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The illicit economy in prisons:

A new measure of biddability (BIDSCALE) to predict involvement in prison illicit economy and its consequences.

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Introduction

In the prison context, the Illicit Economy (IE) refers to trade that is forbidden by law or by prison rules which mostly includes either goods ranging from canteen items to classified drugs, New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), prescribed medications, alcohol and mobile phones or services such as money lending and gambling. Although the IE may have some positive impact on prison life by engaging prisoners in an activity that rewards the seller and meets a buyer's need, or by filling idle hours and keeping prisoners calm, reports suggest that the IE can lead to debt, intimidation, violence and disruptive behaviour.^{1,2,3,4,5} This study explored prisoners' experiences of the illicit economy (IE) and developed a new measure of biddability to predict involvement in the IE; the BIDSCALE.

The IE in prisons has been described as a system of supply and demand in line with other legal economies. The supply characteristics of the IE are well understood and routes of supply such as 'over the wall' packages, staff and prison visits have been documented as a security challenge for the prison service for many years.^{6,7} Further, the motivations of those engaged in securing supplies and in selling the illicit goods are typically straightforward,

relating to making money or a need to enhance their status or influence.⁸ To date, the demand side of equation has been less documented.

One increasing problem is the use of NPS which have been reported as more readily and cheaply available and as incurring lower risk and currently evading detection.⁹ Even though NPS were made illegal in May 2016 by the Psychoactive Substances Act, they have increasingly become an integral part of the IE and their supply has increased. Because UK prisons are cashless and prisoner earning capacity through work is limited, the IE, most recently underpinned by NPS, has resulted in one of the key problems in contemporary prisons; namely debt.

Recent reports indicate that over one in three prisoners currently has or has had debt issues due to spending beyond their means, particularly on the IE.^{10,11} Debt is a useful window into the workings of the IE and can be understood within the context of research on consumer debt, defined as 'unplanned and unintended' to distinguish it from credit, which is planned and intended.¹² Some studies have also highlighted the role of psychological issues that illustrate how buying behaviour can deviate from rational choice. For example, Ottovani and Vandone¹³ described a role for instant gratification in 'buy now, pay later' decisions which bring cost in the future. Further, Martin and

1. NOMS (2015). National Offender Management Service Annual Report and Accounts 2014–15. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/434548/NOMS_AR14_15_report_accounts_Final_WEB.pdf.
2. Ward, V. (2015). Legal highs blamed for increasing levels of violence in prisons. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11670937/Legal-highs-blamed-for-increasing-levels-of-violence-in-prisons.html>.
3. Morris, N. (2015). Shocking new figures show huge rise in prison violence, suicide and self-harm. Retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/shocking-new-figures-show-huge-rise-in-prison-violence-suicide-and-selfharm-10011833.html>.
4. Shaw, D. (2015). Gangs and drugs fuelling upsurge in prison violence. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30783075>.
5. Gooch, K., & Treadwell, J. (2015). Preventing and reducing prison bullying. *Prison Service Journal*, 221; 25–29.
6. Crewe, B. (2005). Prisoner society in the era of hard drugs. *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 7(4), pps. 457–481.
7. Faure Walker, D. (2015). The informal economy in prisons. *Criminal Justice Matters*, Vol. 99, pps. 18–19.
8. Crewe, B. (2005). see n.6.
9. Faure Walker, D. (2015). See n.7.
10. Hammill, A. & Newby, R. (2015). The illicit economy, debt and prison violence: Is prisoner debt inevitable? *Prison Service Journal*, No. 221, pps. 30–35.
11. Picksley, M. & Midgley, V. (2014). An exploration of prisoners' perceptions of debt acquired between prisoners at HMP & YO1 Moorland. *Report by Yorkshire & Humberside Psychological Services*, pps. 1–30. Ministry of Justice, London.
12. Webley, P. & Nyhus, E. (2001). Lifestyle and dispositional routes into problem debt. *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 92(3), pps. 423–446.
13. Ottaviani, C. & Vandone, D. (2011). Impulsivity and household indebtedness: Evidence from real life. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol 32, pps. 754–761.

Potts¹⁴ reported that impulsive individuals are biased towards immediate rewards and pay less attention to the future negative consequences of their choices and Gathergood¹⁵ similarly concluded that a lack of self-control was associated with high debt burdens. In line with this, Lea, Mewse and Wrapson,¹⁶ addressed the problem of 'crisis debt' (where there was no prospect of paying off or even reducing debt) and argued that severe debtors were chronically short of money, had troubled life histories and particular behavioural and psychological features, such as feeling the stigma of debt so keenly that they spent to cover up the issue. These characteristics are very common among people who have committed a crime and indeed are seen as key to explaining criminal behaviour.¹⁷ To date, however, little research exists on the factors that may make prisoners more susceptible to debt through the IE.

Debt is not the only consequence of the IE and recent concerns have focused on the link between the IE and violence.^{18, 19} For example, Edgar, O'Donnell and Martin²⁰ concluded that trading within the IE was a source of victimisation that, in turn, could lead to violence and Ireland²¹ and Gooch and Treadwell²² similarly argued that bullying, particularly within the context of the IE, may progress to violence between prisoners.

In summary, concerns have been expressed about recent increases in the IE in the context of NPS, debt and subsequent violence. The present study focused on the demand side of the equation with a particular emphasis on prisoners' experiences of the IE and its consequences. The study also explored whether particular prisoners are more susceptible to both the IE and its consequences. To this end the notion of 'biddability' was developed to reflect those prisoners who are eager to please, easily led astray,

impulsive or lacking self-control in line with research on consumer debt. This study therefore utilized two stages with a mixed methods approach. The initial qualitative stage involved an exploration of prisoners' experiences of the IE and the impact of the IE on risky behaviours. The subsequent quantitative stage evaluated whether susceptibility to the IE could be assessed using a new measure of biddability (BIDSCALE), whether this new measure had good psychometric properties and whether biddability was associated with risky behaviours such as substance use, debt and violence. Both stages took place in four UK adult male prisons across England.

Stage 1: Qualitative study to explore how prisoners experience the IE

Method

Aim

To explore prisoners' experiences of and involvement in the IE.

Design

A qualitative design with in-depth, semi-structured interviews analysed using content analysis.

Sample

Seventy-one male prisoners were interviewed from four prisons across England. Their mean age was 33 years, their mean sentence length was eight years and on

average they had attended four prisons. Based on discussion with Governors and their teams, sampling was done in two ways: i) project posters were displayed on the prison wings and wing officers were asked to suggest those who might participate (n=37); and ii) a list of both perpetrators and victims in recent incidents reported on the prison's Incident Reporting System (IRS) as debt-related was used to approach individuals (n=34). This sampling approach aimed to access prisoners with a range of knowledge of IE and debt.

Debt is not the only consequence of the IE and recent concerns have focused on the link between the IE and violence.

14. Martin, L. & Potts, G. (2009). Impulsivity in decision-making: An event-related potential investigation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 46, pps. 303–308.
15. Gathergood, J. (2011). Self-control, financial literacy and consumer over-indebtedness. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, Vol. 33, pps. 590–602.
16. Lea, S., Mewse, A. & Wrapson, W. (2012). The psychology of debt in poor households in Britain. In *A Debtor World: Inter-disciplinary Perspectives on Debt*, (Eds. Brubaker, R., Lawless, R & Tabb, C.), pps. 151–8.
17. Andrews, D. & Bonta, J. (2010). The Major Risk/Need Factors of Criminal Conduct. *The psychology of criminal conduct*, 5th Edition, pps. 157–294. LexisNexis, New Jersey, USA.
18. NOMS (2015). see n.1.
19. Gooch & Treadwell (2015). see n.5.
20. Edgar, K., O'Donnell, I. & Martin, C. (2003). The extent and nature of victimisation. In *Prison Violence: The dynamics of conflict, fear and power*. Willan Publishing, UK.
21. Ireland, J. (2013). Prison bullying and fear: Can fear assist with explanations of victim responses? In *Bullying among prisoners: Innovations in theory and research* (Ireland, J., Ed.), pps. 229–149. Willan Publishing, UK.
22. Gooch & Treadwell (2015) see n.5.

Procedure

Prisoners were interviewed in settings deemed safe and conducive to frank dialogue for both parties including a room in the education wing or library, a wing office or the prisoner's cell. The first fourteen interviews were not recorded, pending approval from the prisons to do so. The remaining fifty-seven interviews were recorded following consent by the prison and the prisoner. Most interviews took about thirty minutes.

The interview schedule

Questions covered interviewees' participation in the IE (or that of others), their motivations, their perception of risk and the consequences of their own and others' behaviour.

Data analysis

Recorded interviews were transcribed by a professional legal service. The transcripts, along with interview notes from the fourteen unrecorded interviews, were analysed using content analysis.²³ First, data was coded for the subsequent quantitative analysis (Stage 2) to describe dichotomous risk behaviours in relation to the IE that were coded as 'present' or 'absent'. Next a series of emergent themes were identified, coded for their frequency and illustrated with exemplar quotes.

Results

Risk behaviours

The interviews were analysed to generate dichotomous outcomes ('present' or 'absent') in terms of the impact of the IE. These are summarised in Table 1.

Outcome or risk behaviour	Prison A	Prison B	Prison C	Prison D	Overall n/%
Ever used substances? (1,4)	(n=50) 69%	(n=61) 86%	(n=52) 73%	(n=59) 83%	(n=56) 79%
Participates in IE? (3)	(n=36) 50%	(n=42) 59%	(n=48) 67%	(n=56) 78%	(n=45) 63%
Impacted by IE? (2)	(n=27) 38%	(n=45) 64%	(n=38) 53%	(n=43) 61%	(n=39) 55%
Isolated?	(n=27) 38%	(n=55) 77%	(n=28) 40%	(n=28) 39%	(n=36) 51%
Tried NPS?	(n=27) 38%	(n=36) 50%	(n=33) 47%	(n=40) 56%	(n=34) 48%
Trades? (5)	(n=27) 38%	(n=19) 27%	(n=38) 53%	(n=31) 44%	(n=28) 39%
Has debt (now or past)?	(n=13) 19%	(n=32) 45%	(n=14) 20%	(n=31) 44%	(n=24) 34%

Notes:

Most frequently mentioned: cannabis (n=35), heroin (n=19) and cocaine (n=17)

Either stated in response to a direct question or inferred from the interviewee account

Meaning buys, sells or both versus does not participate. Traded items most frequently mentioned: tobacco (n=28), NPS (n=28) and medications (n=12)

Of these, 38% (n=30) indicated they were still using substances

Trades means sells or both sells and buys (versus buys only or does not participate).

The majority of prisoners had used substances ever and a half had tried NPS; two thirds had participated in the IE directly and about a half said that they felt impacted upon by the IE. Over a third had traded on the IE and reported having debt. There were no differences between the four prisons (P values > 0.05).

Emergent themes

The content analysis highlighted four themes. These are described below. Illustrative quotes from the prisoner interviews are given in Table 2.

Theme	Illustrative quote	Mentions
The IE is inevitable and pervasive	'People do it [trade] in prison. It's just a way of life. It passes the time.' (I-30) 'Like they say, boys will be boys ... the more you tell someone not to do something, sometimes the more they do it.' (I-41) Trading ... I think it's fundamental to prison life, innit? It's absolutely fundamental. (1-21)	50/71
Trading NPS is perceived as low risk	'... the only reason I would take 'mamba' [NPS] is because it doesn't show on your piss test. I don't want cannabis because it's too much risk.' (I-29) 'Because legal highs are legal, people will bring them for ... for ... for almost anyone ... and even staff can be wrapped round fingers because it's legal.' (I-68) 'There's too many psychedelic drugs in the system for anyone to understand what the f--s going on.' (I-45)	33/71
NPS use is problematic	'I lit it up [a spliff containing NPS] and then it just went boof and I thought what the f ... hell's just hit me here? Me heart rate went up... then I got this like paranoid feeling that everyone ... were on me... and all the, like, walls closed in on me.' (I-47) 'It's quite an intense buzz. And it's ... it's like a ... like a mind control buzz. It can send you paranoid within seconds. And it can send you angry in seconds. People are fitting off it ...' (I-46). 'I just got in deeper and deeper and I got to the point where, like, I just wanted it [NPS]. I didn't care about the consequences. I just wanted it.' (I-50). 'Erm ... I've seen people smoke 'spice' and end up doing things you would never, ever put them down as doing. Erm ... hurting themselves, hurting other people, smashing up their cell.' (I-58).	39/71
Debt leads to isolation, violence and transfers	'There's certain people that do it [get into debt] on purpose, certain people that do not mind getting a thumping ...' (I-54) 'Trading's part of the game. Yeah, but most people are just doing that then moving wing, moving jail ... because you've done it everywhere.' (I-62) 'Yeah, 95 per cent of people run ... transfer [wing], another jail, do the same again.' (I-27) 'We had a prisoner, he ... he moved every wing. He just debted himself up continuous. Now, he's just passing the problem around.' (I-5)	24/71

Note: Annotation (I-xx) refers to interviewees in chronological order of interview 1-71.

23. Hsieh, H. & Shannon, S. (2005). Three approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 15(9), pps. 1277-88.

Theme 1: The IE is inevitable and pervasive.

The IE was seen as inevitable and described as 'fundamental', 'a way of life' and 'it passes the time'. It was seen as an issue and used as a way to manage boredom and keep the prisoners occupied.

Theme 2: Trading NPS is perceived as low risk.

Almost half of interviewees claimed that NPS were the most frequently traded items which were seen as readily available, not detectable in mandatory drug tests (MDT) and a relatively low risk activity (compared with in cannabis or heroin). This helps to explain the high profile of NPS in the IE.

Theme 3: NPS use is problematic.

The majority stated that they had used substances in the past or now. The majority felt that NPS were problematic and almost half admitted to using NPS now or having tried it (notably 'spice' or 'black mamba') at least once. Diverse descriptions were offered of personal experience of 'spice' and many described the detrimental impact of 'spice' on the mental and physical health and interactions with others.

Theme 4: Debt leads to isolation, violence and transfers.

A third acknowledged that they had current or past debt issues. The escalation path for non-payment included intimidation and threats of violence whilst at times there was a direct move to violence (fight or assault). Those in debt sometime sought 'help' from staff, usually requesting a wing transfer or a transfer away from the prison (to escape the debt), citing the prison's obligation to keep them safe. Sometimes the prisoner was then moved to a segregation unit or vulnerable prisoners' wing (if there was one). If the prisoner was not moved then they sometimes opted for self-isolation in their cell. Alternatively some described raising the stakes for example by assaulting a member of staff, self-harming or setting a fire in their cell; all of which aimed to enable the prisoner to 'escape' the debt.

Stage 2: The development and validation of a new measure of prisoner biddability and its role in predicting risk behaviours

Method

Aim

This stage aimed to develop and validate a new measure of prisoner biddability and to evaluate the role of biddability in predicting the risk behaviours identified from stage 1.

Method

The decision to become involved in the IE is influenced by a number of factors which may either be core to the individual such as risk perception, personality, needs and wants or a product of the prison environment including, prison culture, peer pressure, availability or boredom. Prisoners may also be influenced by whether or not they are biddable (previously defined as being amenable, co-operative, susceptible, malleable, persuadable, submissive, wanting to be liked, yielding). Biddability might therefore predict involvement in the IE and the impact of the IE on the individual.

Design

The initial questionnaire comprised seventeen questions calling for responses on a scale 1–10. Following psychometric analysis, items were rejected and a final scale was created. The role of the subscales of biddability in predicting the dichotomous risk behaviours with the IE using data from Stage 1 was then evaluated.

Sample

Questionnaires were completed by all participants (n=71) in Stage 1 of the study.

Developing the measure

The questions were derived following initial conversations with prison staff, from the literature and compiled from a search to capture the synonyms and antonyms most frequently used for the word 'biddable'. The questionnaire was presented at the conclusion of Stage 1 interviews. Participants could choose self-completion or to have the researchers deliver the questionnaire verbally. All chose the latter approach. Prompts and clarification were offered when required although this occurred very rarely. The questions were posed in a way that high biddability was either scored 1 (questions 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16) or 10 (questions 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17) to balance the order.

Data analysis

Items were re-coded so that a higher score reflected greater biddability. First, the psychometric properties of the scale were evaluated using principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure to verify sampling adequacy. Eigen values exceeding 1 were used as the cut-off for inclusion with a minimum of three items per factor and a factor loading greater than 0.4. Cronbach's alphas (α) were calculated on the total scale and sub-scales to test for reliability. Second, participants were coded as having either high or low biddability scores and the role of biddability in predicting risk behaviours was assessed using Chi-square (χ^2) tests and Cramer's V effect sizes.

Participants
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Results

The psychometric properties of the new scale

All 71 participants completed the biddability questionnaire. The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO = 0.75). A principal axis factor analysis was conducted on the 17 items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin). Five factors had eigen values > 1 and together explained 63.1 per cent of the variance. The scree plot was ambiguous and showed inflexions that could justify retaining between three and five factors. Two factors had less than three items. The factor analysis was rerun to assess the options for the most parsimonious description of the observed correlations in the data. This iterative process yielded a principal axis factor analysis conducted on 11 items with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) and KMO = 0.74. The resulting solution had three factors with eigen values > 1, together explaining 61.1 per cent of the variance, each with more than 3 items. Table 3 shows the factor loadings after rotation of this 11-item solution.

Table 3: Factor loadings for 11 item biddability questionnaire (n=71)

Rotated factor loadings			
Item (question as asked)	1. Assertiveness	2. Compliance	3. Willpower
Do you think you're pretty tough or likely to be intimidated when dealing with an aggressive person?	.63	.04	.11
Would your mates describe you as assertive or submissive?	.63	.10	.15
When you're with a group, do you go your own way or do you try to fit in?	.62	-.06	-.08
Do you like to please people even if they behave badly or do you pull them up?	.54	.05	.10
Do you break rules you don't like or do you obey anyway?	-.14	.72	-.01
Generally, do you follow the rules or make up your own?	-.02	.72	-.01
Does breaking rules make you feel nervous or does it give you a rush?	.16	.65	-.20
Do you lead by example or are you more likely to follow?	.18	.02	.64
If someone's trying to sell you something you really don't want, do you buy it anyway or say no thanks?	-.11	.02	.64
Would you say you're easily led astray or you're not open to being influenced?	.28	-.08	.59
If someone's trying to force something on you, do you go along with things or do you resist?	.15	.07	.56
Eigenvalues	3.49	1.92	1.31
% Variance	31.71	17.45	11.93
Cronbach's α	.73	.73	.76

Note: Factor loadings >0.40 are highlighted in bold.

These three factors were labelled as follows: i) 'assertiveness'; ii) 'compliance'; iii) 'willpower'. The reliability of the scale was good: total scale (11 items: $\alpha=0.76$); assertiveness (4 items: $\alpha=0.73$); compliance (3 items: $\alpha=0.73$) and willpower (4 items: $\alpha=0.76$). A higher total score reflected greater compliance and lower levels of assertiveness and willpower. The final questionnaire is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: The final Biddability Questionnaire (BIDSCALE)

Would you say you're easily led astray or you're not open to being influenced? (e.g. have a lark when you know it's not allowed — W)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you think you're pretty tough or likely to be intimidated when dealing with an aggressive person? (e.g. you're told to pay more than you owe, do you refuse or give in — A)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you like to please people even if they behave badly or do you pull them up? (A)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Generally, do you follow the rules or make up your own? (C)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Would your mates describe you as assertive or submissive?(A)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
If someone's trying to force something on you, do you go along with things or do you resist? (W)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Does breaking the rules make you feel nervous or give you a rush? (C)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you like to lead by example or are you more likely to follow? (W)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Do you break rules you don't like or do you obey anyway? (C)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
If someone's trying to sell you something you don't really want, do you buy it anyway or say 'No thanks'? (W)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
When you're with a group, do you go your own way or try fit in? (A)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A-Assertive (4 items); C-Compliance (3 items); W-Willpower (4 items).

The role of BIDSCALE in predicting risk behaviours.

The dichotomous risk behaviours from stage 1 are shown in Table 4. The final BIDSCALE consisted of 11 items rated on a scale 1–10. The total maximum score was 110. Total biddability scores were used to classify participants as either high in biddability (score >50; n=20, mean=62.5; SD=12.4) or low in biddability (score <33; n=20; mean=24.7; SD=5.1). A χ^2 test was used to evaluate the association between biddability and each risk behaviour.

The results are shown in shown in Table 5.

Table 5: The role of BIDSCALE in predicting risk behaviours (n=40)				
Risk behaviour or outcome 'present'	χ^2 (df = 1)	P value	Cramer's V	Effect size
Isolated?	14.40	<.001	0.63	Large
Trades?	9.23	0.002	0.48	Med-large
Has debt (now or past)?	8.64	0.003	0.47	Med-large
Tried NPS?	6.47	0.011	0.40	Medium
Impacted by IE?	5.01	0.025	0.35	Medium
Participates in IE?	1.76	0.185	0.21	—
Ever used substances?	1.15	0.284	0.13	—

The results showed that high biddability predicted prisoners being isolated (large effect size), being involved in IE trading and getting into debt (medium-large effect sizes) as well as having tried NPS and being impacted by the IE (medium effect sizes). No effect was found for participation in the IE or for substance use ever.

Discussion

The present study explored prisoners' experiences of the IE, the role of NPS and their relationship to outcomes such as debt and violence. The results from the qualitative stage showed that active participation in the IE was very common and was seen as an inevitable and fundamental part of prison life which helped to pass the time and ease boredom. Further, NPS were seen as core to the IE as they were low risk and hard to detect but prisoners also described them as problematic due to their impact of physical and mental health and the ways in which prisoners interacted with each other. This reflects recent concerns reported by NOMS²⁴ and the media^{25, 26} and supports the notion that the IE in prisons may be changing due to new influences. Furthermore, prisoners described how debts incurred

from the IE could lead to prison transfers and violence which is in line with reports in the media²⁷ and provide some evidence for recent NPS amnesties which have been implemented as a means to tackle the surge of violence in prisons.²⁸ They also support concerns about the IE expressed by NOMS²⁹ and the work of Gooch and Treadwell³⁰ who highlighted the links between the IE, bullying and victimisation.

The study also developed a new measure of biddability to reflect vulnerability to the IE and to evaluate whether this new scale was associated with involvement in IE and its consequences. The results showed that the 11-item BIDSCALE was easy to administer in a prison setting, had good psychometric properties and consisted of three reliable subscales: 'assertiveness', 'compliance' and 'willpower'. In addition, the total biddability score was significantly associated with trading in the IE and being in debt. Research exploring consumer debt in the non-prison environment highlights a role for a number of factors including psychological issues such as impulsivity and lack of self-control.^{31, 32} The results from the present study indicate that a comparable construct conceptualised as biddability to reflect the lack of assertiveness and willpower and a high sense of compliance may be similarly predictive of debt in prisoners. Furthermore, the new BIDSCALE was also associated with the negative consequences of the IE such as trying NPS and becoming isolated.

The results from the present study therefore indicate that the IE is an integral part of prison life and that prisoners trade, particularly for and with NPS, because it takes up time and they are bored and because NPS are considered low risk and cannot be detected. The results further indicate that the IE can lead to debt, violence and transfers and that trying NPS, trading, isolation and debt can be predicted by BIDSCALE. For the IE to change, these factors therefore need to be addressed. This could involve improved educational and physical activities for prisoners to alleviate boredom, greater education concerning the risks associated with NPS, the wider use of body scanners, mobile signal blocking equipment and drug testing procedures to pick up the supply and use of NPS. Each of these, however, involves financial investment into prisons for increased staffing and equipment, a challenge in times of austerity and a

24. NOMS (2015). see n. 1.

25. Ward (2015). see n. 1.

26. Morris (2015). see n. 3.

27. Shaw (2015). see n. 4.

28. Doward, J. (2015). 'Spice' amnesty to tackle violence epidemic in prisons. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/aug/29/prison-amnesty-spice-drugs>.

29. See n. 1.

30. See n. 5.

31. Martin & Potts (2009). see n.14.

32. Gathergood (2011). see n. 15.

longer term solution. These solutions also involve a whole prison approach together with clear national and institutional strategies as argued by Gooch and Treadwell³³ who highlight how the IE is a complex and multifactorial problem. Perhaps, however, in addition to trying to change the IE itself, in the shorter term, efforts could also be made to limit the consequences of the IE. In line with this, prisoners could be helped to avoid or manage their debt differently by discussing it openly with prison officers rather than just transferring their problems to another wing; they could be educated explicitly about the problems with the IE, the likelihood of debt and the availability of NPS in prisons on entering prison; and they could be screened on entry for the likelihood that they will become involved in the IE and suffer deleterious consequences. And the 11 item BIDSCALE developed in the present study could be used to help identify and support those prisoners most at risk from the IE and most likely to suffer its consequences. Accordingly, such a screening tool could be used with newly arrived prisoners, alongside existing tools as a means to identify those most likely to trade in the IE, most likely to try NPS and most likely to incur the negative consequences of the IE such as debt as a

means to offer support prior to the onset of any problems to those identified as most vulnerable. This is not to stigmatise such prisoners per se, nor to consider problems of the IE as being unrelated to the prison environment but to simply target limited resources of support to those prisoners in most need.

To conclude, the IE in prisons is perceived as inevitable and pervasive and as a means to pass the time. NPS have recently become a central part of the IE but impact on prisoners physical and mental health and ability to engage with others. Further, the IE can lead to debt which may result in transfers and/or violence. Participation in the IE and resulting debt and isolation are common but not universal and can be predicted by the new Biddability Scale (BIDSCALE) that was shown to have good psychometric properties and to consist of three subscales relating to assertiveness, compliance and willpower. It is argued that in the longer term the IE needs to be changed through policy and practice. In the shorter term, however, it is suggested that prisoners could be educated about the risks of both IE and NPS on arrival into prison and that the BIDSCALE could be used to identify, monitor and support those individuals most at risk of the detrimental consequences of the IE.

33. Gooch & Treadwell (2015). see n. 5.