such forms provide respondents with the opportunity to be fully informed of the nature of the research and the implications of their participation from the outset. In addition, the researcher has a signed record of consent if any concerns are raised in the future by participants.

Confidentiality

According to Barbour (2008:81) “The need to persevere confidentiality and anonymity is an enshrined principle in the qualitative research endeavour”. Likewise, Bryman (2012) highlights that the anonymity and privacy of participants should be respected when conducting research even when this causes difficulties for certain forms of qualitative endeavours. It has also been identified that respondents may reveal sensitive or potentially damaging information such as unconventional behaviour, therefore participants identities should remain anonymous through creating ‘pseudonyms’ or false names (Driscoll, 2011). In order to adhere to principles of confidentiality, it was clearly explained at the beginning of each interview that participants should try to refrain from using names of others when talking about their experiences. In addition, demographics of the staff and prisoners were not asked or recorded such as the age, ethnicity or names of the participants and questions relating to the prisoners criminal offence history. This was partly due for anonymity so the interviewees would feel more assured about potential repercussions after the encounter. Once the interviews had been conducted, the data was stored on a secure device, only accessibility through an encrypted password. Although principles of confidentiality were maintained, when transcribing the interviews, it became evident that removing names did not eliminate entirely the possibility of identification. Therefore, other details which could make an individual identifiable such as referenced locations and specific positions held by staff within the prison were also removed from the transcriptions. It was also ensured that the details which were removed did not change the meaning of participant’s words in anyway.

Other ethical considerations

Other ethical considerations include ensuring that the safety of the participant is protected. As Bryman (2012) outlines, harm can entail a number of facets: physical harm, psychological harm, loss of self-esteem, stress and inducing subjects to perform reprehensible acts. As researchers we are encouraged to anticipate and to guard against potential factors that may be harmful to the participant. Therefore, the social researcher should try and minimise disturbance to subjects, themselves, and the subjects’ relationship with their environment. When arriving at the prison, it was arranged that we would be met at the gate by a staff member and escorted around

the prison. Throughout the collection process, a staff member remained with us at all times, including throughout all of the focus groups and reassurance was offered at each stage of the process. As a young female conducting research in a prison environment for the first time, safety was a concern before undertaking the research. Especially because it was a male prison, at times it was intimidating walking through the yard. It was also daunting to conduct a large focus group with male prisoners in such a confined space. However, these concerns were overcome by having an experienced female staff member with us at all times. Having the presence of a female officer was reassuring to me and allowed me to feel comfortable despite the challenging nature of this fieldwork. In terms of harm caused to prisoners, respondents were not forced to participate in any way or reveal any information against their will. It was also made known to the participants that they were free to withdraw at anytime.

Qualitative research

This type of research is based on data expressed usually in the form of words, descriptions, accounts, opinions and feelings, obtained through methods of collection such as interviews, ethnographies, longitudinal studies and observations (Walliman, 2011). One of the central reasons this research strategy is used is because it gives life to the 'why' and 'how' and emphasises the contextual understanding of social behaviour (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). According to Barbour (2008), qualitative research also provides a 'fuller picture' and facilitates our understanding of how people perceive certain phenomena. By employing qualitative methods, we are also able to access the embedded processes of people's everyday life, and in particular understand the reasons behind 'illogical behaviour' (Barbour, 2008). In addition, Liebling (2001) highlights that research is an act of human engagement, therefore in order to achieve criminological *Verstehen*, meanings and emotions have to be present. This research strategy was adopted in this project for the reasons detailed above. We often neglect to explore and truly understand the opinions and social process of those who are vulnerable in society. When conducting this study, we sought to gain a holistic view of NPS use, taking into consideration all those involved and allowing them to express their opinions and experiences. Through forming coalitions with those inside we were able to draw attention to the basic humanity of the prisoners. We were also able to uncover the motivations behind offending behaviour, drug taking and understand the complex relationships between staff and prisoners.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is an extremely prominent method in the qualitative researcher's armoury, especially when seeking to address sensitive topics (Bryman, 2012). Face to face interviewing specifically allows the researcher to judge the quality of the responses, clarify potentially ambiguous terms, probe for more complete data, use non-verbal communication and discuss sensitive topics (Walliman, 2011, Driscoll, 2011). Walliman (2011) outlines the three common types of interviews: structured-

which entails standardised questions according to a highly structured schedule. Unstructured- which requires a general plan but is flexible, conversational and uses open questions to maintain flow, and semi-structured-which contains a mixture of both structured and unstructured elements. According to Barbour (2008) one-to-one semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used qualitative method and have become almost the 'gold standard' approach. Semi-structured interviews use guides which usually entail a list of both open and closed questions linked to fairly specific topics. Questions may not follow on exactly in the way outlined on the schedule and other questions may be asked depending on what is said by the respondent. Therefore, there is flexibility in the order of the questions to ensure a natural flow, but generally, all questions will be asked using similar wording in each interview (Guthrie, 2010., Bryman, 2012) (See Appendix)

The interviews conducted in this research project were of a semi-structured nature. Interviews were initially set up via emails and telephone conversations between my supervisor and lead staff within the prison. It was agreed that an hour would be allowed for each interview although we anticipated that the interviews would not take this long. The interview schedule was split into four key sections with each section designed to cover a different topic. The first section centred on the NPS Prevalence in the prison, section two explored NPS markets, the third section sought to identify the impact of NPS use and the final section addressed potential knowledge gaps. The interviews with staff also included more standardised questions seeking to explore their previous experience and length of time working at the prison. Although this schedule was used to facilitate one-to-one interviews with staff and prisoners; a more relaxed guide was used in the focus groups. Adopting this interviewing technique allowed us to gain in-depth reliable data and demonstrated that we were not trying to exert control over the respondent but instead valued their opinions and shared experiences. In addition to allowing respondents to speak freely, we also wanted to be able to draw parallels between prisoner and staff perspectives and assess if there was any discrepancies or consistencies among the data. Bryman (2012) outlines that in order to ensure cross-case comparability some structure is required hence why we opted for a semi-structured interviewing technique. We were also able to visually see the attitude and emotion of the respondents toward the subject in question and uncover deeper meanings through probing.

However, it is acknowledged that interviewing can be a timely process and can often be hard to maintain a positive attitude. Bernard (2000) highlights that the time spent going back and forth interviewing more people in order to gain a representative sample can be a lengthy, time consuming process. In addition transcribing the data is a lengthy process that needs to be completed before the data can be analysed. Although this research project obtained data from twenty two interviews, it is not expected of a dissertation at this level to conduct, transcribe and analyse that many interviews. Normally it would be required to interview four to six however, because

this research formed part of a larger research venture, the dissertation was able to utilise a larger volume of data. Given that this was my first time interviewing in a prison estate, I was able to observe the first few interviews until feeling confident enough to more fully participate in asking the questions. Due to various researchers being involved in the project I was not present for all of the interviews, however I was solely responsible for transcribing, analysing and interpreting all of the data. Having multiple researchers carrying out the fieldwork also meant that the process of collecting the data was quicker than expected which allowed greater time for analysis.

Focus groups

This type of interview involves a group discussion led by a facilitator who is responsible for managing the group dynamics and ensuring that those involved feel comfortable sharing experiences in what they view as a secure, confidential environment (McNeil and Chapman, 2005). According to Walliman (2011), focus groups tend to concentrate on a particular theme or topic based on the open ended questions researchers use to generate discussions and interactions between the group members. The group is often made up of individuals who have knowledge or experience about the subject of the research. Although various suggestions have been put forward, Barbour (2008) recommends that typically, focus groups should consist of between six to eight members, a researcher and a facilitator. However, it is acknowledged that smaller numbers are more effective if seeking to obtain really in-depth discussions about sensitive issues (Bernard, 2000). It is thought focus groups can reveal reasons and motivations behind complex behaviour in addition to uncovering collective meanings and shared group identities (McNeil and Chapman, 2005). Furthermore, Bryman (2012) indicates that individuals will often bring to the surface issues that they deem important, and challenge each other's view which ultimately produces more truthful and realistic responses. Likewise, Bernard (2000) notes that focus groups generate a variety of responses and views in relation to a particular issue and thus, provides a tremendous amount of rich, credible data.

During this research project, three focus groups were conducted as well as a restorative justice circle. Focus group one consisted of nine prisoners, the second group discussion had ten members – three of which were recovery peer mentors, and the third focus group had six members. It was important that the time spent being interviewed would not disrupt the prisoners' 'normal' prison regime and therefore considerable planning was required beforehand. It was agreed that the focus group interviews would not surpass an hour and that prison staff would have to carry out roll call during one of the group discussions to ensure all prisoners were accounted for. In terms of recording the interviews, we gained approval from the prison to bring in our own recording equipment; therefore each of the interviews was recorded on two Dictaphones and later transcribed. From these focus groups, it was possible to gain rich data with enormous potential to compare the opinions of prisoners with those views generated from the one-to-ones with staff.

However, in reflection, this research method presented some limitations. As widely indicated in existing literature “some individuals may be reluctant to take part in group discussions” (Barbour 2008:133). Likewise, Guthrie (2010) writes how it is sometimes challenging for the interviewer to deal with group effects, such as controlling individuals with a strong personality who dominate the discussion and encouraging those who remain quiet to participate. At times this unequal balance of participation was evident throughout the focus groups, which meant that the researcher was required to facilitate the discussion more than was hoped for. As mentioned earlier, for safety reasons a staff member remained with us at all times. Prior to the research there were concerns that prisoners would not divulge truthful experiences of NPS use and drug markets. Although that said, as the subsequent results chapter’s evidence, many of the prisoners talked very openly and frankly about their own drug use, and about the operations of wider NPS markets regardless of a staff member being present.

Another difficulty which arose from this chosen method surfaced when transcribing and analysing the interviews. According to Bryman (2012) focus group recordings are particularly prone to inaudible elements and are therefore hard to transcribe. It was apparent when transcribing the interviews that there was ‘cross talk’ which meant at times, it was hard to make sense of what was being discussed. Additionally Bryman (2012) argues that qualitative data is difficult to analyse. When conducting focus groups, a large amount of data can be quickly produced. It is argued that “developing a strategy of analysis that incorporates both themes in what people say and patterns of interaction is not easy” (Bryman, 2012:517). However, this was overcome by adopting a thematic analysis framework.

Analytical framework

According to Driscoll (2011), the purpose of analysing data is to examine the information you have collected and to create a cohesive, systematic interpretation that will validate your hypothesis or research questions. Gadd (2012) explains that when conducting qualitative research, you should begin with grounded opening coding strategies which will help to avoid the application of preconceived concepts and opinions. It is thought this will also assist in generating new ideas and will keep the researchers grounded in the data. Walliman (2011) conveys that the theoretical ideas of the research should develop purely out of the collected data. Likewise, Bernard (2000) suggests that at the heart of the grounded theory lies inductive coding which allows understanding to emerge from close study of the texts. Gadd (2012) also recognises that good qualitative research emerges from the thoroughness and rigor of the inductive analysis.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis (an inductive strategy) was adopted within this research project and can be conceptualised as “a systematic approach to the analysis of qualitative data” (Mills et al, 2010:2) It is not a research method as such but an analytic approach and synthesising strategy used to formalise the identification and

development of themes (Thomas and Harden, 2007). According to Guest et al (2012) thematic analysis focuses on recognising and describing both the implicit and explicit ideas within the data. The researcher is required to seek commonalities, relationships or overarching patterns within the data which are then identified and labelled as themes (Mills et al, 2010). Bernard (2000) conveys that the process of 'coding' turns free flowing texts into a set of categories. In addition, codes are typically developed to represent the identified themes, which are then applied to raw data as a summary marker to facilitate future analysis (Guest et al, 2012). When transcribing the interviews from this research project, it became evident that certain themes naturally emerged from the various transcripts. Once familiar with the data I was able to identify key themes that surfaced in the staff interviews and compare and contrast them with the responses of the prisoners. By organising the data into tables it enabled me to not only establish the dominant themes in each of the interview but also identify the key arguments for the overall research project.

Reflection of research methods

Although the methods selected for this research project produced rich, valid data, in reflection, it is evident that quantitative methods could have also contributed to the main findings and conclusions. In terms of investigating the 'scale of the NPS problem' in the prison, it could be argued that quantitative methods, such as closed questionnaires would have been more appropriate in measuring the extent of use. In addition, due to the quantifiable nature of this method, comparing the relationships between staff and prisoners would have also been a quicker and more efficient process. Although the volume of data gathered from the research project provided us with in-depth, detailed accounts, it was often hard to analyse the data, and became very time consuming. Therefore, if some elements of the research were investigated using a quantitative technique, it would allow more time to be spent analysing and interpreting the findings. However, given that a large proportion of the respondents were prisoners, it was acknowledged that overall, qualitative methods would be more appropriate as it would provide us the motivations and reasons behind offending and drug taking behaviour; data not possible through a quantitative methods.

On reflection, when conducting focus groups in the future, greater effort will be made to ensure all respondents are contributing or if possible, the focus groups will be made up of smaller numbers. In this project it was daunting as a researcher to manage such a large group of male prisoners. It was hard to listen to all discussions as often cross talk would occur. Furthermore, it was a challenge to ensure that each of the respondents equally participated and shared their views. This was also evident in the staff interviews, with some lasting up to one hour, while the shortest interview lasted twenty five minutes. The same interview schedule was used for all interviews; therefore, the variation in interview times is in part, a reflection on how much the respondent engaged. However, depending on the staff role, not all questions would have been applicable. When conducting research in a penal establishment in the future casual clothing will be worn, like in this study. Dressing this way allowed us to

look and feel like we were comfortable in our surroundings. It also sought to remove any 'interviewer status' whilst hoping to make the interviewees feel at ease. It was also beneficial to have a Dictaphone approved to record all of the interviews. This allowed us as researchers to fully engage and listen to what was being said without focus being distracted by note taking. We were also able to retain eye contact and probe effectively.

In a study of this kind, it is also hard for a researcher to know the extent of information needed for arguments to be generalised to a wider population. However, Geertz (1973) believes if a detailed 'thick description' of a certain culture is attained then transferability is achieved. The following findings chapters begin to document some of this in-depth knowledge and seek to answer some of the key questions put forward at the end of chapter one.

3. Scale of the NPS problem

This findings chapter seeks to highlight the scale of the NPS problem in the prison. This will be achieved by considering how drug use has changed in custody over the last few years in comparison to what is now perceived as the 'drug of choice'. The chapter will also establish the prevalence of NPS use, the substances that are being used in the prison and the type of prisoners who are most susceptible to taking these substances. The availability and the accessibility of NPS will also be discussed, in addition to the functions of the drug market in this prison.

Changes in drug use

Oh it's changed massively, massively (Prison Staff 5)

Through interviewing a wide range of staff members from the prison we were able to gain a detailed account of how drug use in custody has developed and changed over a long time period. In discussing the changing nature of substance use in the prison, one staff member with over nine years' experience stated he explained:

In the early days... it was subutex and methadone scripts... but then obviously, as times gone by its now become NPS as one of your biggest, biggest drug of choice in the prison (Prison Staff 5)

The changing landscape of substance use in custody was echoed by all staff, for example:

When I was on residential with young offenders you'd smell cannabis on the landing and it would just be cannabis, you wouldn't smell anything else, whereas now when you walk onto the landing 85% of the time it will be NPS, it won't be like cannabis, it's very rare that you'll smell it, so it's the fluctuation, it's just dramatically changed. (Prison Staff 13)

When speaking with longer serving employees from the prison, we were able to gain a consistent account of when this noticeable change in drug use occurred in the prison. Findings identified that this shift from more traditional drugs to new psychoactive substances has been evident over the last two to three years. The following comments from operational staff illustrate this change:

It was probably about 2 year ago we noticed that there wasn't much around of cannabis, that had dropped, and we were getting prisoners that were acting strange... about 2 year ago that we first noticed there was something different being used in the prison (Prison Staff 8)

Another staff member from operations who had worked at the prison just under ten years highlighted that:

In the last 3 years, I've noticed the NPS, you know, creeping in ... it has evolved to a disease within the prison, it's a massive disease within the prison (Prison Staff 3)

When conducting the focus groups with prisoners and Prison Recovery Peer Mentors a similar time frame emerged from the findings. *[NPS] First started about 3 year ago* (Prisoner 3) *I've known the mamba to be in the jail two years since I've come in* (Peer Mentor 1). Thus, there was a consensus among staff and prisoners that NPS use has been established in the prison for between two to three years.

The prevalence of NPS use in the prison

This is the worst place I've seen for it" (Prisoner 1)

In addition to establishing the time scale of when the NPS problem first surfaced in the prison, the research attempted to establish the prevalence of NPS use in this prison estate. In the absence of a comprehensive survey of all prisoners, both staff and prisoners were asked to estimate what percentage of prisoners they believed were using NPS. Although opinions varied, most staff and prisoners estimated between 60 - 80%. A recovery worker stated that *probably say about 80%*. Similarly, Prison Staff 5 approximated at *70%, as a guess*" and further acknowledged that *I think it's a high percentage*. Other interviewees indicated *close enough to 85%* (Prison Staff 13) while others estimated a figure of *70%* and recognised the problem to be *a daily battle, a daily thing where people are found under the influence* (Prison Staff 7). Although some employees did not provide a specific percentage, they were still in consensus that it was widely used in the prison. Prison Staff 3 indicated that *near enough everybody is doing it* and Prison Staff 7 in addition to his previous comment explained that *I think it's just a bigger problem than what people think it is, especially in here anyway*.

Prisoners similarly discussed high percentage estimates of NPS use, in many cases suggesting levels of use was higher than many staff estimates. Prisoner 2 claimed that *80% of people* were using NPS. Additionally, a Recovery Peer Mentor believed that *80-90% of the jail was using it* (Peer Mentor 1, Focus Group 3). When asked by another prison mentor if he believed if it was that high, Peer Mentor 1 responded *corse [sic] it is, there's only a few lads on the wing who don't smoke it, I can name, well not name, but I can count on two hands, about 7 lads who don't smoke it on our wing*. When asked how many prisoners were on the wing Peer Mentor 1 stated *98 lads on the wing, do you know what I mean ... it is 90% of the jail who'll be on it, there's only a few lads on every wing that don't do it*. After considering the responses from the focus groups it becomes evident that the opinions of the prisoners are in harmony to those estimates identified by prison staff. Therefore it can be concluded that in the prison, a conservative estimate would be that two-thirds of prisoners are using NPS with some prison peer mentors indicating figures could be as high as 90%.

‘Everybody’s doing it’

Even people who you wouldn’t expect are smoking it (Prison Staff 5)

In existing literature, there is the indication that young people are the main consumers of ‘legal highs’ and are the most likely group of people to be affiliated with drug use. This has led to a widely held perception that NPS’s are primarily consumed by young people. However, in prison this widely accepted argument loses its strength and credibility and a different picture emerges when speaking with staff and prisoners. As this staff member on the NPS basic wing explained:

We tend to have more adults on our basic for being under the influence for NPS than we do young offenders... I’ve seen a lot more adults on here than I have young offender (Prison Staff 11)

However, the most common response from both staff and prisoners was that NPS was not specific or limited to a certain group of people. Instead it was acknowledged that NPS is an all-encompassing drug which appeals to the whole prison population; therefore all types of prisoners are prone to use it, or failing that, to at least try it. The following comment from a recovery staff conveyed:

With regards to people trying it or using it every now again or weekly, I think that all the population, I think that young people, I think that middle aged people, erm, not relevant really on areas, it’s just widespread now (Prison Staff 4)

Likewise, Prison Staff 7 described that *it’s not just one particular wing it seems to be all across*. A key response from Prison Staff 5, a recovery worker in the prison, stated *It just started off with the odd few, but now it’s the whole jail, the whole jail*. Similar findings were evident in the focus groups with one prisoner stating *everyone’s using, especially now* (Prisoner 1). Additionally, Prisoner 2 remarked in reference to who was using it, *every single person in the country guaranteed*. As portrayed through these quotes, a reoccurring theme that has emerged throughout the interviews is the opinion that even those who you would least expect, are taking the substances. Thus it is not just ‘young people’ or ‘substances misuses’ which existing literature focuses towards, instead these findings demonstrate that NPS is attractive to all the prison population regardless of age, gender, ethnicity and history of use.

The herbal mix

It all started off with black mamba, black mamba was the first ever NPS that we got in this prison ... and they still call it black mamba now even though it’s a million different variations of it now (Prison Staff 5)

Another important aspect of this research sought to identify what substances are being used in the prison. During the interviews, two types of NPS in particular were consistently referred to, however staff emphasised that little information is actually

known about the substances. This is due to the fact that prisoners will classify any synthetic substance under these two types of NPS despite not knowing what it is they are actually smoking. A member of the recovery team conveyed:

They refer to it all as spice, despite what it is, so it could be any brand, but when it comes in here it's called spice to everyone, that's what they all refer to it as. Mamba it used to be, but that's kind of died out now, and everyone uses the terminology of spice, so it would be difficult to determine what kind of brands they are using because they probably don't even know themselves (Prison Staff 4)

Other interviewees indicated that *it's just the black mamba and spice and those are the only two I've heard of spice and mamba*. From these responses it becomes evident that both spice and mamba have been and are still being used in the prison.

In discussing the different types of NPS which are being used in the prison, prisoners in the focus groups referenced the same two substances that were identified by the staff. Prisoner 1 said *spice and mamba int it [sic]*, Prisoner 2 answered *synthetic cannabis* and Prisoner 3 remarked *spice*. Prisoner 4 highlighted that spice is now the dominant drug of choice *it always used to be subbie and like gear and subutex and that but that's all gone now ant it, it's all spice*. Likewise, Prisoner 1 stated:

It's swapped over to mamba now, do you know what I mean, I reckon mamba is more dangerous than the gear, definitely more dangerous, definitely more dangerous than heroin yeah, so there's no gear is there, it's just all that legal high.

These quotes also indicate how spice and mamba have taken over the use of other illegal substances in jail such a heroin and subutex. However, a recovery worker identified that there is a wider range of NPS being used in the prison, he remarked *it's definitely progressed on from black mamba, you get your clockwork orange, Annihilation, Gocaine, millions of different ones*, thus there is some evidence that other substances are being used in addition to spice and black mamba.

Do you smoke?

They'll mainly smoke it through the roll ups or they'll do the mamba challenge which is obviously through the bong (Prison Staff 9)

From the findings it can be assumed that due to the 'drug of choice' being synthetic cannabis, the substances spice and mamba are being smoked. Prison Staff 12 explained that *The majority are smoking it*. Likewise, Prison Staff 7 remarked *From what I'm hearing it is just in a roll up yeah*. In addition to smoking it findings also indicated that prisoners create bongs. The 'mamba challenge' was discussed in numerous interviews as a way in which people take these substances. Prison Staff 9 acknowledged, *They do the mamba challenge which is like your bong*. Prison Staff 12 describes that *The mamba challenge which involves erm smoking it in a pipe out of a bottle of pop or something was most prevalent probably the first 6 months...when they were doing the mamba challenge with the bong*. However, when

prisoner were asked about the mamba challenge, their responses were *50 bong challenge, I done it a few weeks ago in Strangeways* and Prisoner 5 said *that's why I'm on basic some guy gives us a massive pipe of it, and I went fucking sky making noises fell over an that got twisted up and that*. These responses indicate that the 'mamba challenge' is still prevalent in the prison.

Other responses indicated that the mamba challenge is a way in which those with little money or those who are vulnerable gain access to these substances, a Recovery Peer Mentor explained:

A lot of the time people say smoke 50 bong and I'll give you a couple of heads free, you know the ones who love the stuff and smoke it a lot, so it's just there, it's their way of getting a bit of free drugs so they don't have to pay for the next couple of joints.

Similar findings were identified in another focus group, Prisoner 1 outlined *Some people who can't pay for mamba and they can't afford it, they'll go to someone and say give us a bong, and someone will give em a bong just to watch em go under*. Additionally, a staff member from programmes highlighted:

The most vulnerable ones of the wing, they'll get em to do, we've heard they'll get em to do mamba challenges now where they have to smoke £50 of mamba and see how good they are at smoking it, and even when they ambulance comes in, they'll still start laughing and say here's comes the mambulance (Prison Staff 7)

Therefore, in addition to smoking the substances, bongs are also a common way these substances are being taken.

Availability of NPS in the prison

It's so readily available and it's just there, it's another substance, it's that easy to get hold of, well I see it that way compared to cannabis (Prison Staff 13)

In this chapter findings have already established that there is a high percentage of the prison population smoking spice and black mamba. However questions relating to the availability of these substances further emphasise the scale and extent of the problem in the prison. A member of the security team stated *I mean it's on every unit, I don't think there's a unit that says it's not on here, I think it's everywhere*. Another staff member from the programmes department said *it's gone through the roof... it's just appeared and there's a massive influx of it*.

These opinions were also prominent in the focus groups, with one prisoner remarking *it's shocking how much of it is in the jail* (Prisoner 1). Another prisoner responded *I think it's a bad drug and that me but at the same time it's easy to get hold of, you know it's there so if you want it you know what I mean it's not hard to find it* (Prisoner 2). This comment was in line with the opinions shared in focus group 3, when discussing how accessible the substances were on the NPs basic wing, one

prisoner answered *no comment*, with a staff member responding *you can get hold of it on any wing*. Additionally one of the recovery peer mentors emphasised:

Every wing has got it, even if they're not letting people know, but someone on that wing has got it, you could go round the yards now and I guarantee now that there's someone on that yard whose smoking it.

In order to emphasise the volume of spice and black mamba in the prison, Prison Staff 11 stated *with NPS here, last year, they found 969 grams of it, and this year, up to May they've already found 2283 grams of it, so you can see the massive increase there already, we're only half way through the year*. These quotes demonstrate how widely available the substances are and put into perspective the magnitude and scale of the problem, especially if the substances are available on drug free wings and the NPS basic wing.

'It's worth it for that one ounce'

They are coming purposely for that oner [one ounce] which is worth £3000"
(Prison Staff 3)

Another focus of the interview schedule sought to identify how these substances are entering the prison estate. Although exchanges on visits and package throw-overs were identified as ways in which spice and mamba are entering the prison, 28 day recalls emerged as a dominant response from the interviewees. When discussing how these substances enter the prison estate, a staff member from operations remarked it was through *licence recalls, people who are coming in on a 28 day recall, come with a package inside them*. A recovery worker also explained how *prisoners bring it in when they come into custody. What we called 'plugged,' up the backside, so I would say that's the main reason- the main way they are getting it in*. Another respondent described how prisoners bring substances into the prison estate with them to make money:

They are coming with oners, they say it on the wing, they are coming in with oners [one ounce] that are compressed like I told you earlier, that are already up there... it's worth the while to come in with it ... they're all doing it because it is big bucks, it's massive bucks
(Prison Staff 3)

Likewise, Prison Staff 4 remarked:

The lads will tell you themselves, I'm going come back in, I'm going to go out get some spice and mamba and then I'm going to come back in and I'm going sell it and make thousands of pounds ... they know as well they're guaranteed to come back to [the prison]

Within the focus groups, prisoners openly discussed this form of entry as a way to smuggle drugs into the prison. Prisoner 1 from Focus Group 3 stated:

No one can stop for instance me coming in on my next sentence before I get arrested just putting a big ball of whatever inside me do you know what I mean, you're never guna stop that, I doubt it anyway.

In addition Prisoner 5 documented that *people come in and they swallow it, you know before they get arrested, they swallow it and they hide it and it comes in that way.* The above statements highlight how 28 day recalls to prison are a dominant way these substances are entering prison. It would seem the prisoners are under the opinion that 'no one can stop them', and they also have confidence in the knowledge that they will be sent back to the prison once being recalled.

'Wheeling and dealing'

We believe it's between £100- £120 a gram depending on whereabouts you are in the jail (Prison Staff 9)

In addition to referencing how they perceive substances to be entering the prison, these responses also shed some light on the drug market in the prison. It is believed a large amount of money can be made from selling these substances, hence why recall sentences have become more frequent. When asked about the cost of spice and mamba in prison, figures were consistent amongst staff and prisoners. Prison Staff 4 explained *basically for 3 grams of spice, in the community would be around £15, so that would go in here for £300, that £15 turns into £300 in custody.* This response was similar to Prison Staff 3 who also outlined that it was *£100 a gram... £3000 an ounce.* Interestingly, numerous prisoners discussed using a vimto lid as a means to measure the amount of substance. A Peer Mentor explained that *a vimto lid was about a gram,* to which another peer mentor responded *just less than a gram int it, I think you get one and a half lids in a gram don't ya, one and a half lids in a gram.* When asked how much this would cost both peer mentors responded *£100, everything in jail goes... goes tenfold.* From these quotes it is evident that the mark up of these substances is astronomical in the prison. However, what is more important to document is the implications and damaging effect this has on those involved such as increased cases of violence, self-harm incidents and debt. The effects of the drug market in prison will be discussed in chapter four.

4. Impacts of NPS use

This chapter seeks to evidence what impact NPS use has on prisoners, prison officers and the daily functions of the prison estate. It will first discuss the effects NPS use has on the physical and mental state on an individual. It will then explore how the presentation of these symptoms affects the management and daily operations of the prison regime with specific emphasis on how prison officers are affected emotionally. The chapter will then document how NPS use has impacted on prisoners' behaviour such as through increased cases of self-harm, debt and violent incidents. After highlighting the addictive nature of these substances, the later part of the chapter will explore the way NPS use has impacted upon prisoner-on-prisoner relationships.

Spicing with death

I think it's only a matter of time before someone dies in here

(Prisoner 1)

In discussions about how NPS use impacts on prisoners in the prison, a wide variety of effects were identified which respondents had either witnessed or personally experienced. Prison Staff 1 outlined the typical process an individual might experience, *'You're basically going through all your emotions in the space of god knows how long, euphoric, you know anxiety, angry, stress, sad, hallucinating, you know you name it, the whole lot'*. The following quotes detail some of the symptoms officers have witnessed when dealing with an individual under the influence *Erm its sort of, it goes from them laughing hysterically to then quite sad and aggressive and strong with it, they'll grip hold of you, then they will be vomiting* (Prison Staff 8), *Er, they're unpredictable, erm, some cry, some fight, some wanna fight, some go under have a fit and come out wanting to have a fight, it's varying and you can tell the different NPS' that are coming in* (Prison Staff 3). In addition Prison Staff 3 explained:

First its panic, that they're going to die', 'their heart races, it, it's going to explode", "I've had two present to me on association on a Saturday... one comes and sits down and says 'im gonna die, im gonna die, im gonna die, im gonna die' [sic], and then collapse... another comes up the stairs only about a month ago – green- and I mean green, and he just said 'boss die' and he grabbed my hand and he started having a fit.

The operations staff member also outlined that although it normally *wears off after 10 minutes, 'sometimes it can last for a few hours'* with one particular prisoner having *long lasting effects for 6-7 weeks* (Prison Staff 3). Prison Staff 7 relayed the effects of one of the prisoners who took NPS:

A cleaner who was due to go out, he had two kids, only had 3 months left on his sentence erm, and it was his birthday so someone had give him some psychoactive substances to smoke in his pad at night time, it was a Sunday night, and erm he, ended up slicing every major artery in his body because he thought that it was snakes going around him, wrapping... he's living in a mental institution now he's completely lost his head, so his kids will never know the dad that they had because of this one incident.

This depicts a case of a prisoner experiencing a hallucination- another commonly recounted effect of taking NPS.

The following quotes evidence some of the symptoms prisoners have personally experienced from taking NPS:

I thought I was being chased and that, my body felt like it was shaking it wasn't right it was horrible (Prisoner 1, Focus Group 2)

When I had a big pipe I thought I was gonna die like I thought I was being electrocuted [laughs] it was vile like, I didn't like it, like it felt, it wasn't very nice (Prisoner 5, Focus Group 1)

Probably paranoia can be involved there int it, people paranoid on mamba and that thinking someone's looking at me (Prisoner 1, Focus Group 1)

Peer Mentor 1 also identified a number of negative effects of NPS use:

I've seen people strip naked, erm, run round in circles fighting for their lives, I've seen all types of stuff... I just see people screaming at the top of their voices, holding they're head... I think it fucks everything up, I think it does your insides, your appearance people turn scruffy off it, your head goes all different, people changed paranoid, you know what I mean

When asked about any long term effects that people have experienced prisoners remarked: *Physical withdrawals, there is definitely physical withdrawals...sweats erm* (Prisoner 4); *Anxiety and that* (Prisoner 1); *Yeah depressed and anxiety yeah* (Prisoner 4), while Prisoner 5 emphasised the seriousness of these effects *It's destroying people, it is.*

A key quote from Prisoner 1 conveyed:

It's killing people for me, do you know what I mean, at the end of day it's doing harm to people, it's causing a bit of extra work for the officers yeah but it's not killing them do you know what I mean.

He went on to state:

I think it's only a matter of time before someone dies in here I'm surprised no one has died to be honest

These quotes give an insight into how NPS has affected the prisoners both physically and mentally.

Problem's at home?

Once they've had that bad turn it's like all resources on them (Prison Staff 13)

One of the key issues the research wanted to document was how NPS is impacting upon the management and function of the prison estate. It became apparent after speaking with various employees that substance use in custody has detrimental effects on prison regimes and staffing. There was a consensus in opinion that 'operationally it has a big impact'. One staff member described the resources needed when an individual is under the influence:

There would be a nurse, they're might be 3 nurses it depends how bad he is... they'd be at least 3 officers, 3 officers have to be there if you have to use any force on him... if he has to go out to hospital, that's 3 members of staff gone because they have to go with him, I've seen people out there for days. (Prison Staff 11)

Similarly, Prison Staff 1 remarked:

It's just frustrating, the man power involved to an incident to sort it out, you've got Oscars, you've got health care, you've got nurses, you've got doctors you know, it's taken away from other posts in the prison, it's all at the taxpayers' expense, it ridiculous.

Staff members also provided various examples of how an incident of this nature can negatively impact upon other operations throughout the prison. Prison Staff 4 explains:

It's difficult, it wears everybody thin, you've got people who are on general duties who get called to an incident and then the rest of the duties throughout the prison, so say like the walking round escorting people, anything that needs doing at movement time, observing the main street, that comes second then which has a bigger repercussion on the safety on the staff and prisoners because it is going to kind of make us short staffed.

Prison Staff 9 indicated:

I think it impacts upon everybody, it can impact upon the regimes of the jail because if we've got an incident at 8 o'clock in the morning, it can put the daily regime 20/30mins behind ... so it's a domino effect really, you have to take staff out of certain areas to deal with that incident, it means that they can't be doing their daily job at that time.

Likewise, Prison Staff 13 emphasised:

It is a major issue because anytime there is an incident, you've got to think ten steps ahead of what's going to happen ... it's a strain on staff because we're taking away staff from what they're meant to be doing ... it's just drawing resources from everywhere.

In terms of the frequency a case like this demanding all of these resources, Prison Staff 13 suggested, *It's becoming more of a daily occurrence... a while ago an incident on the unit where we had 3 or 4 people coming off the exercise yard.* Likewise, Prison Staff relayed *"I've known times when there's been two or three at the end of a shift going out to hospital, and you need to man that then, you need to have staff going out with them.* These quotes demonstrate the frequency these incidences occur and thus emphasises how regular the prison regime is disrupted.

Fighting a losing battle

. . . and you feel as an officer, that no matter what you do to try and prevent it and to try and deal with it you've got no other backup (Prison Staff 5)

Another key finding that became evident when speaking with employees was that not only do these incidences affect the operations of the prison estate and cause a strain of staff member physically, they also negatively impact upon staff emotionally. Throughout the interviews, various employees expressed the personal struggle they face when required to deal with an NPS incident. Prison Staff 3 acknowledged:

It can affect the psychology of the officers, in regards to getting one over, but he's not getting gone over because he's under the influence, but you've got really big officers that have had their eyes out as we call it, yet, and I don't know it's weird.

The interviewee also expressed:

It's hard, it's so hard and it's horrible, it's horrible, I hate it, I do, and I work on the wing and I hate it, and what it's doing to people, like I said, you know where you are with heroin, you know where you are with marijuana, coke whatever, but this stuff is just crazy, it's crazy, it really is (Prison Staff 3)

Likewise a member from the recovery team recognised:

"I would think there's been an increase in staff being worried about dealing with incidents because ... you don't know what you're going to deal with once you get there, so it's quite daunting coming into work to think, you don't know what's going to happen and you've seen some quite bad experiences (Prison Staff 4)

Prison Staff 5 indicated feelings of helplessness:

I was working with the basic prisoners on Saturday and there's just no respect when they're under the influence ... there's just no respect for staff ... you just feel like you're fighting that losing battle at the minute.

One particular employee appeared visually emotional when relaying how the NPS problem in the prison was affecting him. Prison Staff 7 relayed the following experience:

I had this on Christmas day and it really-this is what I like to stress because they don't understand the ripple, the ripple effect it has as such, because it really affected my Christmas day night because this guy I thought he died, it was an inmate who said you better get down there because something bad is happening there, and these lads are just outside his pad laughing but when I get there, I literally thought that this guy was dead, this guy was white as a ghost on the floor and it was Christmas day, and I just thought I don't need this now, I don't need this, erm, we managed to resolve it, so he came around, he came around and started striking, started trying to attack me because he thought that I was trying to hurt him when I wasn't I was trying to put a pillow behind his back, and then his head because I wanted to stop him banging his head any further so he started striking me thinking I was hurting him, trying to get the doctor and the nurse to him was another struggle because again he thought we were trying to attack him but we wasn't we were just trying to help him. Closed the wing down, trying to get him off the landing which was horrific because he was upstairs so we had to carry him, so we had to get 8 of us to carry a wheel chair down, had to get him to hospital, but it really took an effect on my Christmas day night because, I, I thought he was dead, it just really shook me so I ended up getting very drunk that night and having to buy my girlfriend a very expensive meal to apologise, but she understood that, you know because of that incident it just affects the rest of your day, we was all like, we nearly lost some guy there, it's horrible this ... but they don't see it like that.

This quote perfectly captures the emotional strain NPS use can have on prison officers. Although the impact on prison officers was not discussed at length in the focus groups, one Recovery Peer Mentor recognised:

"I've seen officers in tears me from some lads ... if you've been here for a couple of years you start building a bit of a like relationship with an officer do you know what I mean, one of my mates was coughing up, foam was coming from his mouth and everything in the pad and when we told like Joe Bloggs they cried their eyes out because, they had bin [sic] with him for a few years ... I reckon they went back and it messed with their heads.

The drugs don't work

I just wanna get out of it but no matter what you do you can't snap out of it
(Prisoner 1)

In line with the finding that prison officers can feel emotionally affected by NPS use, one finding that emerged from the focus groups was the notion that NPS use can lead to increases in self-harm as a result of the mental state of the prisoner when under the influence. In particular, one prisoner spoke openly about his experiences

and highlighted that, *'You don't wanna face anyone do you know what I mean. He described the effects as a mental thing I didn't get no physical thing, it was more of a mental thing'*. The interviewee then proceeded to explain:

Do you know what I'm surprised at what's not a regular occurrence about mamba is suicides", "a few times when I've gone under I've started thinking proper negative thoughts about myself like 'why have I turned out this way', 'why am I here', 'why am I in jail again', but magnified do you know what I mean times ten, like do you know what I mean, I'm not worthy to be here kind of thing do you know what I mean erm, 'what have I done to my family' and it just runs over and over in my head and that's when I know I'm going under, and it gets worse and worse and you can't control it, horrible horrible (Prisoner 1, Focus Group 3)

This view point was in line with other responses which relayed *was there, I can definitely agree with that, can definitely see that*. When Prisoner 1 was asked by another staff member if he had previously ever had the self-harm thoughts or if it was a new thing, he responded:

No was a completely new thing, do you know what I mean, I've always known you know that I'm a bit of a bad lad but when you've had that, it's like a bit of a bad lad yeah but I don't deserve to be here kind of thing do you know what I mean, I've felt like that off it before, just thinking about it now gives me the shudders (Prisoner 1, Focus Group 3)

This experience gives an insight into the detrimental emotional effects NPS can potentially have on all those who take the substance.

I predict a riot

We've had like violent prisoners who have become even more violent (Prison Staff 13)

In terms of behavioural implications, existing literature in chapter one has correlated the increase of violent incidents in custody with the increase of NPS use. There was some evidence to suggest this claim to be true in the prison. Numerous interviewees documented an increase in violence in the prison *In terms of day to day there's a lot more violent incidents from when I first started here* (Prison Staff 12), *We have seen a rise in violence ... you can't put it directly to NPS but definitely without saying over the last 2 years we've had an increase in NPS, we've also had an increase in violence, erm we've had an increase in assaults on staff, you know, you can't directly link it but they'll be a rise in both* (Prison Staff 8). Prison Staff 13 acknowledged:

... it sort of almost like enhances how they think and with a lot of people 90% of the time, the outcome has sort of led them to become more violent and more aggressive and it's almost like them getting aggression and assertiveness mixed up, but then again ... they're under the influence.

Although these quotes do not explicitly correlate NPS and violence, it is clear the increase in NPS use has played a fundamental role in the increase in violence the prison estate. Several interviewees also described a violent incident where an officer got attacked by a prisoner; however this was the only specific experience that was relayed throughout the data as evidence of NPS violence in the prison. Prison Staff 3 relayed:

I think one of the officers went over to address his behaviour and out of nowhere came a punch with a key, where normally he wouldn't of done it, he wouldn't of dared do it as this officer is quite a big chap and he's quite well known, but due to that been under the influence he attacked him, because he thought, he got paranoid and thought he was going to be attacked first.

In reference to the same incident Prison Staff 1 highlighted:

We've had officers stabbed in the face with keys because they thought they were aliens and all sorts of things and you know, and if it was a young lady or a smaller girl they probably would of put them in hospital but the guy was a meat head, you know its lucky it was a meat head, if it was anyone else he would of knocked them out and killed them, erm, so yeah.

From these quotes you can gauge that the reason why the prisoner acted in this violent way was because he was under the influence. When discussing with prisoners the percentage of violent incidents they thought were linked to NPS, a Recovery Peer Mentor replied *Most violence comes from that*, with another prisoner responding *I'd say most of violence comes from mamba*", "yeah deffo [sic]. These quotes indicate consistencies between staff opinions and prisoner opinions regarding NPS use as the source of many violent incidents in prison.

Insufficient funds

I get quite concerned in terms of the debt and how much debt lads get into
(Prison Staff 1)

Debt was also referred to consistently throughout the interviews as one of the biggest ways NPS impacts on prisoners. Prison Staff 1 acknowledged that debt is a problem in the prison *you know they're in debt. They're behind the door, because they are too scared to come out because they owe money*. Likewise Prison Staff 13 documented:

We often get lads coming up to us saying, look I need to get off the unit cos I've run up a debt, I've been smoking it I've got hooked onto it ... they've ended up in debt and it gets to the point where they end up behind the door on voluntary lock up because they can't afford to pay what they've done or what they've taken".

Prison Staff 3 identified that often prisoners will keep their financial problems concealed:

They keep their mouths shut because, it's not a thingy, [sic] but then afterwards the cleaners will tell you about people who you know, 'him whose just gone out is £20,000 in debt', and you know, 'he was doing £500 a day'... that's when you find more things out, is when they've gone.

Although implied, these responses do not directly link debt issues to NPS, however numerous interviewees did evidence this correlation. As outlined earlier, Prisoner 6 explained with spice, *You can run up debt and debt and debts and debts...getting in debt over buying legal highs.* Prison Staff 2 identified *There was people who were getting debted up, [sic] they were getting drugs that they can't afford to pay for.* When asked if this was seen with NPS specifically, Prison Staff 2 responded *Yeah, yeah it was, there was yeah.* Prison Staff 10 relayed an experience where a lad on C1 [NPS basic wing]. . . *had a £500 a day habit in here and you know within a matter of no time he had run up £10,000 worth of debt on NPS.* A recovery worker described a typical scenario of how NPS use creates problems for the prisoner:

... gets hooked on NPS, he then ends up potentially, holding a mobile phone for somebody or getting himself into debt with NPS, he then will be writing to his family saying, can you put this in such a bodies bank ... it escalates and it gets completely out of control and that's then getting the family members involved

(Prison Staff 4)

These quotes demonstrate how debt and family related issues can spiral out of control as a direct consequence of NPS use in custody. Running up NPS related debt is an additional way that the rise in NPS use is linked to violent incidents as a result of unpaid NPS debt.

Just can't get enough

Spice is very very addictive... (Prisoner 6)

Another key finding that surfaced in the data was the acknowledgement of how addictive these substances can be; an opinion prevalent amongst staff and prisoners. Prison Staff 1 indicated that *It is addictive, you know and the lads tell me, you know it is chronically addictive.* Prison Staff 9 explained *Even the lads who don't smoke will smoke it, but we're hearing that it's more addictive than crack.* A staff member on the NPS basic wing relayed an experience where he asked a prisoner the following question *I said why you back... 'I've got a problem' he said, 'I'd never ever smoked any drug until I came in here in prison, and now I'm addicted to this mamba, I need help.* In the focus groups, prisoners expressed similar opinions *Spice is very very addictive, you can run up debt and debt and debts and debts and it's just addictive* (Prisoner 6). Likewise Prisoner 1 highlighted *Yeah it is addictive, physically it is addictive, it is addictive, I've done it where I've been off it a few days and I've been sweating shaking getting twitches and everything, when I've been smoking really bad in jail and stuff.* These quotes demonstrate the apparent addictive nature

of these substances which ultimately have further negative implications on individual's behaviour.

Spice up your life

The lads are getting a laugh out of spiking lads on the yards (Prison Staff 1)

After analysing the data the most prevalent finding which surfaced, (a finding which has received limited attention in previous literature) was the paradox between prisoners and their interaction with one another in regard to these substances. From the research it became evident that prisoners will either 'spike' each other for entertainment or they will conceal each other's symptoms in order to protect them from getting in trouble. Here you have an interesting relationship between how prisoners interact with one another. The following quotes evidence that 'spiking' occurs in the prison *It's like, something for them to watch and laugh and point at, they do spike people just to see their reactions it's done, it's been known to have been done* (Prison Staff 11), *You see it all the time people getting spiked on the wing and stuff like that, I've seen it, I've seen it done loads of time, people who have got no burn [tobacco] and stuff, I don't agree with it,* (Prisoner 3). Furthermore other interviewees documented one of the common ways prisoners spike other individuals. A Recovery Peer Mentor explained:

They spike people with it, you know someone says give us a bit of that burn and they've absolutely packed it out with mamba, and they give it to someone whose never touched it before, then they 'ave and they buzz off it for 10 minutes just to see 'em go under[sic]

Likewise, Prison Staff 7 described:

Oh yeah what they'll do is they'll get erm a roll up and the first two drags will be normal it will have no mamba or spice in it but the rest will, so they'll be smoking to someone new and they'll smoke it, and they'll say, do you want a drag of that mate, because the other person will think oh it's got no mamba or spice in it because he's had it, so they'll go and smoke it and then they'll go and thingy, like I said they're the most vulnerable ones on the wings, they'll get em to do.

The notion that it is the 'vulnerable ones' that are spiked was a dominant theme throughout the interviews. Prison Staff 7 relayed:

They tend to pick the weakest ones just for a laugh at night so they'll give him something,

Prison Staff 9 expressed *It's a joke to a lot of them, the vulnerable ones or the older ones who aren't that aware they're just been given it to see the reactions of them.* When asked who would be considered 'vulnerable' in the prison estate, Prison Staff 3 explained:

They think its funny spiking other people who have got nothing ie) erm... I want a better word than this, but those who they class as 'tramps', they think its funny giving them a spliff of that because they've got nought to loose [sic]

Prison Staff 4 also shed light on the type of person other prisoners would spike:

... preying on more vulnerable offenders and giving it for free and saying 'ohh have this', and you know that offender might have nothing, and you know being quite lonely or whatever, he uses it to take himself away and realistically, the effects that its having on the unit is just their entertainment for the wing.

As outlined above, one of the central reasons why prisoners will engage in this type of behaviour is for 'entertainment' or 'a laugh'. The following quotes embody the opinions of staff which emerged in the interviews:

... the entertainment, they think it's funny ... until it happens in front of them and they see someone explode, they'll carrying on doing it, because it's a joke, it's a laugh
(Prison Staff 3)

It's how the other prisoners react, they all just laugh they call it the mambulance [sic] when the nurses arrive, you know, and they all find it quite amusing if someone is under the influence
(Prison Staff 8)

Prisoners in the focus group also acknowledged this behaviour: *Some people who can't pay for mamba and they can't afford it... someone will give em a bong just to watch em go under* (Prisoner 1), while another prisoner added, *I seen that lad get took, oxygen mask on, 30 seconds later another lad gone by the side of him, half of the lads in the workshop are sat in the corner laughing their heads off thinking it's hilarious* (Prisoner 3). One respondent in particular conveyed:

I think that's bullying me, your pointing and laughing at someone and you're a grass as well ... officers are guna be clicked onto him, just help him out, fair enough he's stupid for doing it but still you've got to think about, I think about their loved ones me, you know I think about the family, like everyone's got kids.

This final quote reflects the contrast between the way in which prisoners either 'spike' one another or go to great lengths to protect one another.

Behind the door

Some hideaway and just vomit in their cells, it's happening a lot... (Prison Staff 3)

Thus, alternative to prisoners deliberately spiking each other for entertainment, it became evident that prisoners also have a 'code of protection'. Prison Staff 8 emphasised *I guess a lot of it goes undetected because the lads will look after each other and make sure they are okay and all that kind of thing*. Prison Staff 3 also documented this:

... and the prisoners, they do it together in their cells or whatever and will hide the fact they're having this fit or they're having this episode and you won't get to know, but sometimes one of them will say we've tried to keep him away from you for 3 hours but we've tried and we can't do anything and we need some help.

Likewise, Prison Staff 11 *I think it's used a lot more than what we know, someone can be away in their bed and we won't know fitting, doors shut, but all the other prisoners know but they don't tell us because they don't want to get them in trouble.* This behaviour was openly discussed in the focus groups, Peer Mentor 1 expressed:

... we did it with a lad not so long ago from my town, he went under, we shut the door and got his sick out and everything and do you know what I mean, tried to turn him round a bit...we do try and help because obviously, we're all in the same boat so we wanna help each other, we don't want that lad on basic so we'll try and help him there as much as we can before the officers do it unless they're in a really bad way because obviously you don't want em dying do you.

These quotes demonstrate how in parallel to prisoners spiking each other, there is also a culture among prisoners where they seek to protect each other. It emerged from the data that prisoners are more inclined to smoke behind the cell door as a way to avoid getting caught. As will be discussed in the next chapter, prisoners are reluctant to tell prison staff about an episode in fear that they will be placed on the NPS basic wing. Chapter five will also detail other ways the NPS basic wing is viewed by staff and prisoners.

5. Responding to the NPS problem

This chapter will highlight some of the ways the prison has responded to the scale of the NPS problem outlined in chapter three. The main focus of the chapter will consider how the NPS basic wing has impacted upon prisoners in this institution. In addition, it will outline 'models of good practice' which have been already been implemented. The section will conclude by highlighting some of the areas which staff have identified as needing improvements such as better detection of these substances and more intense training.

Back to basics

When put on basic now, we expect them to work with programmes, that's C1 offer, if they do work with them and they can prove their trying to reduce it then you can come off at 14 days, but they'll get follow up calls and we'll look at it from there
(Prison Staff 9)

In order to gain an insight into the current interventions and strategies that are in place at the prison, we spoke to an array of prison staff across the various departments in the prison. It emerged that one of the fundamental interventions that has been put in place to respond to the NPS problem is the dedicated NPS basic wing that was introduced into the prison in January this year. This is a wing which is devoted to house prisoners who have either been caught under the influence of NPS or who have been caught in possession of NPS whether it is found in their cells or physically on them. As outlined in previous chapters, because the substance is hard to detect, this sanction is usually given to a prisoner if an officer suspects that they are under the influence, or if they are displaying the symptoms associated with NPS use. An operations staff member describes an incident where he responded to a prisoner who he suspected was under the influence *Couldn't stand up, skin had turned green, hot and sweaty ... I don't think he knew where he was at the time ... the nurse had a look at them, and then we took them straight down to the basic unit because of that.* This experience depicts the process which occurs when prisoners show symptoms of NPS, as Prison Staff 12 indicated *Straight on basic.* Prison Staff 12 also explained *They do the full 28 days if they're involved in an NPS incident they just put them straight on there.*

Although the NPS basic wing is a new phenomenon in the prison, the majority of opinions which emerged in relation to the success of this wing were critical, especially within the focus groups. However, in a discussion with Peer Mentors, they spoke highly of the NPS basic wing and perceived the wing to be successful. Peer Mentor 1 remarked:

We think we've done good because a lot, there's no lads coming back on it ... I see it working, and it [NPS use] has gone down.

Likewise, Peer Mentor 2 explained:

No lads have come back

Peer Mentor 1 also relayed some figures relating to the NPS wing:

We've had one lad come back do you know what I mean out of 120 lads

These quotes indicate that Peer Mentors view the basic wing as a good practice in responding to the NPS problem however this was not echoed in the focus groups with prisoners. One dominant finding that became apparent when speaking with the prisoners is that the NPS basic wing discourages individuals to reach out and seek support for their substance misuse. Instead it was found that the basic wing makes prisoners feel reluctant to engage with recovery due to fear that they will be punished. A key quote by Prisoner 1 emphasises this popular opinion which surfaced throughout the discussions:

I don't think many people are voicing their concerns about them having a problem because they think they'll get punished ... listen, I'm bad me on mamba but I know, I know I'll just get thrown on basic, I think there should be more people going listen I need a bit of help with my mamba but not getting punished for it getting help.

Prison Peer Mentor 1 voiced similar concerns:

... people don't wanna come out with it though because like lads were saying before if you come out with it saying that they've got a problem with it, then a lot of the time they'll just go straight on basic...that's not helping them with their problem that's just giving them awareness about.

Another criticism of the NPS wing that emerged from the research is the notion that prison officers wrongly assume someone has taken the substance and individuals are therefore mistakenly punished. A quote from Prisoner 6 in Focus Group 3 evidences this finding:

Anything happens they automatically assume that it is mamba, I had a fit in my pad and I ended up going on basic for 3 days ... they just think everything's mamba, there's sick kids in here do you know what I mean ... it's not always the cause of it.

Another prisoner described an experience where a guy was wrongly placed on basic, *it's a bad thing though because what if you're not though... some kid had a bit of a fit in the yard yeah, he'd not been smoking mamba he just had sun stroke* (Prisoner 1). Additionally, Prisoner 1 was also critical of the process carried out in the prison, he claimed that prison officers use their discretion in these situations as a way of exerting control and punishing certain prisoners. The interviewee explained *Certain jails it's different ... in Manchester they just leave it they're not like in here, in here*

they crack down on it too much I think", when asked what he meant by this, the interviewee responded:

You get stuck on this so called mamba basic for however long, it's wrong how they do it, if a member of staff don't like ya they go see their manager, 'he looks under the influence' yeah they agree to stick him on basic for 21days (Prisoner 1).

This idea that prison officers use the NPS basic wing as a mean to punish prisoners they do not like was also highlighted by the Recovery Peer mentors who deliver the NPS course on the basic wing. In Focus Group 3, a Peer Mentor remarked:

There's loads of people who don't get caught, a lot of the time, like a lot of the kids come down and say, 'they just said that I was under the influence', and I think that's because a lot of the time, I'm not saying that you are, but a lot of the time you are being a dick on your wing and you might give a lot of officers a bit of shit ... a few kids who I've seen are stoned right but I've not seen them get put under the influence, so I put it to people who must be giving shit to the officers who they're not a fan of do you know what I mean.

However one officer on the NPS wing addressed these claims, he described an incident where a guy who was showing symptoms of being under the influence got placed on basic. The prisoner submitted an appeal and when the nurse was called, she confirmed that the prisoner had suffered sun stroke and was not under NPS. The next day he was taken off basic regime. Prison Staff 11 stated that in spite of this scenario *a lot of them do say they've been stitched up and you phone the nurse and they say no, he was definitely under the influence, so, we don't keep them on basic regime for nothing, just that's what they say.*

After analysing the findings it also became evident that there are conflicting opinions on whether the NPS basic wing acts as a deterrent for individuals taking these substances. A former prisoner who now works as a gateway mentor voiced that the NPS basic wing does not act as a deterrent for prisoners:

It's not going to deter anybody is it, its erm just the same as anything, everything we do in life has consequences ... you're not going to think, oh I'm not going to smoke NPS because I might end up on the thingy wing, it's just, its Russian roulette isn't it, you just take your chance (Prison Staff 2)

However, some prisoners did express that they found it challenging being on a basic regime, therefore implying some level of deterrence. In Focus Group 2, Prisoner 3 expressed:

For me personally it has affected me with my child and that, got a lad 4 years old used to speak to him every night say goodnight to him and stuff like that but since being on basic I can't afford the phone credit... so like that's one of the privileges that was took like your tele kind of thing, I said to her don't bother coming up on

closed visits, sit there and watch everyone else eat double deckers and stuff like that, it does affect me, it's affected my family.

Similarly, Prisoner 2 from Focus Group 2 remarked:

Like on here its closed visits so, it's a hassle shacking your arse up here for only a half an hour a week, or every 2 weeks you know what I mean...just feels like you're on your own in here sometimes don't ya, so personally I won't be smoking it again anyway.

Prisoner 1 from Focus Group 3 also emphasised that:

... mamba course it strips your basic in half, like, you get 28 day basic do you know what I mean but if you do the mamba course its only 14 days and so it gives you an incentive to work for it, you know to work for that back, work for your privileges back, you know what I mean like me I don't like going without no tele, you're learning about it and all that your learning about it, plus its giving you motivation to get out your pad and go do something about it.

These quotes demonstrate that being on a basic regime can negatively impact family relationships and consequently motivate the prisoner to alter his substance habits in order to stay off the basic wing and retain privileges available to the individual.

In terms of the training and awareness they receive on the wing, it appears the level of education could be of a higher standard. A Peer Mentor who delivers the NPS training on the basic wing gave us an insight into the NPS course which all prisoners are required to complete in order to cut their time on the basic unit in half, he explained:

We do a booklet which at least takes 10 minutes so we try and get all them done in the morning, but at the minute there's hardly anyone down here so we'll take a bit longer you know, we'll do a bit more on the board and stuff instead of just on the sheets, it's just awareness really, a bit more of awareness about it... we're not here to help them get off the drugs because we don't know where to start do you know what I mean.

This quote demonstrate that the mentors who are responsible for teaching prisoners the NPS course have little training in substance misuse which would be beneficial on a wing such as this. Additionally it appears that the NPS course they receive lacks detail. From the discussions it also emerged that after being on the basic wing, prisoner's become more clued up about when to smoke NPS without getting caught. Prisoner 3 from Focus Group 2 relayed *It's not stopped though...I was smoking it during the day running around association with it and I got caught with it but I know next time I won't get caught with it.* Additionally he remarked *Kids walking around with it and a member of staff will stop em [sic] and get caught with it during the day and they're put on basic for 14 days and they think 'oh do you know I'll wait till I'm banged up in half an hour and smoke it then.* Prisoner 3 in response to the question

what have you learnt remarked *Don't get caught again*. These quotes convey that after being on the NPS wing, prisoners use of the substance has not changed, just when they decide to take it. It was also made known that prisoners are more likely to smoke it behind the door and conceal their use as a means to stay off basic which is actually more dangerous for the individual.

Overall a critical opinion of the NPS basic wing was most present in the data. A key quote from Prisoner 3 stated:

It won't stop it won't, this dunt [sic] do any good for most people, do you know what I mean it's just sitting here going through the motions isn't it, I guarantee 80% of people who have been on mamba basic who've come off it for 14 days or whatever, if there was a test for it to see. If they've used mamba since they've been off it they'd all turn around and say they had. ... I don't think this does any good, sticking you on basic, it doesn't make a difference, even since I've been on basic, I've smoked behind my door and stuff like that if you get caught you get caught.

This opinion was also expressed by Prison Staff 2, although he did acknowledge that it had potential to make some difference:

It's not going to stop people but I suppose it's better than they've got somewhere to house them than, and to educate them I suppose, it's not... to be honest I'd say 97% of them aren't going to take any notice but even to get through to 3% is better than nothing isn't it.

Other NPS interventions that have been implemented

I think we are either the first prison or the only prison whose doing work in regards to NPS
(Prison Staff 11)

In addition to the NPS basic wing, a wide range of other interventions were documented throughout the staff interviews. One particular member of the Recovery Team spoke very positively of the changes that have been implemented in the prison over the last 'six months to two years'. She described some of the prison responses to the NPS problem:

... doing research around NPS, asking offenders their experiences with it, erm, looking at ways in which we can kind of raise awareness both to staff and to offenders ... looking at what kind of groups we can run, what one to ones we can do around NPS, erm, harm reduction advice ... NPS family campaigns in visits, family forums, we do the restorative justice circles around NPS... we've done the staff awareness for the past 18 months I would say regularly, we did a walk through last month were we captured 257 staff members to raise their awareness further around NPS use
(Prison Staff 4)

Another staff member in the focus group identified *I honestly can't tell you anymore we can physically do in prison*. Prison Staff 12 an operations staff member relayed

an experience where the recovery team did a workshop at 6am in order to catch staff on the way into work, where they dispersed leaflets, showed pictures of NPS and displayed evidence bags. He emphasised *even if it's only a quick 5 minutes on the way into work ... it gives them an idea of what to look out for with prisoner's behaviour and see what the stuff looks like*. Prison Staff 4 also highlighted that they have phone lines in custody if anyone from the community wants to speak to someone about NPS use from the prison. Prison Staff 5, a recovery worker, described:

We've got loads of Intel books, loads of information for people to read up on, erm, we do one to ones around NPS within the recovery team ... we're so far in advance of other prisons that we're seen as the leading prison at the minute, or we were recently anyways.

This was an opinion that surfaced in other staff interviews. Prison Staff 4 stated:

When discussing with other establishment about what other work they were trying to prevent that or deal with it, we were doing quite a lot more than what other establishments were doing.

However when speaking with other staff members, the research findings indicated that the actual content of the training is inconsistent and lacks depth. Instead it was found a large proportion of the information and awareness they receive is acquired from personal experiences they have had in the prison or from actively researching the problem independently. Prison Staff 13 conveyed *We've had people come in and sort of give a lecture on what NPS is and stuff but I don't think that's good enough for staff*. When asked about the level of training received as a member of staff, interviewee 1 replied *It's trial and error isn't it, you know, everyone's just kind of learning about it now ... in a way we are training each other, learning from the front line basically*. Prison Staff 5 remarked:

Personally, it's just reading different things on the internet and trying to learn up ... lads telling you information about it ... But other than that not a great deal, I think it's just your own, your own research that builds your knowledge up.

Prison Staff 12 explained how for the most part training involved *Just one of them workshops when I've come into work one morning*. These quotes highlight that all staff are not exposed to the same level of knowledge surrounding NPS. Additionally, Prison Staff 1 suggested ways to improve current levels of training he stated, *I think just everyone has to work together and try and come up with some sort of training solution ... sort of more in-depth harm reduction and awareness on it because it's just frying people*.

Another key finding which emerged from the discussions was that there is a lack of clarity regarding the baseline training which employees receive at the prison. Prison Staff 5 stated *I think everyone within the prison needs to go on training because it is*

impacting upon everybody's work. Furthermore, a discussion with Prison Staff 6 sought to highlight what training the interviewee had received both as a staff and a prisoner at the prison. The respondent explained:

... erm, we did a course and some group work on it while I was in here, erm, we've got worksheets and stuff but as far as the training goes on the effects of it ... we can only tell them what we know which is pretty basic, basic stuff.

The interviewee was then asked about how long the course was that he had received and if it was a 'one off' to which the interviewee responded *It lasted about an hour and a half, two hours* and *yeah*. When asked *So you've only had that one and a half hour intervention? But as a member of staff there's no specific training delivered to staff?* Prison Staff 6 then replied *Not to us, like I said I only just started here 3 months ago, they are putting us on different courses and I think maybe some of the other recovery staff may have done more intense training on it.* This conversation demonstrates the varied nature of training and awareness staff receive at the prison and also indicates that the information both prisoners and staff receive is insufficient when considering the challenging nature of the NPS problem.

A time for change

I think the biggest issue for me, obviously coming from the MDT side of it is why we can't test for it. (Prison Staff 12)

Another aspect of the interview schedule sought to identify what staff felt needed to be done in the future to respond to the NPS problem more effectively. After analysing the data two distinctive suggestions surfaced from this discussion. The first dominant response expressed concern about the unknown long terms effects that prisoners may face; the following quotes evidence this finding. Prison Staff 1 remarked *the long terms effects of it I would say, because, nobody knows it.* Another staff member conversed *what bothers me more is the long term effects* (Prison Staff 3), Prison Staff 8 acknowledged *I suppose it's just educating prisoners, or trying to get through to them the effects of it* and Prison Staff 6 conveyed *I suppose more of the effect it's having sort of long term on people.*

The second suggestion that derived from the data was the need for an accurate test to detect the substances. This finding was the most dominant response across all of the staff interviews. Prison Staff 7, a staff member from programmes, stated *Something I would recommend strongly that money goes into finding a test for that because I think a lot of people would then see a lot of people drop it.* Prison Staff 2 a gateway mentor also expressed the importance of having an accurate test:

The only thing that is going to erm, like going to curb it all or at least reduce it is, some way of detecting it, whether that be through a urine test, or whether that be, a sniffer dog or something but until then, the officers are going to be blind.

Prison Staff 9 highlights that:

If we could test it here ourselves with whatever kit was available then that would help the staff out, the nursing staff out and it would take the strain away from where we're sending it too as well.

Testing was also highlighted as a main reason why prisoners take these substances, thus a key reason why prison officers are keen to have a test for NPS. Prison Staff 5 emphasised *I think it's just eventually getting hold of a test that can prevent it, and then it gives the lads a deterrent for not using it because it gives the lads repercussions on the back of it.* Prison Staff 7 emphasised that *without there being a physical test we can do, to say right you're under the influence, unless we know the signs they're going to get away with it.* Likewise, a recovery worker acknowledged *I think that's kind of key, right now and that's what the feedback we get from the offenders as well, if they had a test, not as many people would use it because a lot of people would be facing consequences.* Additionally Prison Staff 5 documented *they'll openly admit it because they know the tests don't work.*

This was a finding that was evident in the focus groups with the prisoners. When analysing the data it was apparent that the lack of testing for NPS is a core reason why prisoners use these substances. The quotes below are evidence of this:

It dunt [sic] come back in urine test, you know when we do urine tests, they don't test for it at the moment, with cannabis and anything else like, heroin and benzos and anything like that you get tested urine (Prisoner 1)

That's why a lot of people use it now at the moment in jail (Prisoner 2),

By the time you get the piss test for mamba they'll be another drug out (Prisoner 5)

From these quotes you can gauge the prisoner's attitude towards testing, which further emphasises why there is a desperate need for an accurate way of testing NPS. The other central factor that was documented as a reason why prisoners take NPS was boredom:

It's boredom that's what it is its boredom there's nothing to do ... especially because of all the cut backs there's no jobs anymore so you're sat in your pad 21 hours a day and you've got like some people out there with the papers and stuff people think that jails an hotel of something, do you know what I mean, they think we're in Tenerife sunbathing, Sky TV in our pads, McDonald's but were not (Prisoner 1).

Likewise, a key response from Prisoner 5 explained *its boredom, when you're literally bored in your cell at night you just pick up a drug up smoke it.* Similarly, Prisoner 1 emphasises:

... because you're not working your banged up 21 hours a day its guna get to your head no matter what, it does, no matter what you're bored out your head there's nothing to do at all, if you're smoking that is like having a party or a laugh or

whatever it's a head change, it's like what I said at the beginning it's a day out in your head int [sic] it, it's a day out.

Furthermore, Prisoner 4 stated *it kills your jail dunt [sic] it... It's like an escape mechanism, an escape mechanism.* These quotes provide an insight into two of the fundamental reasons why prisoners use NPS, and therefore two essential areas the prison should be responding to as a way of reducing or preventing the problem of NPS in the prison.

In summary, this chapter has explored the views of staff and prisoners in relation to the way the prison has responded to the NPS problem. It was highlighted that the NPS wing has been negatively perceived by prisoners, with some respondents indicating that it discourages prisoners to engage with recovery for fear that they will be punished. It also detailed how prisoners can be placed on the NPS wing based on assumptions which are not always true to the cause. When speaking to staff, they documented good models of practice in the prison such as family forums and restorative justice circles, although staff did identify that more training is needed. The latter part of the chapter sought to identify further improvements in order to effectively respond to the NPS problem. These included more research on the long terms effects, and a way of detecting NPS in prison. Further recommendations will be discussed in the next chapter.

6. Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter will provide a detailed discussion of some of the key findings outlined in chapters three, four and five of this dissertation and their implications for policy, practice and future research agendas. Whilst existing literature will be revised, new recommendations for policy and practice will be suggested for each of the specific findings. The chapter will begin by examining the relationship between self-harm incidents and NPS use. The role of the NPS basic wing and the implication this has on prisoners' engagement with recovery services will then be examined. A prominent section of the discussion highlights the limitations of Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) and the influence testing has on the substances prisoners use while in prison. The chapter goes on to propose recommendations specific for the issues identified in this prison. These include the detrimental nature of 28 day recalls and the challenges associated with tackling boredom among prisoners. To conclude, the chapter will detail suggestions for future research.

Increases in self-harm incidents

In line with existing literature, experiences of self-harm were identified as an effect of smoking NPS in custody. Palamare and Acosta (2015) have identified that temporary psychotic episodes have been associated with suicidal and harmful thoughts. As documented in chapter four, an experience shared by one of the prisoners provided evidence to strengthen this association detailing that after smoking NPS he felt 'he did not deserve to be here'. Furthermore, in addition to the qualitative data obtained through conducting the interviews, the prison also provided a quantitative breakdown of self-harm related incidents which have occurred across a three year period in this institution. This table has been interpreted, analysed and core arguments have been extrapolated from the quantitative data. Key figures demonstrate that in 2013 there were a total of 335 self-harm incidents. This dramatically increased to 482 incidents by the end of 2014, with the current rate (up until 15th August 2015) reaching 472. Hypothetically, with the remaining four months added to this yearly figure, it could be approximated that the end figure for 2015 would be 720, although this is just an approximation. The highest month for recorded self-harm rates over the three year period was April 2015, which had 79 incidents. These figures clearly reflect a dramatic increase in self-harm incidents in this particular institution. When considering the data evidenced in chapter three, it is apparent that the increase in self-harm incidents are in parallel with the increases in levels of NPS in the prison. In chapter three, it was consistently identified by staff and prisoners within this institution that in the last three years, NPS has evolved into a disease within this prison. This consensus among staff, the quantitative figures detailing self-harm and the experience relayed by a prisoner in chapter three, all provide strong evidence that self-harm incidents are directly related to the increase in NPS use among prisoners. However, more analysis of recorded data relating to known NPS use and self-harm would be needed to further validate these links. Although it is documented

by Gov.uk (2015b:23) that “in 2014-15 we have worked to make sure that prisons remain safe for everyone by focussing on maintaining good order and control and by reducing violence, self-harm and substance misuse”, it would appear the objective has not been effective in this prison. Hence, the Government needs to ensure that the needs and safety of the prisoner lies at the heart of prison policy and practise. Part of this requires policy makers to listen and understand the reasons why prisoners take these substances in the first place. If policy can address the motivations for taking these substance and place emphasise on rehabilitating the individual, this may drive down the cases on self-inflicted harm.

Back to basics

Another key finding which emerged from the research, as indicated in chapter five, was the introduction of the NPS basic wing and the role this wing plays in the prison. It became apparent from the interviews that there were discrepancies in opinions among staff and prisoners. Although the perspectives of staff perceived this NPS wing as a beacon of ‘good practice’, prisoners expressed critical opinions of this unique wing. It transpired that instead of discouraging prisoners to take NPS substances, it was found that the basic wing acts as another layer of punishment within the larger form of punishment they already experience through being imprisoned. Thus, instead of deterring prisoners, it was found that it only encouraged them to smoke NPS behind their cell door and conceal their use which is more detrimental to their health. This is due to the fact that prisoners are reluctant to call officers if a fellow prisoner is having a bad experience on NPS for fear of being called a grass or getting put on NPS basic.

However, the most significant finding was that prisoners are reluctant to acknowledge they have a problem or engage with recovery, in fear that they will receive the punishments associated with NPS use. Sykes (1958) argues that once sentenced, prisoners already inherent the deprivations of prison life and have to deal with the ‘pains of imprisonment’. These pains include the deprivation of liberty, goods, services, heterosexual relationships and worst of all, the restrictions mean that inmates are cut off, for the most part, from their family and friends (Sykes, 1958). In addition to experiencing the ‘pains of imprisonment’, various prisoners indicated that being put on the basic wing strips them of ‘prison comforts’, work prospects, reduces association time, and limits the communication allowed with family and friends. Therefore, as indicated earlier, one of the main reasons for not admitting their NPS habit was based on the fear of being put on a basic regime.

Although this dissertation only reflects the opinions of a relatively small sample, it was apparent in the interviews that this NPS basic wing does not help in reducing NPS use, nor does it encourage prisoners to engage with services, which is fundamental to their recovery. Due to the nature of the NPS wing being unique to the prison, existing literature is unable to shed light on this paradigm, however, when looking more broadly, it appears that the NPS basic wing is based on a utilitarian and retributive theory of punishment, as opposed to a rehabilitative model. This opinion

has been formed because it appears that the main principles of the basic wing intend to deter future wrongdoings and punish the offender. As outlined by jrank.org (2015) "the utilitarian theory of punishment seeks to punish offenders to discourage, or "deter," future wrongdoing and the retributive theory seeks to punish offenders because they deserve to be punished". When looking towards improving future policy and practice it is important to analyse and critically evaluate existing interventions. This allows you to identify the limitations of a particular practice and ensure the negative consequential outcomes are responded to for the future. As identified in the previous chapter, staff indicated that the prison is seen as 'the leading prison' when it comes to dealing with the NPS problem. Therefore, it is important that the interventions at this institution reflect good practice if they are to educate other prisons on what can be implemented or how to respond to the NPS problem effectively.

Therefore, after conversing with various respondents throughout this research project, it is proposed that a greater focus should be placed upon restoring the individual through adopting a more heavily focused rehabilitative approach. Some principles of this theory could be applied to helping prisoners overcome their drug taking habits or behaviours such as: changing the way a prisoner perceives drug use, encouraging the individual to address and acknowledge that they do have a problem and stressing the importance of treatment as opposed to punishment as a way of solving the problem (McNeil, 2012). As highlighted in chapter two, when discussing the reasons why people take NPS in custody, one of the central reasons expressed by the prisons was the notion that these substances are smoked as a way to help them cope with the confines of prison life. When taking this view into consideration it therefore seems counterproductive to have a NPS basic wing which strips prisoners of the already basic privileges they hold in prison before being placed on NPS basic regimes. Early signs of this have been demonstrated in the interviews, with prisoners deciding to smoke behind the door as a way of avoiding being caught and thus, avoiding basic. This has been found to have further negative implications on individuals' health, with prison officers and nurses not being aware of prisoners having episodes until reaching a critical point. It also appears to be pushing use more underground. Therefore, instead of responding to the NPS problem in a retributive way by placing them on a basic regime, it would appear more effective to develop interventions that place emphasis on treatment and rehabilitation.

Mad drug tests

The limitations associated with Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT) were a dominant finding in this research project. Nearly all staff suggested that money and resources should be put into finding a reliable, consistent, accurate test for spice, mamba and other SCs. This prominent finding was in line with the arguments raised by Neptune (2015) in the literature review, which indicated that there are a large number of compounds on the market which are not detectable under the MDT. Hardwick (2014)

also highlighted that the list of drugs the MDT can test for has not been updated since 2009 indicating that little development has been made in testing for these substances. Thus, after considering existing literature it could be argued that detection of these substances has received little priority for six years, despite it being a fundamental aspect of prohibiting drug use in prison. Likewise, in this research, it has been found through discussions with staff and prisoners, that testing currently lies at the heart of the NPS problem in the prison in addition to other prisons across England and Wales. Despite arguments presented by Djemil (2008) eight years ago regarding the unreliable nature of MDTs, as mentioned in chapter 1, the problem still remains unresolved. Although it is appreciated that, as indicated by Neptune (2015), compounds are being developed and marketed rapidly, the Home Office funded Forensic Early Warning System (FEWS) was set up in January 2011 to investigate substances, collect data and analyses samples. According to Gov.uk (2015b) FEWS collected samples from South and North West prisons in England in 2014/15 with the aim to find out which NPS were being used in prisons and whether or not they were controlled. Gov.uk (2014) outlines that out of the NPS samples that were collected by FEWS, nine out of ten were mixtures of either two (61%) or three (30%) different active components.

Although these findings, along with other findings from samples have been collected, no test or accurate form of detection is currently in place to combat the ever growing problem of NPS use. In looking to the future, it is paramount that a test is created to detect these substances. Officers within the interviews expressed the desperate need for an accurate testing kit with prisoners openly admitting that a fundamental reason they take these substances is due to the fact that it does not show up in testing. Therefore, although it may be unrealistic to strive for a holistic test for NPS or SCs given the ever changing nature of the compounds, a test could be developed specifically for different regions of the country. This would be achieved by collecting samples from various prisons within close proximity and identifying the three most common strands of NPS entering and being used in each prison. Although this would not provide a comprehensive test for all prisons and all substances, it would seek to create a regional test specifically tailored for the certain area or cluster of prisons. In my opinion, it is more efficient to breakdown the problem and seek to develop testing for certain areas based on the commonly used substances, at least this way you are detecting the most widely used substances in each prison.

It was apparent from the interviews with prisoners, that a key reason 'spice' or 'mamba' is 'the drug of choice' in custody and favoured over other substances, is due to the fact that it does not show up in Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT). This finding is in line with the arguments put forward in the literature review by Djemil (2008) who conveys that MDT does not necessarily deter prisoners' use of illicit drugs, but instead inadvertently encourages people to take other, more harmful substances. MacCoun and Reuter (2001) highlight that compared with other illicit drugs, the psychological and behavioural effects of taking cannabis are less severe.

However, when considering the levels of harm associated with taking spice for example, it is evident that this is a high risk, dangerous drug. As demonstrated in this research project and in existing studies, effects of spice and mamba have proven to be detrimental to the behavioural, physical and emotional wellbeing of an individual with the long terms effects remaining unknown. As indicated in chapter one, it has also been reported that between April 2012 and September 2014, 19 deaths occurred in prison, where the prisoner was known, or strongly suspected to have been using NPS- type drugs before their death (Newcomen, 2015b). Thus, due to the nature of the MDT, it is evident that dangerous drugs are used over lower risk drugs such as cannabis which is in turn having catastrophic consequences (Djemil, 2008). In addition, a research strategy by FEWS has also evidenced that from the 893 samples obtained from South West and North West prisons, 26 of them were controlled Class A substances and 123 were controlled Class B substances (Gov.uk (b), 2015). Therefore, even when these substances are marketed or commonly mistaken as being 'safe' or 'legal', it is evident that the substances are actually containing traces of dangerous, controlled Class A substances. These findings further emphasize the damaging nature of NPS which have become widely used in custody as a way to avoid drug testing.

Looking forward, it is widely recognised that drugs are, and will most likely remain, a feature of prison life. Various respondents indicated in the research that drug use in prison will never totally stop, regardless of the legal sanctions imposed on the individual. Therefore, it may be more effective to implement policy which seeks to control the substances being used as opposed to eliminating drug use completely. One way this could be achieved is through decriminalising drugs which have been proven to cause less severe health implications. By removing the criminal label and reducing the penalties associated with a particular low risk drug, it may discourage prisoners from taking more harmful substances that pose a greater health risk (Svrakic et al, 2012). Current policy, such as *The New Psychoactive Bill* has sought to ban all substances (Pharmaceutical Journal, 2015) However, as seen with banning cannabis, manufactures of these drugs have created more dangerous drugs to replace already controlled substances. Synthetic cannabinoids have been proven to be five times more potent than the drug it seeks to mimic (Neptune, 2015). Therefore, it could be argued that adopting a blanket ban may lead to the emergence of more deadly substances being introduced onto the market.

Although there is the argument that decriminalising a substance will open the 'gateway' to individuals taking more harmful substances, findings in Amsterdam provide contrasting evidence to this view. MacCoun and Reuter (2001) outline that in Amsterdam, only 2% of cannabis users were also users of cocaine, with less than 1% of cannabis users also using heroin. These findings indicate that in Amsterdam, only a minute percentage of individuals who are cannabis users, are also using more harmful substances, and the relationship between these substances is not directly correlated. Likewise, one prisoner in chapter four stated, *If I could get weed in here I*

would smoke it. This quote indicates how cannabis would be the preferred choice if given the option. However due to testing restraints through MDTs, cannabis, which is argued to be a lower risk substance, has been replaced by spice - a substance perceived to have more dangerous health implications. Although it appreciated that cannabis is a Class B substance and therefore is not recommended or endorsed, it is important to acknowledge that extensive research has been carried out concerning this substance. It is known to the prisoners, medical staff, prison officers and policy makers the long and short term effects of this drug. In some cases this substance is used for medical relief and could therefore be considered a 'safe substance'. Contrastingly, due to the rapid emergence of new NPS, compounds are often unknown and under researched. In addition, the effects and symptoms can be very unpredictable and the long term effects are unknown. Therefore, it could be argued that testing has a profound impact on the substances which circulate throughout prison. Maybe if cannabis was decriminalised or no longer tested for, this substance would take over as the leading drug. Though it is acknowledged that drug use is prohibited in prison, if prisoners are going to engage in drug taking, focus should be placed on preventing the potential harm they may experience. Recent changes across in England and Wales have seen four police forces decriminalise the use of cannabis including Durham and it may be time for prisoners to consider taking a similar line.

Recommendations for prison and NPS

28 day recalls

One particular finding that emerged from the data was the notion that prisoners will purposely get recalled into this prison with the substances plugged in them, in order to make money. This was a finding which was not reflected in existing studies as a main form of drug entry when conducting the literature review for this dissertation. Therefore, when speaking with the staff and prisoners it was interesting to discover that 28 day recall sentences are a dominant way drugs are entering the prison. Staff indicated in chapter three that because of the astronomical amounts of money that can be made from selling NPS, prisoners will leave custody with the intention of soon re-entering the prison estate. It was outlined that through missing one probation appointment or breaching an order, recently released prisoners will openly turn themselves in, in a certain location to ensure they get sentenced to the same prison they were in prior to being released – a process which is often well known. Not only is this having a negative effect of reoffending rates, but it is also contributing to the development of the drug market in prison. Therefore, an obvious recommendation would be to make this process difficult for the offender. This could be achieved through housing prisoners on re-call sentences in a state facility or ensuring that they do not return to the same prison which they had just been released from. Although these suggestions may not be cost effective, it is evident that some solution is needed to combat this problem.

Boredom

Boredom was indicated by prisoners as one of the central reasons for taking NPS in custody. This was a reoccurring theme that featured throughout each of the focus groups. Although 'boredom' was not discussed in the literature review, it is important to highlight that it is recognised as a motivational cause of NPS use in existing research, although it is not discussed explicitly. However, in this research study, prisoners openly expressed their frustration of being locked up for twenty one hours a day due to government cut backs. As indicated in chapter five, respondents emphasised that there was *nothing to do* with other prisoners detailing that taking NPS *killed the boredom of prison*. Prisoners also confirmed an explicit link between boredom and taking NPS. According to Gov.uk (2015b:19) a key objective of current policy is to "make prisons places of work and strengthen the focus on employability post-release". Gov.uk (2015b:27) also claimed that "real progress has been made in the delivery of work for offenders across the prison estate". However, under the surface it appears this goal has not been achieved. The Justice Inspectorate (2015) outlined in its recent annual report 2014-2015, that work, training, education and other activity outcomes were dismal and only good or reasonably good in 25% of the adult male prisoners that were inspected. Within the review it was also reported that one in five prisoners spent less than two hours a days out of their cells during the week – the worst outcomes since 2005-2006 (Justice Inspectorate, 2015). Opposing this, Gov.uk (b) (2015) relayed that the number of prisoners working at any one time has risen from around 8,600 to around 9,900 between 2010-11 and 2013-14. Although this increase reflects some level of good practise, when considering that the figures span across a two year period, the increase does not seem very significant, especially when there are 85,892 people in prisons (Howard League, 2015).

Therefore, a key recommendation for policy and practice would be to invest money and resources into ensuring that prisoners are able to engage in some level of employment whilst in prison- appropriate to their physical and mental capabilities. Further suggestions for policy and practise would be in line with those proposed by Newman (2015) who recognises that, at a fundamental level, the prison service are dealing with individuals, addiction and boredom. Therefore, it is essential that the government "invest in educational and creative support services in prison which run alongside a prescribed treatment services". Through adopting this holistic approach, it could be argued that boredom levels will decrease, and in turn NPS use. By the same token, the Prison Service should put into place a comprehensive, mandatory education programme for prison officers outlining the current effects, risks and ways to detect NPS. This would ensure that all staff members had substantial knowledge of the NPS issue they are dealing with on what now seems, a daily basis.

Suggestions for further research

Throughout this dissertation, a wide range of themes have been discussed within the broader findings documented in this project. Key findings have evidenced 'the scale

of the NPS problem' and 'the effects NPS use has on staff, prisoners and the prison estate'. A large proportion of the dissertation has also documented 'how to deal with the NPS problem', and has sought to highlight models of good practice, with consideration of future recommendations for policy and practise. The findings identified and discussed in this research project have notably contributed new knowledge to existing information of NPS use in custody. However, given the ever changing nature of these substances, and the dominance they have in prisons across England and Wales, more research is needed in this field. Many questions remain unanswered for example, females' experiences of NPS use in custody and concrete findings relating to other demographics.

Other research opportunities could explore the effects NPS use has on wider society once prisoners are released. It would be interesting to analyse the percentage of prisoners who continue to smoke NPS in the community versus the number of people who revert back to other illicit substances if they were previous drug users. In particular, one could investigate if the individuals had ever smoked spice before entering the prison estate. As outlined in previous chapters, spice is the 'drug of choice' in prison. Therefore by exploring an individual's drug habits before and after their prison experience, it could demonstrate how addictive these substances are, and if in fact substances such as spice and mamba are replacing the use other illicit drugs. Similarly, there is scope to investigate whether the issues evident in custody which result from smoking NPS such as increases in debt, violence and self-harm continue to arise when in the community. In line with findings in chapter three, estimates detailed that NPS use could be as high as 90%. However, the only way to really ascertain an accurate figure would be to do a full prisoner survey of use- another area for future agendas.

Furthermore, research could be conducted on whether factors such as mental health have further implications on the effects of NPS use. Given that "70% of the prison population has two or more mental health disorders" (Mental Health.org, 2015) and as indicated in chapter three, '80% of the prison population smoke NPS', a detailed review on this topic is needed. More concrete research is also needed on the relationship between NPS use and self-harm incidents in order to cement the links drawn from this research. Research could also investigate how NPS reacts with other substances, whether it is prescribed medication or other illicit drugs. Data already collected from this research which has not been discussed in the dissertation could shed some light on the correlations between steroid and NPS use, however this data is not substantial and therefore more thorough research would be needed in order to make a clear, strong argument. Although various suggestions have been discussed in this section, this list is by no means exhaustive and simply demonstrates personal areas of interest that developed from this research. Without extensive research on this topic to inform policy and practise, it is only a matter of time before the problems of NPS which are contained inside the prison walls, become problems evident in wider communities, in schools and in homes.

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About the Author

Anna is currently a PhD candidate in the Arts and Humanities faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University where she continues her research on the impact of new psychoactive substances. Her doctoral research builds on some of the key themes raised in her Masters dissertation including a deeper exploration of synthetic cannabinoid use and the affect this substance has on an individual's health and wellbeing and offending behaviour. The research will also explore the challenges synthetic cannabinoids pose to service provision, commissioners and policy makers. In addition to her academic studies, she has been engaged in a research project commissioned by Manchester City Council. This ongoing study has explored the extent and nature of new psychoactive substance (NPS) use in Greater Manchester amongst various subgroups including students, clubbers and those from the homeless community. Project aims also centre on identifying what support and education is needed around NPS use and what improvements can be made to service delivery. Finally, Anna has also recently had an article published with her colleagues based on her masters research entitled 'Adding Spice to the Porridge: The development of a synthetic cannabinoid market in an English prison' published in the International Journal of Drug Policy.

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Views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect Howard League for Penal Reform policy unless explicitly stated.