



In the UK, prison drug services are usually delivered by a combination of prison officers and external drug service providers: should prison officers be involved in delivering drug services to prisoners?

Professor Jane Fountain, Alastair Roy and Dr Sundari Anitha, Centre for Ethnicity and Health, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, UK

YES

- Prison officers working as drug workers has helped the process of acceptance of prison drug services by other prison officers.
- Prison officers working as drug workers are those who have expressed a commitment to helping drug users...

NO

- Prison officers often receive little/no training in drugs work and are expected to 'learn on the job.' This causes frustration amongst civilian drug workers working alongside them.
- ...BUT the motives of some are based on drug-free wings being more attractive places to work because they have better facilities than other wings.
- The roles of prison officer and drug worker can conflict: a prison officer may be searching cells for drugs one day, and delivering drug services the next.
- Prisons' operational priorities mean that prison officers are often moved from drugs work to prison work at short notice, leaving drug services short-staffed.
- There are conflicts between the professional priorities of prison officers (control) and drug workers (care).
- Confidentiality may be compromised if, for example, a prisoner reveals security-related issues to their prison officer-drug worker, or the source of drugs in the prison.
- Prisoners are suspicious of prison officers – especially if they are in uniform – and therefore reluctant to approach drug services.

The above data were taken from *'The delivery of prison drug services in England and Wales, with a focus on Black and minority ethnic prisoners'* by Jane Fountain, Alastair Roy, Sundari Anitha, Kate Davies, Jonathan Bashford, and Kamlesh Patel. The study reviewed relevant literature and statistical data, mapped existing prison drug services, and explored a range of perspectives on the issues surrounding this provision. In total, data were collected from 334 individuals, who were interviewed, completed questionnaires, or participated in focus groups.

For further details / a copy of the report, contact Jane Fountain on jfountain1@uclan.ac.uk