

# USER VOICE

ONLY OFFENDERS CAN STOP RE-OFFENDING

CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
DRUG RELATED  
INTERVENTIONS IN  
PRISON. AN INSIDER  
PERSPECTIVE

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# USER VOICE.

*PEOPLE MAKING  
POLICY DON'T  
UNDERSTAND THE  
LIVED REALITY*

- **User led:**
  - **85%** of staff have **been in prison or on probation.**
  - Staff with **lived experience** working in prison **with keys**
- Committed to making the criminal justice system work for everyone, through:
  - **Councils:** elected group of people in prison or on probation.
  - **Consultations:** gives policy-makers and service providers insight directly from service users.
- After 10 years now **widely accepted** that **service users must be involved.**

# AN ESCALATING PROBLEM.

**Pre-2010**  
cannabis  
drug of  
choice

**2010**  
mandatory  
drug testing  
(MDT) =  
spike in  
heroin use

**2012** through  
Councils  
heard spice  
use epidemic

**2012 – 2016**  
no  
government  
response to  
spice

**2016** prisons in  
crisis, eg  
highest number  
of ambulance  
call outs on  
record

**2016**  
User Voice  
Spice report

# SPICE: THE BIRD KILLER (2016)

684 prisoners surveyed, 120 focus group participants, in 9 prisons

## 1. Reasons for spice use:

- Existing habit
- Self medication
- Coping strategy
- Boredom
- Enjoyment

## 3. Why in 2016:

- £900m cuts & 700 fewer prison officers
- Less time outside cell
- Less day release
- Less therapeutic interventions
- Highest imprisonment rates in W. Europe

## 2. Negative consequences:

- Debt 77%
- Addiction 73%
- Violence 62%
- Mental health issues 60%
- Bullying 61%

## 4. Why the most popular drug:

- 1/3 used spice in last month
- Undetected by drug tests
- Availability
- Numbs the mind
- Like cannabis

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE?

- Prisoners using **spice** as it is mostly **not detectable**, positive MDTs fallen 9% from 1998/99 (18%) to 2016/17 (9%).
- **No spice** (or novel psychoactive substance) specific **interventions** have been implemented.
- 2016 to 2018 prisons go **smoke free**
- 2018 Prisons Minister announces 10 priority prisons with **£10m funding to improve security** and so reduce drugs and violence levels.

# THE WIDER ISSUES: VIOLENCE, DEBT & BULLYING

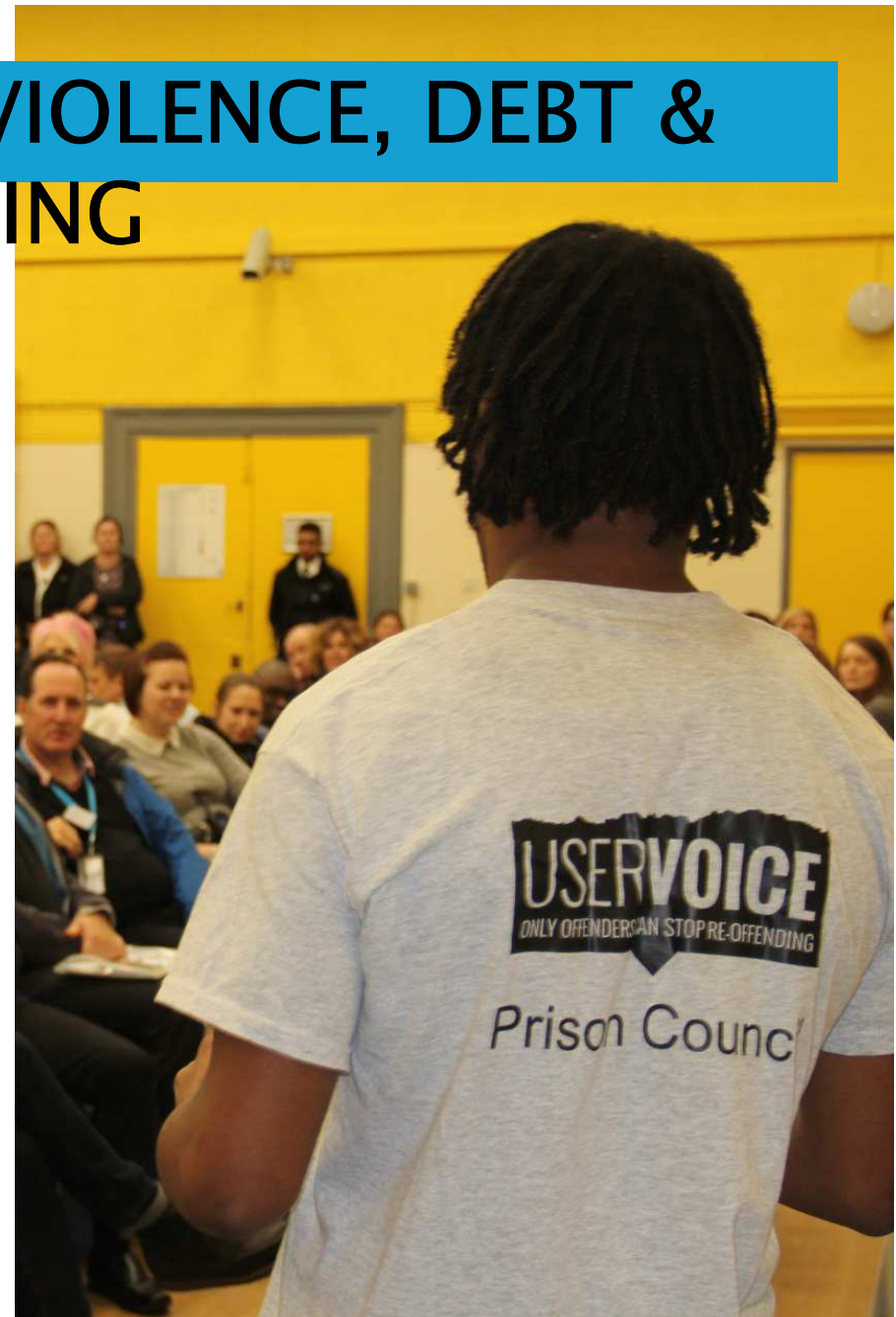
User Voice was commissioned to undertake (unreleased) prisoner consultations on these big initiatives:

- Impact of **smoke free** prisons (for NHS England)
- **10 priority prisons** (for Ministry of Justice)

Engaged with over **1,000 prisoners**.

All raised the **unintended negative consequences** of **poorly designed policy** without the insight of the end user:

- **Violence**
- **Debt**
- **Bullying**



# SMOKE FREE PRISONS: POORLY DESIGNED POLICY

- Smoke free prisons **have not made prisons healthier** environments.
- **76%** said they would **smoke on release**.
- The increase of debt, violence, bullying and drug use associated with the move to smoke free were all **predicted by prisoners** themselves in earlier consultations conducted by User Voice.
- Why were smoke free prisons prioritised over addressing violence, substance misuse and bullying. In fact these were **made worse** by prisons going smoke free.
- So this is an example of **poorly designed policy** without the insight of prisoners from the beginning.

# SMOKE FREE PRISONS: UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE S

- User Voice engaged **over 650 prisoners** across 8 prisons
- There we 4 common unintended consequences:
  1. **Debt & violence (19%)**: tobacco now around £200 which is increasing debt and adding to the levels of violence.
  2. **Pure Spice (16%)**: Spice use has become more dangerous as it is now being consumed on its own without tobacco.
  3. **NRT abuse (12%)**: prisoners are smoking teabags mixed with the nicotine scraped off patches to replicate the sensation of smoking tobacco.
  4. **Stress (21%)**: rising stress levels as smokers attempt to adjust to prison life without tobacco.



# SO WHAT...

## The stats are shocking:

- **325 prison deaths** in 2018, a **10% increase** on 2017
- **Self-harm** incidents reached a record high of **52,814** in 2018.
- 10 years ago, the total was **just 24,119**

## Why?

- Prison **budgets** and **staff numbers** slashed
- **Spice** use is epidemic
- Prisoners **can't smoke** to relieve stress
- **Tobacco** is the **new contraband**

## The real reason?

The **people** making the policy **don't understand** the **lived reality**.

## The solution?

**Build the capacity** of people with lived experience to be part of the **solution**:

- Give service users a **voice**.
- Provide **opportunities** for them to **lead** their own **research, organisations** and **interventions**.

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