

USER VOICE

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

The Bird Killer

A study of the outbreak of spice
(SCRA) use among men in
English prisons in 2016

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QNPMHS Special Interest Day: Managing Dual Diagnosis and New Psychoactive
Substances (NPS) in Prisons - Royal College of Psychiatrists, 28th November 2016

Today's presentation

3 parts:

Background to User Voice research

Key findings of User Voice research

Conclusions & Recommendations

Details on some slides will be skipped over to fit this presentation into the half-hour slot, but copy of full presentation is available on request:

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Background to User Voice research on NPS use in prison

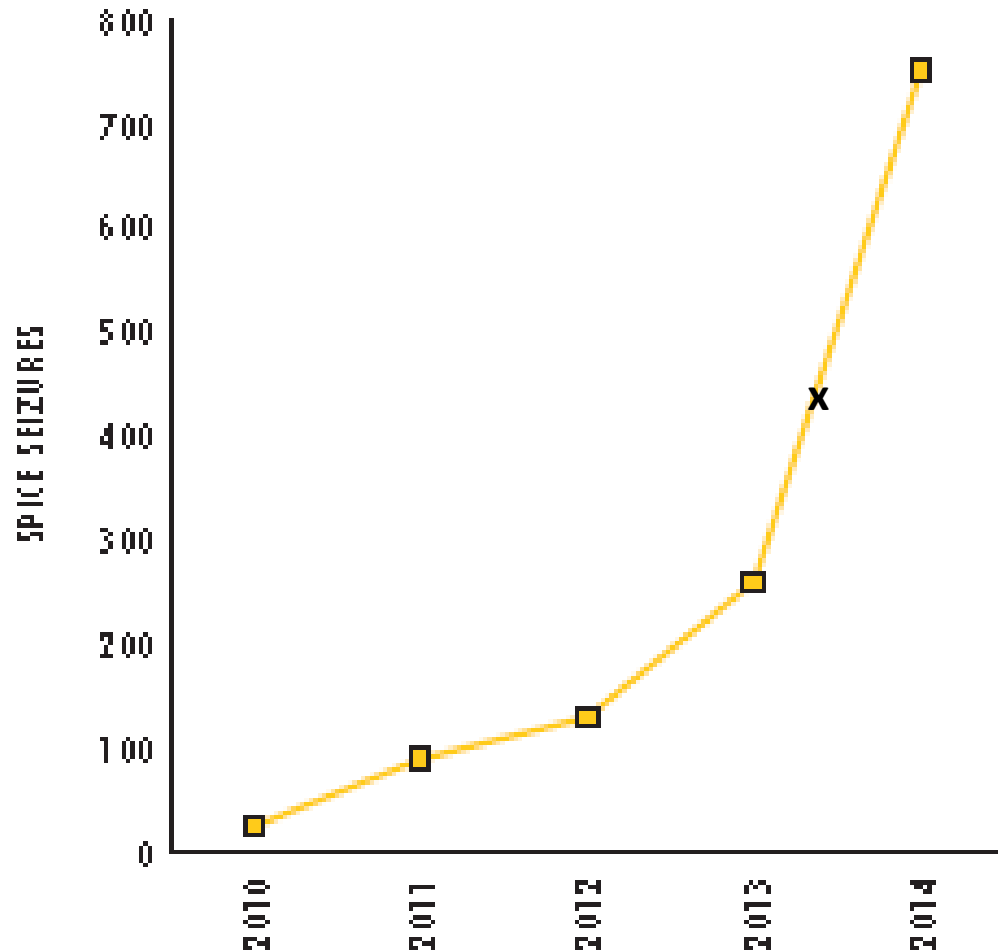
**Official statistics and prior
research on drug use and other
problems in prisons in England
& Wales**

Statistics on drug use in prisons

Literature review shows many kinds of drug use in prisons in Eng & Wales are now at record levels:

- **Drug possession almost doubled in last 5 years:** up from 1,248 in 2010 to 2,255 in first 10 months of 2015
- **Drug seizures climbed** from 3,800 in 2010/11 to 5,973 in 2014 (record high)
- **Spice seizures soared** from 15 in 2010 to an estimated 737 in 2014 [see next slide]
- **HMIP (2015) survey** of 1,376 inmates of 8 prisons found top 2 drugs used were **cannabis (13%) & spice (10%)** – spice was only drug for which levels of use were higher in prison than in 2 months before prison
- **Spice was a concern in 2 in 3 male prisons** in 2014-15 – almost double the 2013/14 rate (HMIP 2015)

SPICE SEIZURES IN PRISONS (England & Wales)



2014 estimate of 737 extrapolated from MoJ figure of 430 seizures of spice in the first 7 months of 2014 (Centre for Social Justice, 2014)

Rise in health problems in prisons

Health-related problems, assaults, self-harm and deaths in prisons have all reached record levels & are related to the growth of spice use:

- **Call-outs for ambulances & emergency services to UK prisons rose from 14,475 in 2011 to 22,055 in 2015 – a 52% rise (based on 91 services - Titheradge 2016)**
- **Deaths of prisoners where NPS use was known or suspected totalled 58 in the 32-month period June 2013 to January 2016 - of which 39 (67%) were self-inflicted (Prisons & Probation Ombudsman, September 2016)**

Safety in Custody statistics, England & Wales

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Record?</u>
All assaults	15,057	20,518	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- prisoner on prisoner	11,530	15,511	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- prisoner on staff	3,530	4,963	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Serious assaults	1,404	2,813	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- prisoner on prisoner	1,116	2,197	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- prisoner on staff	279	625	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Self-harm incidents	23,400	32,313	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- number of individuals	6,090	9,458	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- hospital attendances	1,214	2,261	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

2015: 1 assault every 25 mins; 1 self-harm every 22 mins

All rates of assault & self-harm also peaked in 2015

Safety in Custody statistics, England & Wales

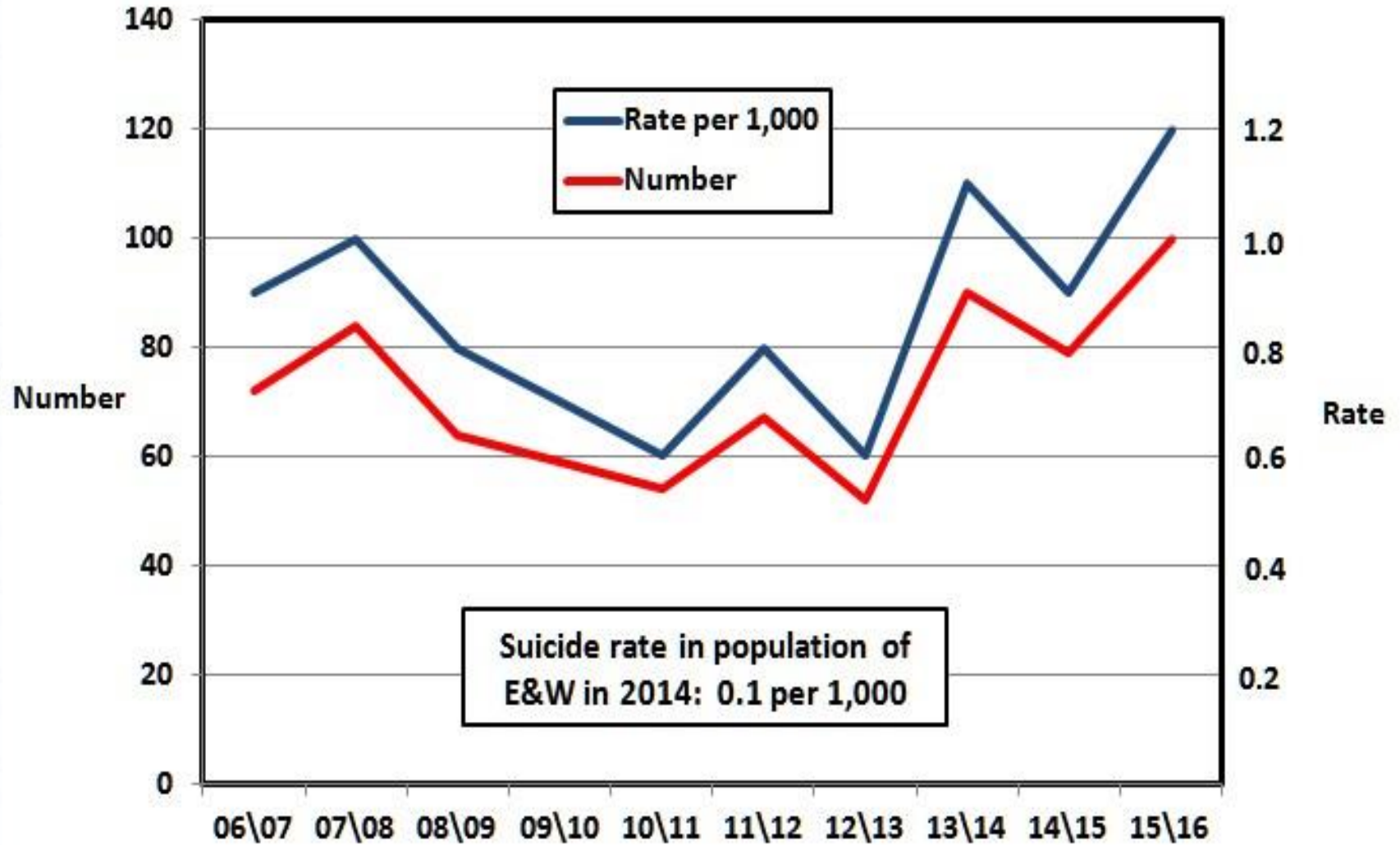
	<u>2006/07</u>	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>Record?</u>
<u>Number of deaths</u>	161	290	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- natural	85	167	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- suicide	72	100	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- homicide	0	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Rate of deaths *</u>	2.0	3.4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- natural	1.1	1.9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
- suicide	0.9	1.2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Largest rises in all safety indicators were over last 3 years (2013 to 2015)

* per 1,000 prisoners

Record = highest level ever recorded

Suicides by prisoners in England & Wales over past decade



Understaffing & Overcrowding

England & Wales has the highest rate of imprisonment in Western Europe: almost 150 per 100,000 population (84,533 at 6/2016). While prisoner numbers have grown - doubling since 1993, with 74 (62%) of 119 prisons now overcrowded - officer numbers have fallen: from 27,650 at 8/2010 to 16,720 at 12/2015 – a 40% drop over 5 years. By 2016, 35% of prisons had staffing problems

Prison governors say record levels of violence are a direct result of budget cuts that have led to 10,000 fewer prison officers dealing with a record 85,000 prisoners. [Guardian 19-10-16]

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/19/time-has-come-to-end-brutality-and-squalor-of-pentonville>

Update - November 2016

“The biggest ever hoard of drugs found in a British prison have been discovered by staff at HMP Northumberland where 5 kilos of spice has been uncovered” - prison black market value of £3.5m
Inside Time (national newspaper for prisoners), Nov. 2016

Over last 3 months, there have been riots and disturbances in HMPs Bedford, Lewes, Lincoln, Birmingham & Exeter; 2 escapes; and a murder.

On 15th November, POA directed members to stop working & protest – about 10,000 prison officers went ‘on strike’: ***“the prison service is in meltdown”***

See also: The Secret Life of Prisons (C4 TV, 10-11-16)

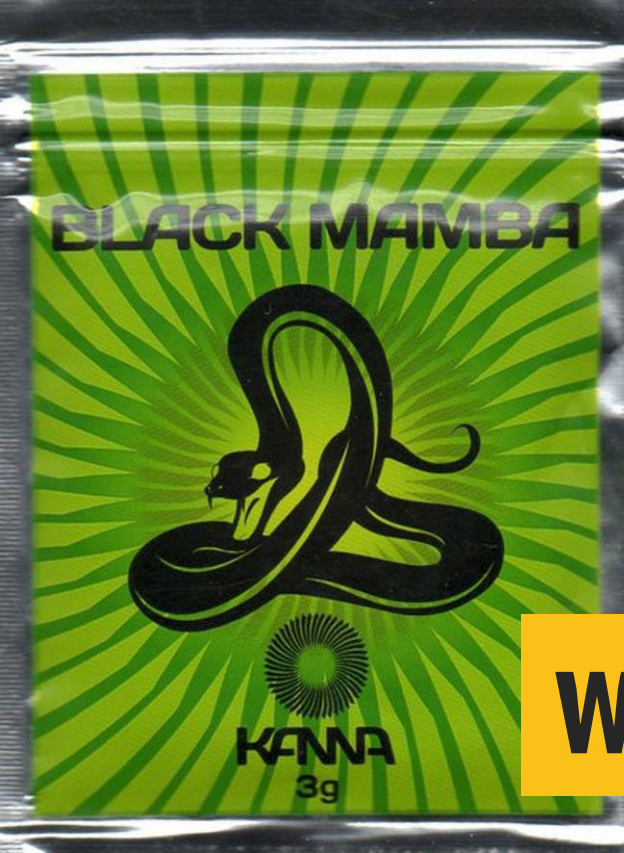
HMIP on: use of spice & NPS in prison

HMIP report 2015-16 (July 2016, p8 & p11):

Referring to rise in violence in prisons – notably record levels of assaults and homicide – HMIP commented:

“It is clear that a large part of this violence is linked to the harm caused by NPS which are having a dramatic and destabilising effect in many of our prisons... the supply & misuse of synthetic cannabis caused major problems in most adult male establishments we inspected, including medical emergencies, indiscipline, bullying and debt”

HMIP concluded: *“Some prisons are making every effort to mitigate the impact of these drugs by trying to disrupt the supply routes and lessen demand for them through education and targeted interventions. However, in other places the response has been more patchy, with no clear strategy in place”*



WHAT IS SPICE?

Synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (SCRAs): known as *spice* or *mamba*, based on earlier brand names for SCRAs. Current popular brand names include *Annihilation* and *Psyclone*. Retail packs (1g, 3g) contain herbal matter with SCRA solution soaked into it. Often smuggled into prisons in powder or liquid forms (eg. soaked into paper)

1st-generation SCRAs banned in 2009.
2nd-generation SCRAs banned in 2013.
Both banned under MoDA 1971- their effects were more similar to cannabis.
3rd-generation SCRAs have more sedative & hallucinogenic effects – similar to solvents, LSD or ketamine.
Banned by Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 – though possession is only illegal in prison (2 years imprisonment)



USER VOICE
ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

The leading national charity for service user involvement in criminal justice services

Founded in 2009, 80% of User Voice's staff are ex-offenders.

The service user is at the heart of User Voice's work.

User Voice's work is carried out through 3 main activities:

Councils: set up in prisons, probation & youth offending teams to provide a platform for service users to voice their views

Peer Support: individual and peer-led group sessions provide support for people exiting custody or in probation

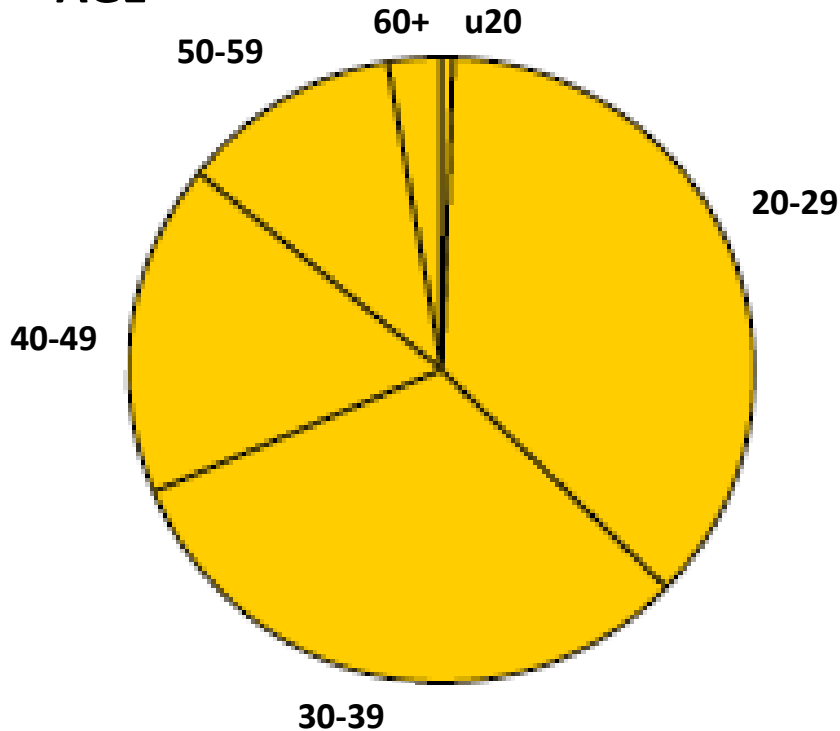
Consultations: research projects and needs assessments conducted for various CJS & NHS organisations, and other agencies. They typically involve surveys and focus groups.

USER VOICE - SPICE USE IN PRISON

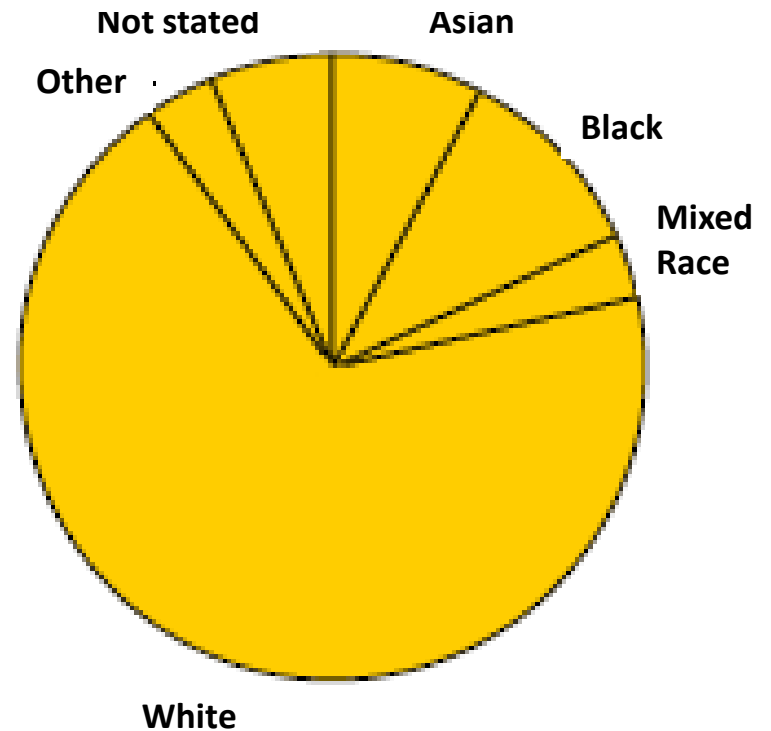
- **The research on use of NPS in prison was a needs analysis consultation funded by NHS England**
- **It was based on voluntary, anonymous & confidential research at 9 category-C prisons for men in England & Wales in first half of 2016, and was conducted by a team of peer researchers (ex-offenders)**
- **The research was based on a questionnaire survey of 682 prisoners (18 to 187 across the 9 prisons) and focus groups with 121 prisoners**
- **Based on the populations of the 9 prisons (513 to 1,605), the overall survey response rate was 8%**
- **Almost all reports of NPS use were about spice, so the final report focused on spice.**

SAMPLE: PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

AGE



ETHNICITY



Typical respondent was: white (69%) & aged 20-39 (68%)

Key Findings

How spice is smuggled into prisons

Prevalence of use of spice and drugs

Estimated levels of spice use

Reasons for using spice

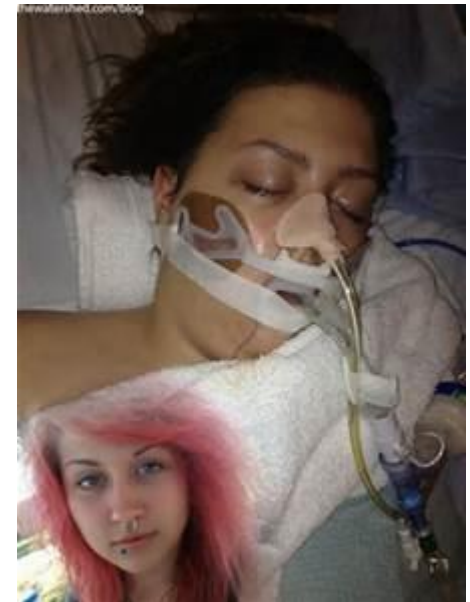
Consequences of spice use

Addiction to spice

Spice problems and help-seeking

Conclusions and Recommendations

See also: Infographic handout



Emily Bauer, left
brain-damaged and
blind from strokes
after smoking spice
in Texas in 2013

MAIN METHODS BY WHICH SPICE & NPS ARE SMUGGLED INTO PRISONS IN E&W

- **New/remand prisoners**
- **Prisoners' visitors**
- **Prison staff (officers & auxiliary staff)**
- **Mail (eg. NPS solutions soaked into paper)**
- **Thrown over wall**
- **Drones: from 0 in 2013 to 33 in 2015 [FOI]**

“most of it isn’t coming in parcels, it’s coming in people’s bums”

“you can spray a piece of paper with it”

“the supply chain, they can’t break, because there’s members of staff bring it in”

“it’s coming through the wall, and it has to come from prison officers, especially if there is so much money made out of it”

MAIN FINDINGS: LEVELS OF DRUG USE

%	<u>Use in the last month</u>	<u>Frequency of use (LM users)</u>		
		<u>Tried</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Daily</u>
Spice	33	31	23	<u>46</u>
Hooch	15	<u>47</u>	28	26
Cannabis	14	<u>50</u>	26	24
Heroin subs.	14	29	25	<u>46</u>
Heroin	8	<u>47</u>	15	38

Tried = once or twice

Weekly = 1 to 3 days per week

Daily = almost daily to every day

heroin substitutes

= methadone, Subutex etc.

Self-reported use – so likely to be an under-estimate

Estimate: at least 28,000 prisoners in E&W used spice in last month

ESTIMATED LEVELS OF SPICE USE IN PRISON

Two-thirds of survey participants believed most inmates in their prison had used spice: either 'over half' (4 in 10) or 'nearly everyone' (2 in 10)



“spice has taken over the drug culture in prison ... it’s reached epidemic levels”

“of 60 inmates on this unit, 50 use spice”

“it’s everywhere in the prison”

“a kilo is worth 50 grand”

“the place is full of spice due to the lack of security”

REASONS FOR USING SPICE

Of 10 reasons, top 5 were: no MDT, easy to access, boredom (3 in 10 each), fun & coping (2 in 10 each)

The top reason given by spice users was 'no MDT' (7 in 10) while top reason given by non-users was 'easy to access' (2 in 10)

Other reasons given were: habit & peer influence

“there is no test so you can smoke it without getting caught ... you won't get punished or lose days”

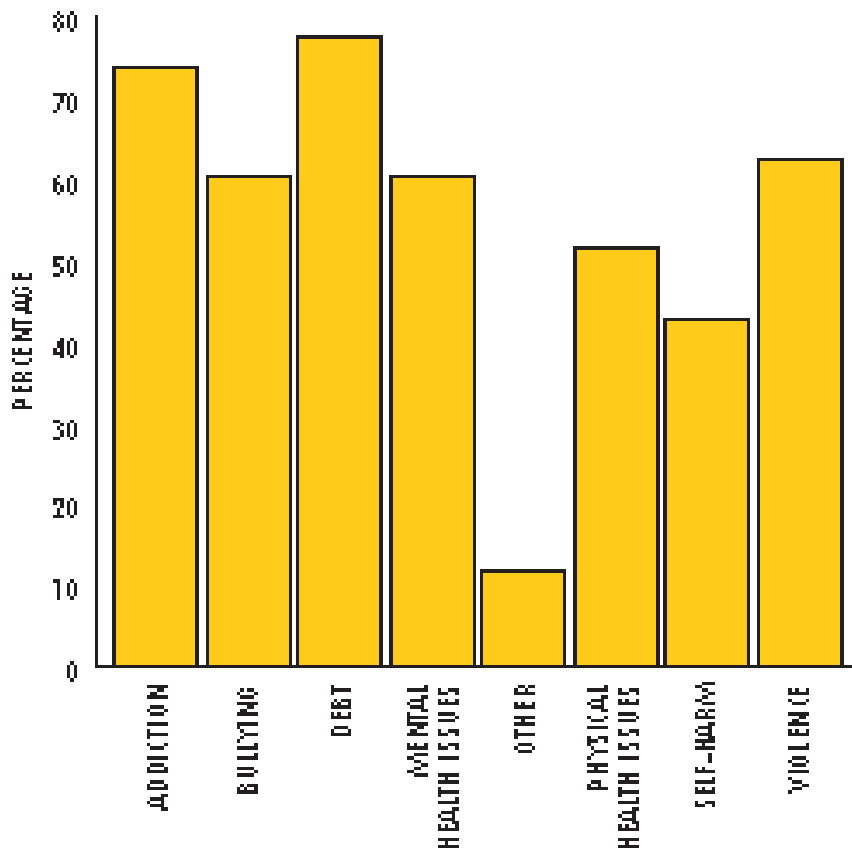
“it kills time, takes your mind away, it's a bird killer”

“a fucking shit feeling is better than no feeling”

HMIP 2015-16: *“Mandatory drug testing remained an ineffective deterrent due to the very limited range of drugs it could test for and inadequate resourcing of suspicion testing”* (p11)

CONSEQUENCES OF SPICE USE

CONSEQUENCES OF SPICE USE



Addiction: *“It’s like jail crack”*

Debt: *“once in debt ... no canteen, straight to dealer”*

Bullying: *“licking someone’s cock for a pipe”, “torture you”*

Violence: *“loads of violence ... kicking off over debt & spice”*

Mental health: *“felt like brain being ripped out”, “paranoia”*

Physical health: *“bad seizure”, “nasty rash”, “spice attack”*

Self-harm: *“a lot of people think about killing themselves”; “I wanted to jump out of window”*

SPICE & ADDICTION

Over three-quarters (77%) regarded spice/SCRAs as addictive - many spice users reported the three classic signs of addiction: craving, tolerance and withdrawals.

Research shows that many SCRAs affect opioid peptide & dopamine neurotransmitters – the same brain systems affected by heroin/opioids, and which underlie physical dependence

“people get dependent on it”

“it’s like a new crack cocaine”

“I suffered bad withdrawal including night terrors and uncontrolled sweating”

“the cramps are unbearable. You get the shakes and sweat”

“I’d go 4 or 5 days without any sleep”

“a friend here got off gear by smoking spice”

“stops the heroin rattle 100%”

SPICE PROBLEMS & HELP-SEEKING

- 3 in 10 LM users saw their spice use as ‘a real problem’ - of these, only half felt OK asking staff to help them

Survey participants were also asked 2 questions:

- Would you feel OK asking staff to help a spice user?
2 in 10 said Yes & 5 in 10 said only in ‘real emergency’
- What deters spice users from seeking help?
Top replies were ‘fear of adjudication’ (5 in 10) & ‘formal recording’ (4 in 10)

“a lot of people abuse it and have spice attacks”

“try to avoid contact, ‘cause you can get stitched up”

“I don’t care, I wouldn’t want death on my conscience”

“on one single day, 12 prisoners had had to be treated for the effects of these substances” – HMP Wealstun (HMIP, 2016, p27)

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

“Many prisoners believed there was an urgent need both for more harm-reduction services and for peer-led interventions ... particularly given their relatively greater understanding of spice problems compared with prison staff”

- 1 Adopt a more therapeutic and less punitive approach**
- 2 Review appropriateness and confidentiality of drug services**
- 3 Provide training and support to develop peer services**
- 4 Review prisoner salaries in relation to canteen prices (no salary rise since 2002)**
- 5 Improve staff training regarding NOMS guidance on punishment, addiction issues, and harm reduction for active drug users**
- 6 Focus some resources on giving support to non-users**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks for listening today.
Thanks to all prisons and prisoners who participated, to peer researchers who conducted the research, & other User Voice staff for their help and feedback.

Report & Infographic can be downloaded at:

<http://www.uservice.org/news/user-voice-news-blog/2016/05/nhs-report-by-user-voice-hears-directly-from-inmates-the-true-horrors-of-nps-use-in-prisons/>

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Copies of this presentation
& further information from:
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Postscript: Planned prison policy

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss: Gove's prison reform plans need remodelling into prison safety & reform plan

MoJ announced £14m worth of investment for the UK's 10 worst prisons, which would increase staffing levels by 400.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/19/time-has-come-to-end-brutality-and-squalor-of-pentonville>

Truss has since stated that prison staffing levels will be increased by a further 2,000 = 2,400 new prison officers – and that:

“The prison & probation ombudsman rightly sets out a number of factors that must be addressed, including the availability of NPS and levels of violence in prisons”

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/21/prison-violence-at-wholly-unacceptable-level-ombudsman-finds>

Truss co-wrote a 2011 book calling for prisons to be made “tough, unpleasant and uncomfortable” places of punishment...

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/19/prisons-legal-highs-peter-clarke-new-psychoactive-substances>