

A Mixed Methods Study of Increased Security Measures in a Drug Recovery Prison

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Key Findings

- The findings demonstrates that there has been a reduction in drug supply entering the prison.
- The security measure that appear to act as the main deterrent is the presence of the scanners.
- Prisoners and staff were most aware of the photocopying of mail, the use of scanners in visits and reception, and intelligence-led searches.
- Visitors were most aware of the scanners in visits and the impact of sending personal belongings and mail into the prison.
- The work of the Drug and Crime Reduction Unit is fundamental to the success of the Drug Recovery Pilot.
- As a result of the reduction in drug supply, the prison environment has become calmer and safer for both staff and prisoners.
- The findings suggest that, whilst the security measures have resulted in a safer prison environment, there is still scope to improve opportunities for recovery.

Research Aim

The aim of this research study was to evaluate the use of new technology that has been implemented at HMP Holme House as part of the Drug Recovery Prison (DRP) Pilot. This includes the use of a full body x-ray, personal security scanners (millimetre wave) and magnetic resonance scanner. The aims of the study were to understand the impact of the new security measures on key stakeholders including the men who reside in the prison, staff and visitors.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has the introduction of the new security measures disrupted the supply of drugs coming into the prison?
2. To what extent has the new security measures acted as a deterrent?
3. What is the level of awareness amongst prisoners, staff and visitors about the new security measures and their purpose?
4. What are the staff/prisoner/visitor attitudes towards the introduction of the scanners and their potential effect on identifying contraband entering establishments?
5. What are the lessons learned from the introduction of the new security measures?

Data Collection and Analysis

Stage One – Quantitative data analysis, using data provided by Holme House. This was provided in different forms and consisted of a combination of raw data, monthly totals and charts, with data from the millimetre wave scanners located in visits, data from the I-Scan body scanner in reception where men arrive and leave, and results of intelligence-led searches by the DCRU, and mandatory drug tests (MDTs) within the establishment. With this data it has been possible to report on the following: Number of searches and finds by contraband type for the I-Scan in reception and intelligence-led searches (drugs, mobile phones, weapons etc.), presented by type (intelligence based/ routine) and the different scanners in place, and results of the MDTs. As data was supplied from different sources, slightly different dates are presented here, with the overall parameters of between March 2018 and April 2019. All quantitative data was translated into usable form for this report and entered into Microsoft Excel for analysis.

Stage Two – The qualitative data collection included one to one interview with staff and visitors and focus groups with the men who reside at Holme House. This data collection was carried out between February and April 2019.

Qualitative Data collection included:

Visitor Interviews (n=11)

Focus groups with men (n=12)

Staff Interviews (n = 26) including staff from a range of different roles including:

- Specialist – Drug Crime Reduction Unit (DCRU) (dedicated search team)
- Specialist – Reception Staff
- Specialist – DRP programme /Management
- Generic - Prison Officers (residential units)

The interviews included participants from all of the above staff groups. In order to maintain anonymity, specific roles have not been attributed to comments. With this in mind, the staff work area will not be identified in relation to specific quotes, but where there are specific differences between work areas, this will be addressed in the wider discussion.

The qualitative data from the individual staff interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and anonymised. The focus groups with the men, and the visitor interviews, were captured in note form by the researchers and then written up in full on return to the University. 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 was undertaken (Braun & Clarke 2006). All data has been treated confidentially and stored securely and anonymously. All data has been reviewed by both Dr Victoria Bell and Dr Maggie Leese at Teesside University to ensure the quality assurance of the data analysis.

Research Ethics and Practicalities

Ethical Clearance

The study gained ethical clearance from both Teesside University Research Committee and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The study respects the essence of data protection and has provided suitable and specific measures to safeguard the rights and interests of the data subject in full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. During the qualitative stage of the study each participant

was given a unique identifier number that links their interview or focus group data to their consent form. This process has ensured that their data can be withdrawn from the study if requested by the deadline given for the data analysis.

Consent

It was important to ensure that valid, freely given and fully informed consent can be achieved and for the purposes of this research, it was considered that valid consent is underpinned by the provision of adequate information being provided to the potential study participant and the understanding that they have the capacity to decide for themselves. In line with this all participants were given a participant information sheet that explained the focus of the study and outlined what they were being asked to do. It was important that the participant understands the benefits of the research (or lack of) and understands that they are under no obligation to take part. To ensure that participants understood what was being asked of them, where necessary the researchers went through both the participant information sheet and the consent form verbally and gave all participants the opportunity to ask any questions before deciding if they agreed to take part.

Sensitivity

The qualitative interviews and focus groups are based on participants individual views about the new security measures within the prison therefore it was not envisaged that this could be a sensitive topic. However, it is recognised that participants could be vulnerable and therefore steps were taken to reduce any possible negative impact by ensuring that participants understand the purpose of the study and are able to give their informed consent. If there was any doubt about a person's ability to consent, then they would not have been included in the interviews or focus groups. Before the start of an interview/focus group participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the study at any point before that start of data analysis (this date was clearly stated on their consent form).

Data Storage

All data was stored on Teesside University server in an encrypted password protected format.

Recruitment of participants

The researchers would like to thank the Drugs Recovery Staff that supported the recruitment of participants for the study and for arranging the interview schedule for data collection days.

Findings – Disruption of the Drug Supply in Holme House

The findings suggest that there has been a significant decrease in the number of drugs entering the prison and it appears that the new security measures have had a positive impact on this. There was recognition by both staff and prisoners that it would be a very difficult task to achieve a complete cessation of drug use within any prison environment. However, participants suggested that it has noticeably reduced, with some proposing an 85 to 90 per cent drop.

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, however they will always find a way [because] it stems from other problems. (Prisoner)

Despite agreement between the prisoners and the staff that the new security measures had reduced, rather than stopped, the supply of drugs, some of the visitors expressed concern that drugs are still finding their way into the prison, and their main worry was the impact on the well-being of their friend or family member.

[T]here still [drugs that are] easy to get, my grandson is trying to get a transfer out of here because people are still walking past him out of their face. (Visitor)

The implementation of the new security measures has had an impact on drugs entering Holme House. The new security measures that all participants were most aware of was the presence of scanners, systematic staff searches, intelligence-led searches, photocopying all mail and the reduction of personal belongings, such as clothes being sent into the prison.

The main result of all these measures is, participants told us, that Holme House is overall a much safer place to be. It is suggested here that Holme House should continue this approach, making the prison a safer environment for all, whilst also considering the approach taken to recovery, ensuring that recovery is at the heart of any initiative, both for men and staff.

Scanners

Overall, when asked, the presence of the scanners was the security measure that all participants (staff, men and visitors) were most aware of. The scanners were located in visits and reception where men are administered into and out of the prison. This awareness was due to a number of reasons, including promotion of the scanners, their physical presence and the effect of having the millimetre wave scanners in visits.

The I-Scan body scanner in reception has proved to be successful in finding contraband items. It is used to search men when they arrive at the prison and sometimes in response to intelligence-led searches within the prison. Table 1 below shows the number of scans undertaken each month between July 2018 and April 2019 - over this ten month period the total number of scans was 2512. Of these 2512, 2028 (81%) were done on arrival and 484 (19%) were carried out as a result of intelligence-led information. Table 2 below breaks this data down further and presents monthly totals for each category.

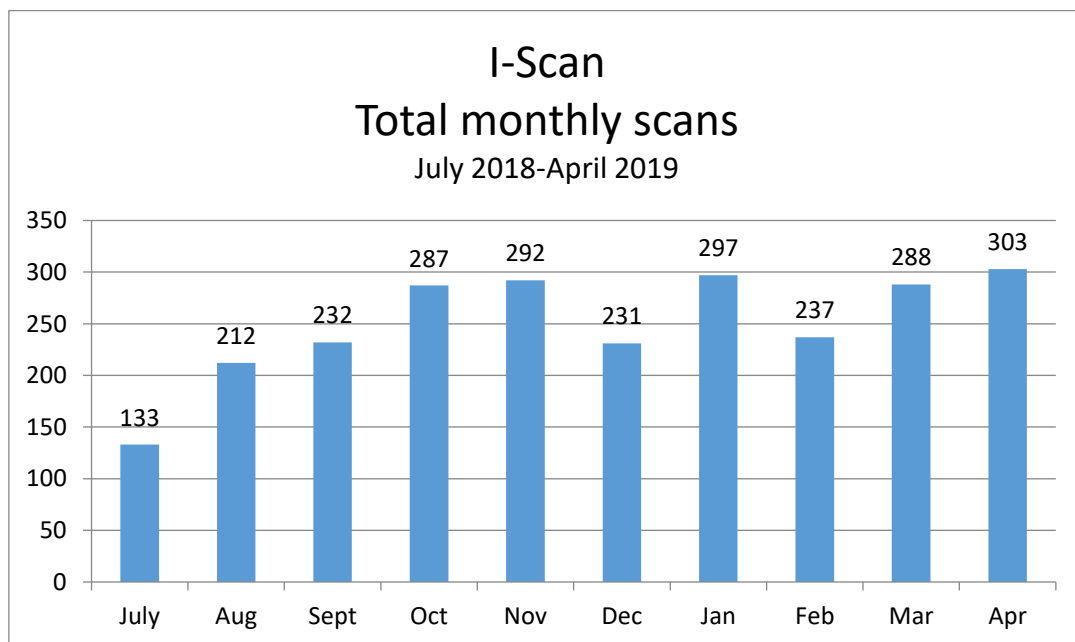


Table 1: I-Scan (reception) monthly total scans.

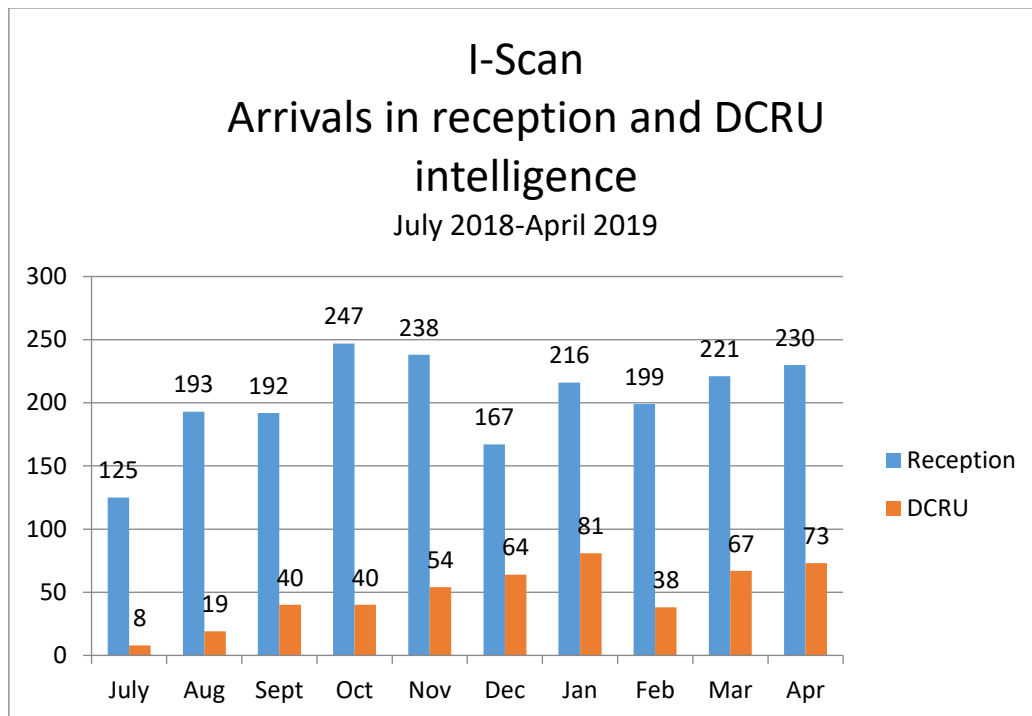


Table 2: I-Scan (reception) monthly totals broken down into arrivals in reception and intelligence-led searches

3.4 per cent of all searches using the I-Scan resulted in a positive find, some of which found more than one contraband on the person: Table 3 below shows the finds by contraband type. The most common find was a suspect package (77/121) - we do not have any further detail to comment on what these packages were. The 9 per cent 'other' included USB sticks, batteries, including mobile phone batteries, and steroids.

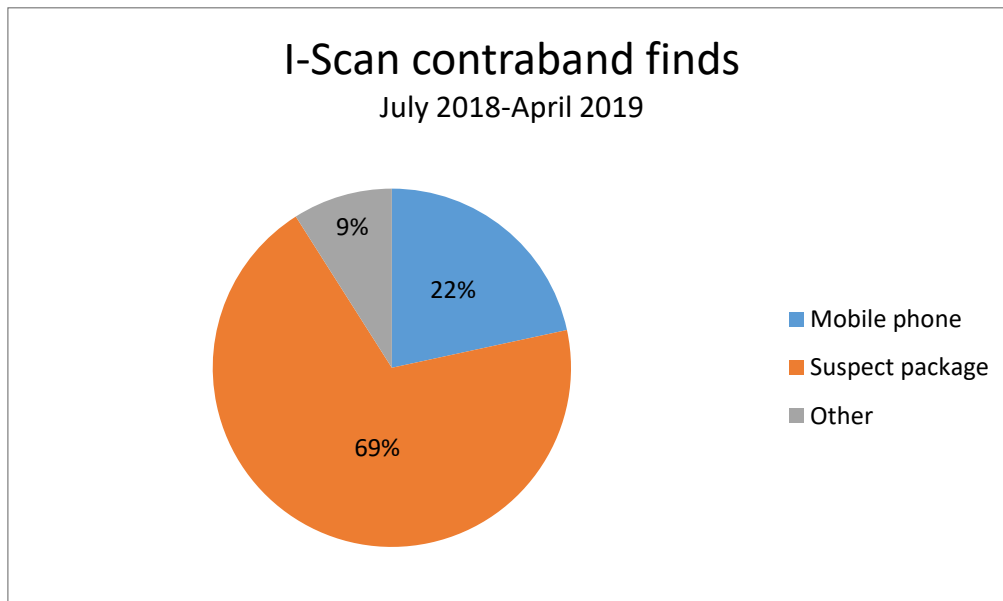


Table 3: I-Scan (reception) finds by contraband type

In the interviews, staff discussed the I-Scan in reception and most of those spoken to suggested that this scanner has contributed to a reduction in drugs entering the prison. The scanner has also acted as a deterrent for men arriving from other prisons.

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

[W]hen the prisoners are coming from 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)

Whilst there was an awareness that this scanner is finding contraband, a number of staff participants suggested that this could be improved further with additional staff training.

I think there's a training need there for the Band 3's that 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)

However, as reported above, there is evidence that contraband goods are still entering the prison estate. For example, in one of the focus groups, some prisoners discussed the scanner in reception and although there was some consensus that it could act as a deterrent, they raised some issues with efficacy of the searches.

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

[T]he scanners don't work if you've got too many clothes on; they are ineffective. (Prisoner)

There were two millimetre wave scanners located in visits, which have now been removed. These scanners were not successful in finding contraband, however, it is thought that, initially, they acted as an effective deterrent.

We had some scanners that were down in visits that came out. I don't think they were really fit for purpose. (Staff)

[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)

Data from these scanners, provided by Holme House, confirms these comments. For example, between May 2018 and November 2018, a total of 25,900 people were scanned on arrival at visits (see table 4 for monthly breakdown) and of these, 8,096 were scanned again during visits – it should be noted that at some point, this scanner stopped working so there is no data available for October or November.

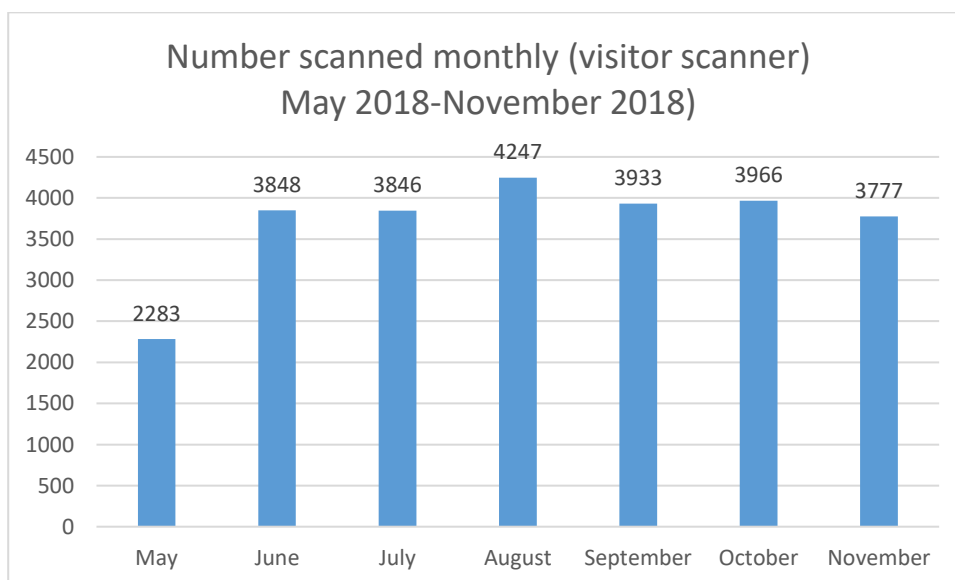


Table 4: Millimetre wave scanner (visitors) total monthly numbers

The data reveals that no articles were found during any of these scans, but that a significant number of scans were classed as 'inadequate' or set off one or more alarm. This was not missed by the prisoners.

The scanners on visits were a waste of time, they kept going off for no reason. (Prisoner)

As an illustration of a typical month, Table 5 below presents data for September 2018 for the scanner that scanned all visitors.

Sep-18	
Main MMW scanner	Number
Total number scanned	3933
Total females scanned	1177
Total males scanned	2756
Inadequate scans total	418
Found articles total	0
Inadequate scan reasons	
Arms - position	377
Legs - position	14
Feet - position	2
Person - position	5
Quality of scan	2
Scan area empty	18
Total	418

Table 5: Millimetre wave scanner data from September 2018

Staff members noted that although they thought that this particular scanner was not appropriate, there was the need for a scanner within the visits area as this was considered to be 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 that 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)

This was corroborated, albeit in a different way, by one of the men in a focus group who discussed their concerns about how the new security measures had impacted on family and friends. One prisoner noted that it was acceptable that he should be subject to scanning and searching because he had committed a crime, but he felt it was unfair to submit visitors to the same process.

I don't think all visitors should be subjected to the searches. I can take what's done to me, take it on the chin, pinch of salt, but I don't like my son coming up and being searched (Prisoner).

Visitors 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 visiting time and suggested that if this was to continue, that they would prefer to be scanned prior to visiting so that it does not impact on time spent with family and friends that they are visiting.

It just stalls it, it takes longer to get in. It's a nightmare when they ask you to take your hair out. Taking longer to get in means you have less visit time – visiting time should start once you're in the visit room. (Visitor)

Intelligence-led Interventions and the Drug and Crime Reduction Unit (DCRU)

As part of the Drug Recovery Pilot a new Drug and Crime Reduction Unit has been established within the prison and they are tasked with carrying out a range of intelligence-led activities based on procedurally just processes, with the aim of reducing and controlling the drug supply within the prison.

They've done initiatives that have been really productive around kind of intelligence-led initiatives. (Staff)

DCRU team...so the team that have been kind of employed and they have all done training in like procedurally just procedures. (Staff)

Intelligence is gathered from a range of sources and, from the staff perspective, this was working well and has contributed to the reduction in drug supply within the prison.

We basically work off intelligence led information coming off the house blocks or staff, other prisoners, members of the public, you know, related to prisoners and things like that. 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)

Holme House provided the researchers with data reporting numbers of intelligence-led searches and types of finds within the establishment. Between April 2018 and February 2019, a total of 952 intelligence-led cell searches took place, with a significant increase in October and November 2018 (see Table 6).

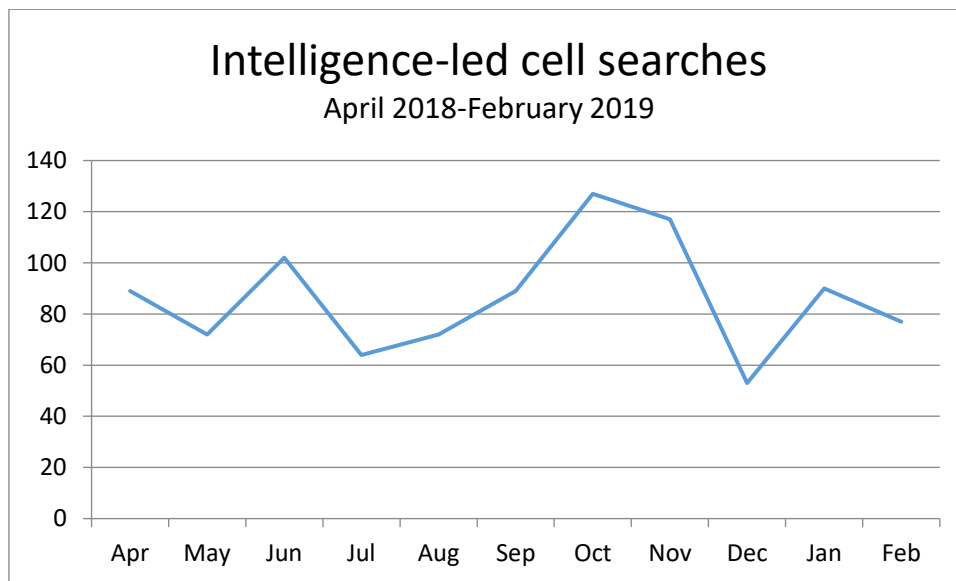


Table 6: Number of intelligence-led searches in Home House April 2018-February 2019

The results of these intelligence-led searches have been quite significant, with finds including drugs, weapons, mobile phones and mobile phone SIM cards and chargers. Combined with routine searches and finds, this demonstrates that the DCRU have made a significant contribution to reducing contraband items within the establishment. These finds are illustrated in Tables 7 to 11 below. The statistics show that at the beginning of 2019, finds have started to increase again, this could be either that the prison are becoming more effective in finding contraband, or that there is a rise in prohibited goods within the prison. Also of interest is the rise in Hooch finds, suggesting that men may be substituting drugs with Hooch. The data shows the impact of the new security measures, however, without data prior to the Drug Recovery Pilot being available, it is not possible to make any comparisons here.

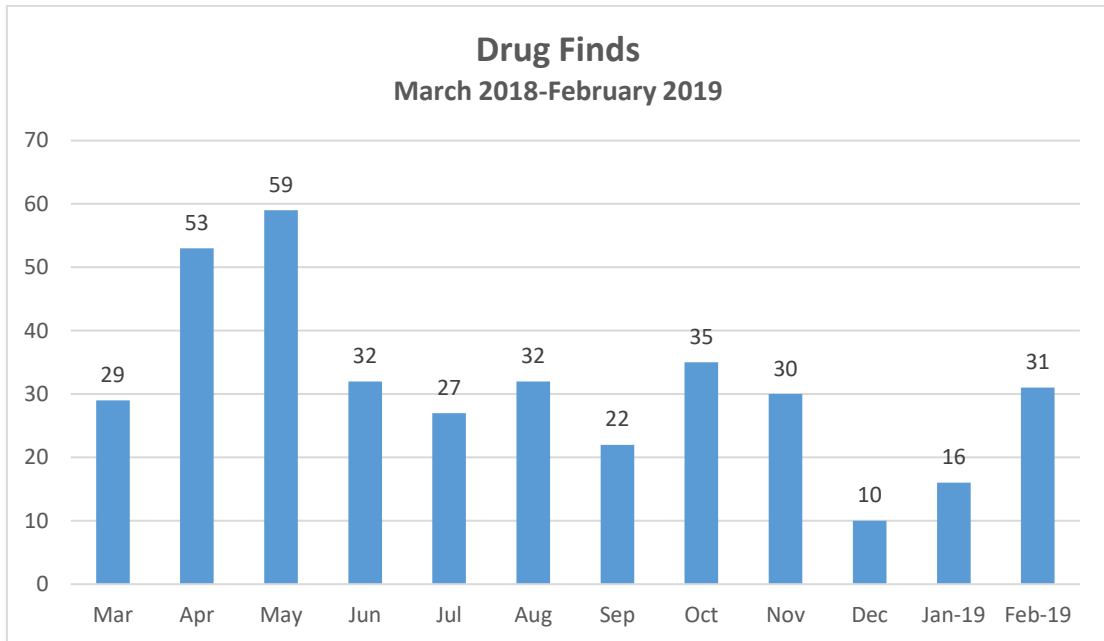


Table 7: Number of intelligence-led drug finds, Holme House March 2018-February 2019

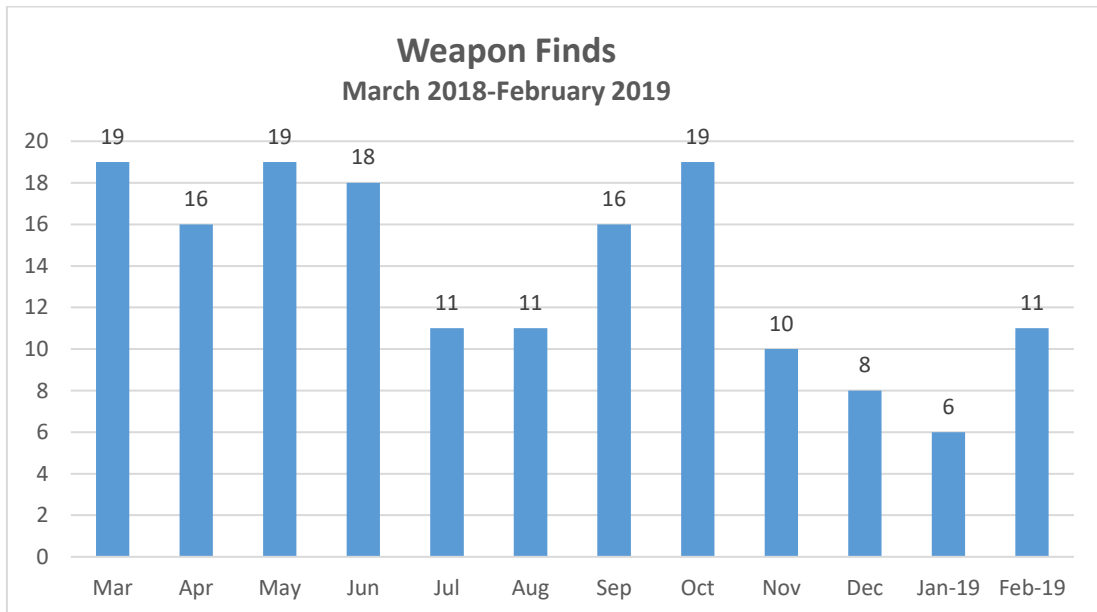


Table 8: Number of intelligence-led weapon finds, Holme House March 2018-February 2019

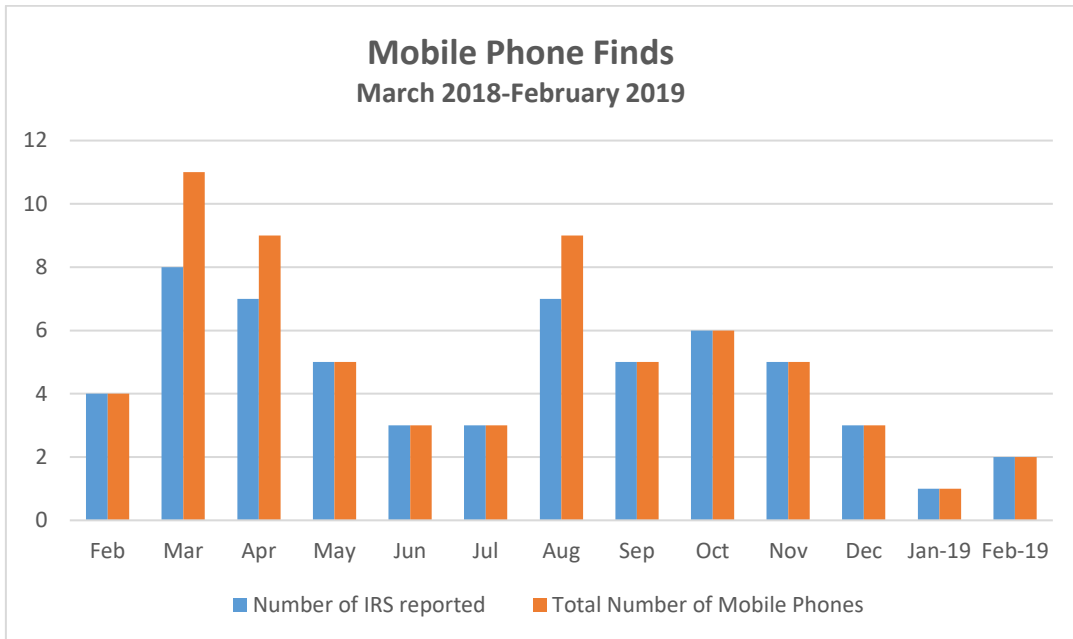


Table 9: Number of intelligence-led mobile phone finds, Holme House March 2018-February 2019

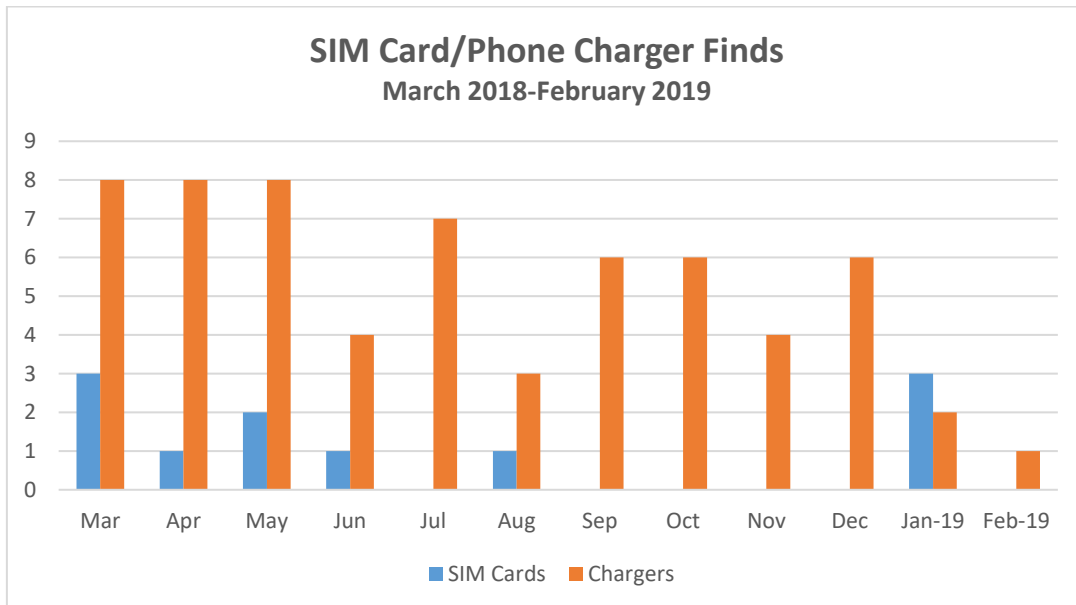


Table 10: Number of intelligence-led SIM card/phone charger finds, Holme House March 2018-February 2019

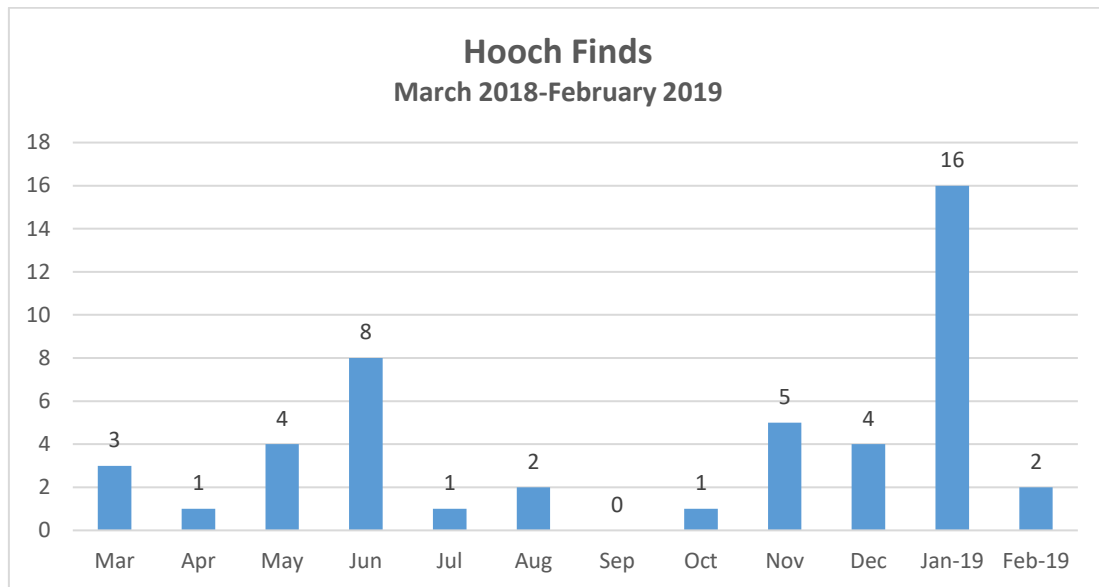


Table 11: Number of intelligence-led Hooch finds, Holme House March 2018-February 2019

In a number of interviews, staff suggested that working in a more targeted way, using intelligence-led interventions, was significant for fostering positive relationships with prisoners.

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)

The dedicated role and efficacy of the DCRU was considered as fundamental in contributing to the reduction in drug supply, which in turn contributed to a better environment for everyone. One participant revealed that prior to the formation of the DCRU when intelligence had been received, it was not always acted upon.

It's like the DCRU is - we haven't had before. We always used to have staff who were, like, sort of searching, like, anywhere, but [...] you know, they've got more - they work more on the intelligence side. You know, they got the equipment, and the means to target and search individuals as and when needed. (Staff)

The ability of the DCRU to analyse drugs and to investigate phone data was also highlighted as an improvement on past practice.

We have mobile phone interrogation. So that interrogates phones when they're found... so basically [we] can pull anything off. So deleted WhatsApps, VoiceNotes, anything. (Staff)

Prisoners also discussed the use of scanners and the use of intelligence to target people for cell searches and body scans. The perception from the men spoken to was that, on occasion, searches could happen due to false information, or just by associating with others who, unknown to them, may be the focus of an intelligence-led intervention, and hence they were 'guilty by association' (Prisoner), but that this was sometimes difficult to avoid.

Even if you're only with someone, talking to someone, you'll still get targeted. (Prisoner)

It's the proximity of our living space, you've got to associate with these people, and if you don't you isolate yourself and get accused of being stand-offish, so you have to associate with them. (Prisoner)

Photocopying and Limiting Personal Belongings

Most staff spoken to thought that the practice of photocopying mail (prisoners receive the photocopy rather than the original) prior to it being circulated to the men has had a big impact on reducing the drug supply. This procedure was considered the main way that the new measures have interrupted the supply of drugs, in particular psychoactive substances ((PS), known as Spice) coming into the prison.

I think that from the men's perspective, and probably from the staff's as well, the biggest impact was when they started photocopying. (Staff)

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)

In one of the focus groups, prisoners made a comparison relating to levels of security between their experience at Holme House and experiences in other prisons. During this discussion they identified the two major differences in security to be the photocopying of mail and the use of the body scanner in reception; they then attributed these measures to the reduction in the supply of drugs in Holme House.

Hull, they are not photocopying like here, and they have the body scanner here (Prisoner).

I've been here 14 months, come from Durham and its very different (Prisoner).

Despite the acknowledgement that the photocopying of mail had reduced the drug supply, the prisoners also discussed the impact of this new security measure on their daily lives. The main points that were made by the prisoners related to the photocopying of cards, pictures and photographs sent to them by family and friends. This was an issue also raised by visitors to the prison.

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)

I don't like that when we send birthday cards or anniversary cards that they just get a photocopy of it, it's not the same as getting the card. You spent money buying the card and then on postage and yet they don't get to see it. (Visitor)

Visitors discussed how they are allowed to send their friends or family a card as long as it was ordered from an online card service (e.g. Moonpig.com, Funky Pigeon.com) but the expense of using this service can be difficult for families on limited budgets. Interestingly, during one of the focus groups, a prisoner suggested that even when their family and friends used the recommended online card service, the card was still photocopied by the prison.

I have a friend whose wife sent him an anniversary card yesterday from Funky Pigeon and it was photocopied. (Prisoner)

Further impacts discussed by prisoners was the lack of personal belongings and the confusion of what they were entitled to have in a Category C establishment.

I brought my Blue Tooth hi-fi from Hull [prison] that I bought in there, and coming from a Cat B to a Cat C, it was taken off me because I'm not allowed to have it, same with my Xbox 360 I had in Strangeways. (Prisoner)

The limit on personal belongings, especially access to clean clothes, was also raised as an area of concern for visitors, particularly for men who were arriving directly at Holme House.

You cannot send anything at all. You cannot send clothes, you should be able to send in but they've got to buy them. He has a shower everyday but has dirty clothes and he stinks. £15 does not get him what he needs. He's been in since September and is still in the same shirt. [...] We should be

able to send in clean underwear, shoes and socks. [...] They need clean clothes. (Visitor)

Other Security Measures

Staff discussed the introduction of the searching procedure for all staff as they come through the gate and, apart from the increased time it now takes to get into and out of work, there was positive feedback on this process. There was some agreement that it is possible that a small number of staff could be involved in bring in restricted items, including drugs.

Because there's always corruption, isn't there? You know what I mean? There is always greedy people. So, we keep an eye on that. So that helps a lot. And some days we'll come in ourselves, the team, and do a full staff search. So, we search everybody from the governors to the janitor. (Staff)

I'm aware of the increased searching that we do – for staff coming in – I think it speaks for itself, to be honest. I think there's been a massive difference. (Staff)

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 them not being deployed solely at Holme House. A further suggestion was that the DCRU should be given the authority to check for drugs in legal mail (Rule 39 mail) because currently staff are not allowed to open and read the contents of solicitors' letters.

[You can] buy a stamp on eBay, I believe, people have said, for a fiver, with a solicitor's made-up name and address on, and it was just getting Spice paper, rolling it up, folding it up, putting it in an envelope, stamping on it that it was solicitors. You don't know none the wiser. (Staff)

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).

Mandatory Drug Testing

Between April 2018 and February 2019, 656 Mandatory Drug Tests (MDTs) were carried out at Holme House. Of these 656, 47 (7%) were found to be positive (see Table 12 below).

Peaks in positive PS tests occurred in April and September 2018. In November 2018, whilst there was a high percentage of positive drug tests (10.2%), none of these tests were positive for PS. From December 2018 to February 2019 there has only been 1 positive PS test per month. This shows that, of those tested, the presence of PS appears to be reducing.

However, it may be that prisoners are changing their drug habit to fit supply, or drinking Hooch. This possible change in supply and demand will be discussed in the next section.

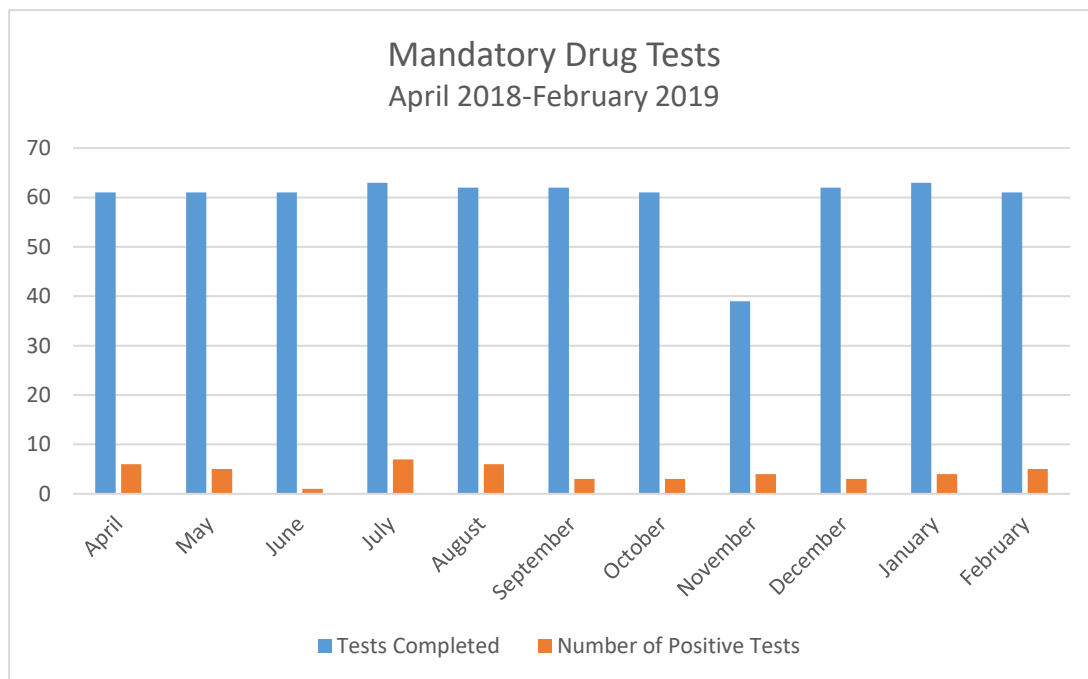


Table 12: Number of MDTs, Holme House April 2018-February 2019

In order to reduce drugs, or deter their use further, in one of the focus groups, a prisoner suggested that more resource should be put into doing a lot more MDTs and during induction into the prison to discuss with men the consequences of drug taking within Holme House.

That's very rare [Mandatory Drug Testing], it's not done enough. Nothing is done until it's too late, and then you get nicked for something. Drug taking and drugs should be part of the induction process. (Prisoner)

Impact on Prison Environment

During the staff interviews there was some concern that after the end of the Recovery Pilot the new security measures would not be continued and participants were concerned that because the levels of drugs in the prison have decreased, there could be a level of complacency that there is no longer an issue with drugs.

[If] we go back to the old ways and they get a bit relaxed about it: "It's okay, we haven't got a drug problem now". We have got a drug problem. (Staff)

Furthermore, although there was agreement with all those spoken to that the security measures have disrupted the supply of drugs into the prison, participants also discussed the different supplies and supply routes that had now started to open up. These include the ever-present continued demand for drugs, the use of prescribed medication and, with the ban on smoking, debts relating to the use of vapes.

It's always going to be the case in prison [that people will take drugs and they will be available]. They stem a couple of avenues, for some that means that they're gone from the prison, but there's a demand, so others soon take over. (Prisoner)

We are finding in the searching that we're doing at the minute there are bits and pieces coming in but it's more we're seeing a big change in- we're finding a lot more of prescription medication that's already inside the jail. (Staff)

One participant also highlighted recent changes in the practice of giving medication to prisoners – previously, two members of health staff would distribute medication to prisoners, but this has been reduced to one person. This was thought to be a possible area of concern because it is a difficult for one person to dispense the medication whilst also ensuring that prisoners had swallowed it.

There was a consensus by the majority of participants that the new security measures have made the prison a safer environment to work and reside in.

I think it's probably one of the most immediate areas where you see success anywhere. [...] it feels a calmer place. (Staff)

A number of participants recalled the time when the use of psychoactive substances (Spice) was at a high level.

I've been here two and a half year, come from Durham. It [Holme House] was a jungle – what it is now and what it was then there's been a massive difference though; I've seen it with my own eyes (Prisoner).

Both the staff and the prisoners agreed with the changes highlighted in this quote; the tangible evidence of this is the reduction in the number of emergency situations occurring within the prison - as well as the change in atmosphere - for many this was the example given when asked about changes in the prison environment.

There's a lot less Spice, that has really improved, there's not as many code blues. (Prisoner)

I've seen some terrible states, honestly, really bad [...] all of a sudden this spice boom kicked right off and I'm not kidding you, we had four or five code blues, when somebody is under the influence or unconscious in the morning and the afternoon. But now, we had one yesterday but apart from that—[it's] very, very rare. (Staff)

Reducing the drug supply and so providing a calmer and safer prison environment for all, allows the recovery agenda to begin to become embedded within the everyday business of the prison.

So it helps the staff feel safer as well and I think that was a key thing from a prison and a health side, if people can see different technologies being brought in, they can see an investment in making the environment safer and they are better placed to be able to deliver the care.[...] If they are fearful and they are seeing people, you know, becoming unconscious, they have to respond to that and it's not delivering the kind of like proactive care that we want to. (Staff)

The link between a safer environment and recovery was also discussed by prisoners in one of the focus groups and they suggested that it is crucial that prisoners are given the support they need to maintain their progress.

Unless they give lads a reason not to take drugs, why bother stopping? It's easy for someone to say they want to stop taking drugs, but it's a different matter staying off the drugs if there's no incentive to. (Prisoner)

The prisoners discussed the plans to re-categorise Holme House from a Category B to a Category C prison, however, they felt that this had not yet been achieved – and that some of this may be as a result of the Drug Recovery Prison Pilot.

It's meant to have changed to a Cat C but they are still locking us up.
(Prisoner)

Having the ability to access meaningful activity was one area where the prisoners felt that further improvements could be made. There was an acknowledgement that some prisoners are able to access work and education, but there was also the suggestion that too many people still spend a lot of time in their cell.

If you want to get people off drugs, you've got to give them something to do. (Prisoner)

They should be adding to it and making it a better place, gym sessions for example. (Prisoner)

The need for exercise, particularly in the yards and via the gym was spoken about by men in all of the prisoner focus groups as a way of improving mental health by positive regular exercise. In addition to the need for meaningful activities, the prisoners also discussed the need for more mental health support. They recognised that the safer environment provides the right conditions to promote recovery, but they highlighted that drugs had frequently been used by prisoners as a coping mechanism for wider issues.

There's more tension, people suffer on their own behind the door, and with nothing to do. (Prisoner)

In my experience...people see someone [mental health support] once, then don't see them again for six months, and so in that time they have had to deal with it themselves. (Prisoner)

It appears that the new security measures have improved overall safety for prisoners and staff and have provided an environment where there is an opportunity for prisoners to receive appropriate support. However, prisoners expressed frustration because despite this, some men are still struggling to access the support they need.