



PRISON SERVICE January 2021 No 252

# JOURNAL

**Special edition:  
Security in prisons**

# Increased security measures in a drug recovery prison: Disrupting the drug supply

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## Background

**Drugs remain a key issue for prisons with 40 per cent of people entering custody stating, that they have a problem with drugs<sup>1</sup>, compared with up to 9 per cent of adults in the general population admitting to having taken drugs in the last month<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) stated that between 2012/3 and 2017/18 the rate of positive Random Drug Tests (RDT) in prisons increased by 50 per cent, meaning that drug use within prisons is ‘widespread’<sup>3</sup>. This paper reports on the qualitative findings of a research study that explored the perceived impact of the increased security measures that were implemented as part of the Drug Recovery Pilot. The findings, in combination with analysis of open access data, suggests that the increased security measures put in place are having a positive impact on the prison environment however they also raise further challenges for consideration by HMPPS.**

The Drug Recovery Prison programme (DRP) in HMP Holme House (a male, local, category C prison) started in April 2017<sup>4</sup> with the aim of reducing demand through ‘recovery’. The programme was aligned to the 2017 Government Drug Strategy, with the purpose of ‘get[ting] everyone living and working in the prison to collaborate, to create better chances for people in

recovery to change and feel hopeful and optimistic about their future’<sup>5</sup>. In order to do this, the programme enhanced the local security measures in an effort to reduce the known supply routes into the prison. The changes focused on ‘activities to deter, detect and disrupt illicit items entering the prison by enhancing physical, procedural and interpersonal security’<sup>6</sup>.

## Drug use and the concept of recovery

The concept of recovery can be defined in a number of different ways that include complete abstinence from a substance, to more dynamic and inclusive definitions that identify the importance of the individual experience and the aspirational process that underpins the journey<sup>7,8</sup>. There are a number of models that have attempted to explain the concept of recovery including the CHIME model<sup>9</sup> that identified five elements that are central to supporting the process of recovery: connectedness, hope, identity, meaning, and empowerment. This represented a shift away from viewing recovery as the point at which a person abstains from using alcohol or drugs to a more self-motivated process that views recovery as a journey. The Social Identity Model of Recovery (SIMOR) places importance on social groups and networks, signifying a change in attitude and the internalisation of a new set of personal values<sup>10</sup>. This shift to a more pro-social

1. Prison Reform Trust (2019) Bromley briefings: Prison factfile, London: PRT.
2. UK Government (2018) *Drug misuse: Findings from the 2017/18 Crime survey for England and Wales. Statistical Bulletin*. London: Home Office.
3. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) Prison drug strategy. London: HMSO. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/792125/prison-drugs-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792125/prison-drugs-strategy.pdf).
4. Wheatley, M. (2016) ‘Drug misuse in prison’, in Jewkes, Y., Bennett, S., and Crewe, B. (eds.) *Handbook of Prisons*. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 205–23.
5. Wheatley, M. (2019) ‘Promoting recovery in prison - The Holme House approach’, *Prison Service Journal*, March, no. 242, 11–17.
6. Wheatley (2016) see note 4.
7. Best, D. and Wheatley, M. (2019) ‘Definitions of recovery’, *Prison Service Journal*, March, no. 242, 3–8.
8. Wheatley (2016) see note 4.
9. Leamy, M., Bird, V., Le Boutillier, C., Williams, J., and Slade, M. (2011) ‘Conceptual framework for personal recovery in mental health: Systematic review and narrative synthesis’, *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199(6), 445–452. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.110.083733>.
10. Best, D., Irving, J., and Albertson, K. (2017) Recovery and desistance: What the emerging recovery movement in the alcohol and drug area can learn from models of desistance from offending’, *Addiction Research and Theory*, 25(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16066359.2016.1185661>.

model which enables the individual to see a positive alternative future can result in both changes to behaviour, leading to a transition of identity<sup>11</sup>. In order to promote recovery within the prison it was essential to reduce the availability and use of drugs within HMP Holme House.

Drug use within prison can have an impact on prison regimes<sup>12</sup>, and while this is not a new issue, the changes in drug use and availability, especially the increase of new psychoactive substances (NPS) that imitate the ones found in cannabis, presents a range of challenges for the prison estate<sup>13 14</sup>. NPS such as 'Spice' has increased in popularity, largely due to its low cost<sup>15</sup>. It is well documented that the buying and selling of drugs form part of the informal prison economy which can be linked to internal hierarchies, enhancing status, and producing economic rewards<sup>16 17 18</sup>.

Wheatley<sup>19</sup> suggested that there are 'five possible explanations for drug use in prison': self-medication; time management; a social network; acquiring and enhancing status; and, economic status and rewards. Other factors can include an existing reliance on substances when a person is sent to custody, as an attempt to forget their current surroundings and in an effort to manage underlying mental health issue<sup>20 21</sup>.

Despite the reason for illicit drug use in prisons, it is agreed that it brings with it an increased level of risk to both the prisoners and the staff. In order to reduce harm, there needs to be interventions that reduce drug use and therefore reduce the overall risk within the prison setting<sup>22</sup>. During 2017, the issues with drugs

within HMP Holme House, particularly psychoactive substances (PS), was widely reported in the media<sup>23</sup>. This issue was acknowledged by Peter Clarke, Chief Inspector of Prisons, in the 2017 HMIP Inspectorate Report for Holme House<sup>24</sup> where he commented on levels of drug use and availability within the prison:

*'...at the heart of our concerns was a very serious problem with drugs. Mandatory testing suggested a positive rate within the prison of 10.45 per cent, which was bad enough, but this rose to nearer 36 per cent when synthetic cannabinoids or new psychoactive substances (NPS) were included. Nearly 60 per cent of prisoners thought it was easy to get drugs in the prison, and a quarter suggested that they had acquired a drug problem at the prison.'*

*The 2020 Inspectorate<sup>25</sup> also acknowledged that in 2017 '...the availability of illicit substances [...] had been almost out of control'. This report recognised that measures to tackle the availability of illicit substances 'had delivered some impressive reductions'.*

Data available from the Ministry of Justice<sup>26</sup> reflects the issues that the prison was facing with a peak of drug finds in 2018. The data also identifies decreasing numbers of mobile phone finds and an increase in alcohol finds:

11. Mawson, E., Best, D., Beckwith, M., Dingle, G. A., and Lubman, D. I. (2015) 'Social identity, social networks and recovery capital in emerging adulthood: A pilot study', *Substance Abuse: Treatment, Prevention, and Policy*, 10(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13011-015-0041-2>.
12. Kolind, T. (2015) 'Drugs and discretionary power in prisons: The officer's perspective', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 26(9), 799–807. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2015.04.014>.
13. Ralphs, R., Williams, L., Askew, R., and Norton, A. (2017) 'Adding spice to the porridge: The development of a synthetic cannabinoid market in an English prison', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 40, 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2016.10.003>.
14. Duke, K. (2019) 'Producing the 'problem' of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in English prisons', *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2019.05.022>.
15. Faure Walker, D. (2015) 'The informal economy in prison', *Criminal Justice Matters*, 99(1), 18–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09627251.2015.1026564>.
16. Wheatley (2016) see note 4.
17. Kolind (2015) see note 12.
18. Faure Walker (2015) see note 15.
19. Wheatley (2016) see note 4 (p.208).
20. Wheatley (2016) see note 4.
21. Faure Walker (2015) see note 15.
22. Laurent, M. (2016) 'Uso de Drogas Na Prisão: Estratégias de Redução de Danos (Programa ANRS PRIDE)', *Ciência e Saúde Coletiva*, 21(7), 2081–2088. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232015217.28442015>.
23. See for example, The Gazette 3rd August 2017, available via Teesside Live: <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/holme-house-prison-put-complete-13429605>; The Guardian 25th July 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jul/25/prison-officers-off-sick-after-inhaling-spice-drug-haul-holme-house-county-durham>
24. HMP Holme House inspection report (2017) London; Ministry of Justice (p.6). Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/12/Holme-House-Web-2017.pdf> (accessed 3rd August 2020)
25. HMP Holme House inspection report (2020) London; Ministry of Justice (p.7). Available at: <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/06/Holme-House-web-2020.pdf> (accessed 10th July 2020)
26. Data available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hmpps-annual-digest-april-2019-to-march-2020> (accessed 7th August 2020)

### Drug finds in HMP Holme House by (calendar) year

Year	Number of finds (all drugs)	Number of finds (PS) ( per cent of all drugs)
2016	92	33 (36 per cent)
2017	129	48 (37 per cent)
2018	373	160 (43 per cent)
2019	248	62 (25 per cent)
2020*	49	2 (5 per cent)

\*Jan/Feb/March data only available

### Other finds in HMP Holme House by (calendar) year

Year	Alcohol finds (Number)	Mobile phone finds (Number)
2016	5	41
2017	19	72
2018	32	63
2019	120	23
2020*	33	6

\*Jan/Feb/March data only available

One of the methods that the prison service use to gain information on drug use and to deter prisoners from consuming illicit drugs is the targeted or random mandatory drug test (MDT). Testing for PS was not rolled out across the prison estate until October 2016, with the range of PS tests being expanded in June 2017<sup>27</sup>. Again, this data is publicly available and contributes to building a picture of the efficacy of the

Drug Recovery Prison pilot at HMP Holme House. Between 2016 and 2020 (year ending March) the prison service carried out an average of 53,369 MDTs, at HMP Holme House this average was 707 per year. A further breakdown of positive random mandatory drug tests over the last five years at HMP Holme House can be found in the table below.

### HMP Holme House random MDTs, including percentage of positive PS tests.

Year ending March	Number of tests administered	Positive tests all drugs (incl. PS) ( per cent)	Positive tests (PS only) ( per cent)
2016-2017	741	66 (9 per cent) does not include PS	Not available
2017-2018	631	202 (32 per cent)	158 (25 per cent)
2018-2019	736	128 (17.4 per cent)	65 (8.8 per cent)
2019-2020	718	39 (5.4 per cent)	2 (0.3 per cent)

### Prison, Drug Policy and the Drug Recovery Programme

The recent Prison Drug Strategy 2019<sup>28</sup>, acknowledges that reducing supply and demand is not a simple case of abstinence, arguing that the issue

'requires a coordinated effort to [...] encourage people away from drug misuse towards positive and productive activities, and support those requiring treatment'. This builds on previous policy that focused on recovery and harm reduction, with the emphasis on individual journeys, rather than a single approach to drug

27. HMIP Annual Digest 2019-2020 for further details. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/905580/HMPPS-annual-digest-2019-20.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/905580/HMPPS-annual-digest-2019-20.pdf) (accessed 7th August 2020)

28. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) see note 3 (p.1).

rehabilitation<sup>29</sup>. As such, the Prison Drug Strategy<sup>30</sup> has three main objectives for tackling drug issues in prison: restricting supply; reducing demand; and building recovery. The 'restricting supply' objective is most relevant for discussion here, with the three main ways that this is to be tackled set out as:

1. "Minimise the supply of drugs into prisons through guidance, processes and technology.
2. Find drugs that do enter prisons using searching, intelligence and drug testing.
3. Disrupt the trade of drugs within prisons, working with law enforcement, sharing information, and tackling corruption".

These three objectives are focused on five areas, all of which can play a part in the reducing drug use and supply and these are:

- ❑ People: Staff awareness; Staff training
- ❑ Procedural: Searching; Visits; Prisoner reception; Drug testing
- ❑ Physical: Dogs; Perimeters; Technology; Physical security
- ❑ Population: Prison safety; Visible deterrents
- ❑ Partnerships: Law enforcement; Intelligence; Information sharing.

The Prison Drug Strategy<sup>31</sup> states that procedural processes within prison should be 'clear, fair and effective'. This informed the work of the DRP at HMP Holme House prison and included the setting up of a new team, the Drugs and Crime Reduction Unit (DCRU). This team lead procedural security at the prison, working both reactively and proactively to support safety and security<sup>32</sup> with the overall aim of making the prison environment safer and more rehabilitative. Staff in this unit were trained in procedural justice to ensure that they were; 'carrying out the duties of law or authority in a way that is perceived as fair by those [they] are dealing with'<sup>33</sup>. These specially trained officers have the ability to carry out intelligence-led searches and use a range of equipment, including mobile phone detectors, to interrupt the supply of drugs within the prison. In addition to this, increased security measures were implemented as part of the DRP included millimetre wave scanners placed in visits and an I-Scan full body scanner placed in the prisoner reception where prisoners arrive and leave the prison. Finally, as part of the DRP there was an increased and more systematic searching of staff, including limitations on certain items being taken into the prison, increased restrictions on

prisoner post and restriction of personal property, such as clothing, entering the prison.

## Study methodology

The findings presented here are relate to the perceived impact of increased security measures on staff, prisoners, and visitors at Holme House. The study utilised qualitative data, including interviews with staff and visitors, and focus groups with prisoners. The sample was not randomly selected and members of staff from the DRP programme acted as gatekeepers, organising interviews, and promoting the research to participants within the prison. While recognising that this was not ideal, it was necessary given the time constraints of the project. The staff also negotiated access to the visitor centre, where researchers were able to speak to members of the public prior to their visits with friends and relatives within the prison. Data collection was carried out between February and April 2019.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature, ensuring that all participants were asked the same range of questions, with prompts and probes used where appropriate. Interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to one hour. The number of interviews carried out with visitors and staff were as follows: visitor (n=11) and staff (n = 26), staff were from a range of roles involved in the DRP, including the Drug Crime Reduction Unit (DCRU), prison reception staff; managers of the DRP programme, and prison officers working on the residential units. Focus groups were held with groups of four prisoners over three occasions (n=12) and they were asked the same questions as the staff interviews. The DRP staff invited a larger number of prisoners to the focus groups, with 12 agreeing to take part in the day.

The qualitative data from the individual staff interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, and anonymised. The group interviews with prisoners and the visitor interviews were captured in note form by the researchers and then written up in full directly after the data collection had taken place. The transcription of the staff interviews was carried out by an HMPPS approved transcription service. All qualitative data was entered into NVivo, a computer software package that supports the analysis of large amounts of qualitative data, and thematic analysis<sup>34</sup> was undertaken. All data has been treated confidentially and stored securely and

29. Harty, P., Wincup, E., and Wright, N. M. J. (2016) 'The potential of prisons to support drug recovery', *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 16(1), 49-58.

30. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) see note 3 (p.7).

31. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) see note 3 (p.5).

32. Wheatley (2019) see note 5.

33. Mann, R. E. (2019) 'Polite, assertive and sensitive: Procedurally just searching at HMP Holme House', *Prison Service Journal*, March 2019, no. 242, 26-30.

34. Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

anonymously. In order to maintain the anonymity of staff participants, specific roles have not been attributed to comments.

## Findings

Overall, the findings suggest that the participants perceived that since implementation of the new security measures, there has been a decrease in the number of illicit drugs within the prison. This perception by participants in this study is reinforced by the data reported earlier in this paper.

Staff and prisoners who took part in the study were largely in agreement that since the introduction of security measures linked to the DRP, availability of illicit drugs within the prison estate has reduced, thus disrupting the supply. Whilst this reduction has had a positive impact on the prison regime, it was also suggested that a complete cessation of drug use and supply within any prison environment would be almost impossible to achieve:

*Oh, I think it's definitely interrupted it. To a big extent. I think if you speak to the staff, you speak to the men — you're never probably going to be able to close off all avenues — but it's absolutely disrupted it. (Staff)*

*I would say 90 per cent has stopped, but they'll never stop that ten per cent. If you want something, you're going to get it in, they will always find a way [because] it stems from other problems. (Prisoner)*

Restricting the supply of illicit drugs has resulted in a reduction of erratic and violent behaviour, however the perceived 'ten per cent' still finding its way into the prison has the potential to negatively impact the prison regime and the experiences of those living and working within the estate.

As part of the DRP, scanners were installed in prisoner reception where men are administered into and out of the prison and in visits. It could be argued that the presence of the scanners has been most successful in both detection and deterrence of contraband entering the prison. Their presence was the

security measure that all participants (staff, prisoners and visitors) were most aware of — this was due to a number of reasons including the physical presence of the scanners and promotion of their presence.

An I-Scan body scanner with the capacity to detect contraband that has been concealed internally was installed in prisoner reception to search men when they arrive at the prison and, when needed, in response to intelligence-led searches within the prison. Staff were mostly in agreement that this scanner has contributed to a reduction in drugs entering the prison.

*[A]ll the men go through the scanner in reception, it picks up anything they've got on them — and then they go into the security cells. (Staff)*

Scanner technology was attributed to successful detection of contraband, and staff also considered that this scanner located in reception acted as a potential deterrent to those arriving at HMP Holme House from other prisons:

*[W]hen the prisoners are coming from [HMP] Durham, they know now they're going to get scanned so that's, like, you know: 'Am I going to get caught? Am I not going to get caught?' 50/50 chance. (Staff)*

The inspection of the prison carried out in 2020 also highlighted efficacy of the scanners for disrupting the supply of illicit substances and the reduction in positive drug test, but also questioned some of the procedures that were used in conjunction with this. It stated:

*'Intelligence was managed well, and an effective use of technology disrupted the supply of illicit items. Positive drug testing rates had dropped significantly. However, some procedural security measures were disproportionate for a category C prison.*

The prison made excellent use of a body scanner to detect illicit items, but all prisoners were also routinely strip searched without risk assessment.<sup>35</sup>

Whilst the technology was detecting contraband, there was also a suggestion that with further training,

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35 HMP Holme House inspection report (2020) see note 25 (p.14).

the scanner could be more successful with additional staff training:

*I think there's a training need there for [all staff who] are using the scanner [...] those that have been trained have expressed that once they've been trained they know how and what to look for, and it's made a massive difference in using the scanner and actually identifying what's in the human body. (Staff)*

This point was reiterated by prisoners who, whilst agreeing that the scanner in prison reception could act as a deterrent, did question the efficacy of the scanner to locate contraband:

*I don't think it's worked. I know friends with phones inside them and they've come back with them. (Prisoner)*

Millimetre Wave Scanners were trialled in the visiting area; these scanners are similar to those used in airports and detects items that have been concealed under a person's clothing. Whilst these scanners were initially considered a successful deterrent, they were quickly considered unreliable because their main purpose is detecting metal, rather than organic material such as drugs that may be entering the prison estate and so were removed from use:

*[O]ne of the scanners, the millimetre wave scanner, after twelve months of recalibrating it and making improvement in the sensitivity, still wasn't quite correct for a prison environment. It's better for the airports, but certainly not for us. (Staff)*

Staff members noted that although they thought that this particular scanner was not appropriate, there was the need for a scanner within the visit area as it was suggested that this is probably one of the main ways that drugs can enter the prison. One staff participant highlighted plans to get a replacement scanner that would be for the prisoners when they are exiting visits, with the aim of identifying and removing any restricted items.

*[W]e are replacing [the millimetre wave scanner] with a full, a body x ray not a full body one but just a torso scanner... so we will*

*have one in reception and one in the exit to the visits area...we're just trying to stop the supply getting back into the residential units. (Staff)*

Visitors spoken to were largely not concerned about the presence of the scanner, saying that they understood the need for the prison to implement searches such as this. However, several commented on the impact of the scanner on their allotted visiting time. It was suggested that if the prison were to implement new scanners in the visit area, that visitors would prefer to be scanned prior to rather than during visiting times as this could limit potential time spent with family and friends, especially for those who had to travel some distance to the prison:

*It just stalls it, it takes longer to get in. [...] Taking longer to get in means you have less visit time — visiting time should start once you're in the visit room. (Visitor)*

...these scanners are similar to those used in airports and detects items that have been concealed under a person's clothing.

The Drug and Crime Reduction Unit (DCRU) carry out a range of intelligence-led activities based on procedurally just processes, with the aim of restricting, reducing and disrupting illicit drug supply and use within the prison. Intelligence

is gathered from a range of sources and, from the perspective of the staff spoken to, this has made a positive contribution to the aims of the DRP:

*We basically work off intelligence led information coming off the house blocks or staff, other prisoners, members of the public, you know [...]. We work off that and we target the people who have the drugs. We gather as much intelligence as we can, and it seems to work really well. (Staff)*

Alongside intelligence-led searches by the DCRU, routine searches have continued, and the DCRU also use technology that enables them to analyse drug finds and to investigate confiscated mobile phone data. All of these measures are an improvement on past practice and have made a significant contribution to reducing contraband items within the establishment. Furthermore, in several interviews, staff suggested that working in a more targeted way, using intelligence-led interventions, was proving positive for fostering positive relationships with prisoners, resulting in a better, safer environment for everyone:

*We've got a good relationship with the guys [prisoners], that's what we go around and do, a lot of cell searching on an intel base, we don't go 'willy nilly'. (Staff)*

As well as searches of prisoners, staff are now subject to more stringent and systematic searches as they enter and leave the prison. Although for some this was frustrating due to the time it could sometimes take to get into and out of work (similar to comments made by visitors), overall, this was seen by all those who were interviewed as a positive procedural process. The necessity of this was also highlighted, with some staff acknowledging that a small number of staff could be involved in bring in restricted items, including drugs.

Staff members commented that the searching of staff on a regular basis has acted as a deterrent and while they acknowledged that during busy times you might not be searched, the chance that you could be is enough to deter staff:

*[I]f there is corruption there, one of the ways to help reduce it or stop it, is to put that search in place because [...] even the random side of things, puts that doubt into their head as to whether they will get searched or not. So it's a deterrent, a massive deterrent (Staff).*

Staff also discussed the use of dogs, and commented that these should be used more routinely, but understood that this was often not possible due to the dogs not being deployed solely at Holme House. The use of sniffer dogs for alerting staff to drugs was discussed by some of the visitors, but because they had noticed that the dogs were not used consistently, they questioned the efficacy of this approach:

*They do have sniffer dogs occasionally when you're waiting in the queue but it's not all the time (Visitor).*

*Well it's a bit of a joke really because they use the dogs but then if it gets busy and it's getting late, they stop using the dogs halfway through (Visitor).*

Other changes in procedural practices include the photocopying of mail (prisoners receive the photocopy

rather than the original) and limiting personal belongings that prisoners are allowed to bring into the prison. Due to the practice of impregnating paper with NPS, the procedure of photocopying mail was considered by those who took part in the study, to be one of the main ways of disrupting the supply of this substance entering the prison:

*I think, because they've started photocopying the mail, you're not getting the problems with the spice coming in. (Staff)*

*They've stopped 90 per cent coming through, by photocopying letters etc., but they will never stop all of it. That 90 per cent has made a difference. (Prisoner)*

Prisoners no longer receive original cards, pictures and photographs sent to them by family and friends — this was described by the prisoners spoken to as limiting access to family and friends.

Prisoners compared their experiences in HMP Holme House with that of other prisons and the current levels of security. The deterrents discussed above — the body scanner in prisoner reception and the photocopying of mail — were identified as the two major differences in relation to security; they then attributed these measures to contributing to the reduction in the supply of drugs in HMP Holme House.

Despite the acknowledgement that the photocopying of mail had restricted the drug supply, the prisoners also discussed the negative impact of this new security measure on their daily lives. Prisoners no longer receive original cards, pictures and photographs sent to them by family and friends — this was described by the prisoners spoken to as limiting access to family and friends, particularly with regard to cards and pictures that children may have made. Photocopying was also raised as an issue by visitors to the prison, not only due to lack of original correspondence, and the cost of alternatives, such as using an online card service (e.g. moonpig.com, funky pigeon.com) where the expense of using these services can be difficult for families on limited budgets, but also in relation to the time-lag of writing and prisoners receiving the post, and for one visitor, this has resulted in her stopping writing:

*Letters have to be photocopied and he gets the photocopy but that can take three weeks, so I don't bother. It's not right. (Visitor)*

As described in the findings, the reduction in personal belongings appeared to be a positive step in reducing supply of drugs, visitors raised concern about their friend or family member's access to clean clothes. The men are only able to purchase goods through the approved supplier, but this can be prohibitively expensive for some and could have a negative impact on the person's well-being and self-esteem.

## Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the new security measures that have been implemented since the establishment of the DRP are perceived to have been successful in reducing the quantities of illicit drugs entering the prison, resulting in a perceived decline in personal risk. This perception is supported by the data from the Ministry of Justice that clearly demonstrates a reduction in finds, and a reduction in positive MDT's. This is a crucial step in HMP Holme House's endeavour to bring about a positive change in the prison environment in order to promote a recovery-focused approach to drug rehabilitation. As positive as these results are the 2020 HM Inspectorate report<sup>36</sup> noted how the reduction in drug finds, had also coincided with an increase in finds of illicit alcohol within the prison.

In 2019 the Government announced £100m to increase security in prisons including a number of measures that have been used in HMP Holme House.<sup>37</sup> In 2020 HM Inspectorate<sup>38</sup> stated that the funding had been used effectively to improve the prisoner's outcomes and this included the use of searching, technology and control of goods coming in. However, whilst it appeared that the technology was successful in detecting contraband, there was also a suggestion by participants, particularly staff, that further training on staff awareness and use of the scanner could result in more contraband being found. This supports the suggestion in the Prison Drug Strategy (2019)<sup>39</sup> that staff awareness and staff training both contribute to restricting drug supplies entering the prison.

It is important to state that staff training should go further than the use of the security systems and needs to engage with the concept of procedural justice. As described by Mann<sup>40</sup>, specialist staff training in procedurally justice processes can help foster relationships and garner understanding between staff and prisoners. From the findings it was clear that the

staff on the DCRU team were selected for these roles based on previous experience and have received the specialist training.

Staff explained that these searches are only carried out based on intelligence and not, as one participant phrased it 'willy nilly'. Whilst this may be the case, these searches can cause tensions as the perception from some of the men was that sometimes individuals are targeted based on hearsay, rather than legitimate authority based on intelligence. Striking the balance between security and decency is not easy and a lack of information about the role of the DCRU and how it operates can result in the men feeling victimised. Cell searches and searching of individuals, for whatever reason, can raise tensions but sharing information clearly and regularly about the process of searching individuals and cells, could reduce some of the negative perceptions from prisoners.

## Conclusions

The study was designed to explore the perception of the men, staff and visitors on the use of increased security measures within the DRP and to understand key stakeholder views about how these have succeeded in the aim to reduce the drug supply into the prison. The study findings revealed that the participants strongly perceived that the changes in security measures had led to a decrease in the availability of drugs within the prison, which in turn has led to a more positive environment, with fewer instances of disruption to the regime. Having an environment that has less erratic and violent behaviour will hopefully open up more opportunities to implement the third element of the Prison Drug Strategy<sup>41</sup>, building an environment that supports and fosters recovery. Overall, the presence of the scanners and the photocopying of mail appears to be the most successful in both detection and deterrence of contraband entering the prison, however this was not always well received. The men and their visitors appeared to understand the need for these security measures, however they discussed ways that these can impact negatively on their daily lives. In conclusion, the new security measures implemented as part of the Drug Recovery Prison appear to have had a positive impact in the prison and this is evident in both the Ministry of Justice statistical information and the qualitative data from this study.

Acknowledgements<sup>42</sup>

36. HMP Holme House inspection report (2020) see note 25.

37. Ministry of Justice (2019) £100 million crackdown on crime in prison. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/100-million-crackdown-on-crime-in-prison>.

38. HMP Holme House inspection report (2020) see note 25.

39. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) see note 3.

40. Mann (2019) see note 33.

41. HM Prison and Probation Service (2019) see note 3.

42. Thank you to Mike Wheatley and Rachel Moore for facilitating this study.