# Obstacles to Successful Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Drug Use Offenders

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#### ABSTRACT:

This preliminary small-scale research aimed to achieve an insight into drug use offenders' rehabilitation experiences both in and out of prison, as well as considering how perceptions of the public may inhibit their successful reintegration into society.

A mixed-methods approach was utilised, with five semi-structured interviews conducted alongside the distribution of the Attitudes Toward Prisoners questionnaire (Melvin et al., 1985) among the general public (n= 106) in the North-West region of England.

Participants recalled a mixture of experiences, highlighting the presence of contraband in prisons to be an inhibiting factor of successful rehabilitation. Additionally, participants expressed the need for more support when preparing for release such as confirmation of accommodation and possible employment. Questionnaires also indicated the public to perceive offenders negatively (M= 76, SD= 16.99), thus presenting a further challenge in the resettlement of drug use offenders.

CUST\_RESEARCH\_LIMITATIONS/IMPLICATIONS\_\_(LIMIT\_100\_WORDS) :No data available.

Findings highlight that improving practices to decrease the presence of contraband in prisons, monitoring an individual's use of methadone, preparing an individual for their release from prison, and educating the public, would reduce some of the obstacles experienced by drug use offenders.

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This study outlines some of the obstacles that drug use offenders experience when attempting to end their drug use activity and criminal engagement.

# Obstacles to Successful Rehabilitation and Resettlement of Drug Use Offenders

### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – This <u>preliminary</u> small-scale research aimed to achieve an insight into drug use offenders' rehabilitation experiences both in and out of prison, as well as considering how perceptions of the public may inhibit their successful reintegration into society.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A mixed-methods approach was usedutilised, with five semi-structured interviews being conducted and alongside the distribution of the Attitudes Toward Prisoners questionnaire (Melvin *et al.*, 1985) among the general public (n= 106) in the North-West region of England.

**Findings** – Participants recalled a mixture of experiences, highlighting the presence of contraband in prisons to be an inhibiting factor of successful rehabilitation. Additionally, participants expressed the need for more support when preparing for release such as confirmation of accommodation and possible employment. Questionnaires also indicated the public to perceive offenders negatively (M=76, SD=16.99), thus presenting a further challenge in the resettlement of drug use offenders.

**Practical Implications** – Findings highlight that improving practices to decrease the presence of contraband in prisons, monitoring an individual's use of methadone, preparing an individual for their release from prison, and educating the public, would reduce some of the obstacles experienced by drug use offenders.

**Originality** – This study outlines some of the obstacles that drug use offenders experience when attempting to end their drug use activity and criminal engagement.

**Keywords** – rehabilitation, resettlement, public perceptions, drug use offenders, Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale, Mixed-methods

Paper type – Research paper

## Introduction

Across England and Wales for the year ending March 2020, it is estimated that 1 in 11 people aged 16 to 59 self-reported to have taken illicit drugs, equating to 3.2 million people (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Additionally, in 2020/21, there were 210,000 drug offences recorded by the police in England and Wales (Allen and Tunnicliffe, 2021). These figures highlight the vast presence of illicit drugs within society. However, elearly-identifying how illicit substances are linked to criminal behaviour is challenging as factors like individual differences and context complicates the relationship (Pudney, 2003; Brochu *et al.*, 2018; Rolando *et al.*, 2021). Consequently, this lack of understanding may-inhibits the successful rehabilitation of drug use offenders and their subsequent experiences both in and out of prison. This can have additional repercussions on an individual's success once they begin their re-entry into society, with public perceptions further inhibiting their progress.

This paper is based on a small-scale final year dissertation project carried out at undergraduate level. The study aimed to investigate the experiences of drug use offenders thus providing an insight into their rehabilitation both in and out of prisons in the North-West of England. Additionally, public perceptions of offenders were explored to allow for additional context of the research findings and identify further possible barriers that drug use offenders may face. Identification of these potential obstacles leads to recommendations that may aid the rehabilitation and resettlement of drug use offenders, subsequently, reducing recidivism.

# Drug Use and Criminal Behaviour

Psychopharmacology considers the role of drugs on neurobiology and how substances influence areas of the brain responsible for behaviour, emotions, and cognitive functioning (Ettinger, 2017; Stahl, 2012). Focusing on the direct and indirect effects of chemical changes in the brain due to drugs, psychopharmacology exposes specific behaviours which leads a person to commit crime (Kuhns and Clodfelter, 2009; Bennett and Holloway, 2005). For example, the immediate short-term effects of cocaine results in increased levels of dopamine thus amplifying feelings of euphoria, but also impairing judgment and creating feelings of irritability, which over a long time; could lead to the development of psychosis (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). Due to these is changes in personality and cognitive functioning, the possibility of an individual committing a criminal act becomes feasible.

Copes et al (2015) identified drug use to be connected to violent offences. A as after interviewing 30 car-jackers, some participants reported physiological changes after engaging in drug use, reporting like feelings of anger, irritability and irrational thoughts thus highlighting connections between drug use and criminal activity. However, only having a sample of car-jackers, limits generalisability of the findings to individuals who commit other types of offences. Hakansson and Jesionowska (2018) further—investigated how different types of offenders engage in different substance use patterns. Violent offenders were found more likely to engage in drug use for the purposes of sedation, while acquisitive offenders reported using heroin and cocaine. Therefore, drug use can be linked to various offences, being argued to share a broad relationship with criminal behaviour. The emergence of Psychopharmacology is valuable, being applied to help understand how drug use and crime relate to one another and

provide insight into cognitive intervention methods aimed to reduce impulsivity which may lead to offending (Shiderman and Solberg, 2015).

Societal factors have also been explored in relation to drug use and crime (Gorsuch and Butler, 1976; Simpson, 2003; Seddon, 2006; Stockdale *et al.*, 2007). Early globalisation has been blamed for the increase in drug use as gaining illicit substances became easier as supplies arrived from other countries arrived in large quantities (Seddon, 2006). The influence of social relationships has also been investigated by Ali *et al.* (2012) who, after interviewing 500 male drug users, discovered that peer pressure to be a contributing factor in 26.3% of cases, peer pressure was a factor for why individuals engaged in drug use. In addition, when recording self-administration behaviours of cocaine using in rats, Smith (2012) found higher usage when rats were socially housed then alone. Hence, the presence of peers can influence the likelihood of an individual using drugs, possibly linking to Social Learning Theories (Leonard, 2002).

On the other hand, crime and drug use may relate to economic factors. Engaging in crime becomes a route to finance drug use (Brunelle *et al.*, 2000; Felson and Staff, 2015), especially for those who feel the need to use drugs several times throughout the day to avoid psychological and physiological withdrawal symptoms (Bennett and Holloway, 2005). Those of high socioeconomic status are also likely to engage in the use of illicit substances (Bretteville-Jensen, 2011), contradicting the popular belief that it is primarily the unemployed living in the poorest neighbourhoods who engage in drug use (Seddon, 2006). Therefore, comprehending the impact of economic factors is complex, highlighting the need for future studies to explore this relationship further.

The connection between drug use and crime is difficult to comprehend with attempts to understand which behaviour occurs first, raising further questions and complications of how the two interlink. However, implementing a Reciprocal Model which is bi-directional (Bennett

and Holloway, 2005) is beneficial as this approach promotes the perspective of drug use causing criminal behaviour, and vice versa. Hence, adopting this model is useful as it acknowledges an intricate shared relationship between the two. Subsequently, implementing this view also allows for a holistic approach and openness when examining drug use and crime together. Having considered how drug use and crime may interact, reviewing rehabilitation techniques aimed to tackle the two seems is beneficial.

# Rehabilitation Techniques

Rehabilitation is a mixture of programs, treatments and intervention methods which intend to aid an individual in overcoming issues connected to their offending, reduce recidivism, and break the cycle of drug use (Ubah, 2003; Newburn, 2007). Many strategies <u>currently</u> exist that try to rehabilitate drug use offenders, such as <u>random drug testing</u>, therapeutic interventions, and gate mentors (House of Commons, 2012). One popular method <u>often</u> implemented to aid in <u>rehabilitation</u> is the use of a methodone program or methodone replacement therapy (Robertson and Daniels, 2012).

Introduced by the Integrated Drug Treatment System (IDTS) in England, opioid substitutes became available to drug use offender populations in July 2006 as a new approach to combine clinical and psychosocial elements of rehabilitation (Marteau *et al.*, 2010; Asher, 2013; Public Health England, 2017). Individuals are encouraged to use an opioid substitute (typically methadone or buprenorphine) instead of illicit drugs and reduce the strength of the opioid overtime, thus resulting in the individual no longer being drug dependent as well as stopping their engagement in criminal behaviour (Asher, 2013; Public Health England, 2017). These methods have led to less bullying in prisons, a decrease in drug related violence, and higher levels of engagement from offenders with their treatment process, therefore facilitating stability

of their behaviour (Asher, 2013). Nevertheless, difficulties in managing users due to their own specific individual needs can limit the effectiveness of these strategies and so, without regular reviewing, possible modifications that would improve an individual's rehabilitation success is ignored (Leukefeld and Tims, 1993). The allocation of resources and stigma can also have a negative impact (Klingemann, 2020). Sondhi and Day (2012) found that while male prisoners did havehad high expectations of the IDTS, they felt their treatment they received did not match their prior assumptions. Additionally Moreover, offenders often continue to use illicit substances despite taking a substitute (Newman, 2014), consequently failing to reduce their drug use and related criminal activity. Furthermore, the ease of which offenders claim to increase their dosage by simply asking the relevant doctor (Asher, 2013), contradicts the belief that drug substitutes like methadone are often prescribed at low levels (Patel, 2010). Therefore, gaining an insight into rehabilitation techniques from a drug use offenders' perspective, offers unique insight into the true rehabilitation processes implemented in and outside prisons, along with highlighting possible areas of improvement. Additionally, considering the supplementary factor of public perceptions of drug use offenders, allows for supplementary understanding of added obstacles that impact their rehabilitation and resettlement.

# Public Perception

Once released from prison; it can prove difficult for a drug use offender to adjust to the new social world they find themselves in causing possible mental health implications (Bahr et al, 2012), difficulties in finding employment (O'Reilly, 2014; Sered and Norton-Hawk, 2019), and securing housing (Clark, 2007; Lutze *et al.*, 2014). Bahr *et al.* (2012) suggests that offenders who obtain social support, are motivated, and distance themselves from crime, have better quality experiences of rehabilitation and resettlement. Therefore, attitudes held by the general

public and wider society towards offenders, may affect this process. Public perceptions of offenders were measured by Melvin *et al.* (1985) who aimed to gauge how the public view those reintegrating back into society. To do so, the Attitude Towards Prisoners (ATP) Scale was created enabling a "standardized, psychometrically sound instrument" (Melvin *et al.*, p.242) to measure such attitudes. Students, residents, and prisoners completed the questionnaire allowing for understanding of how different groups perceive offenders. Melvin *et al.* (1985) found residents within the community had the lowest negative attitudesscores, suggesting offenders to be deviant individuals. Kjelsberg *et al.* (2007) also implemented the ATP and reached similar conclusions, finding offenders to be viewed negatively by members of the public.

These negative perceptions held by the public emphasises possible obstacles which may inhibit the successful reintegration of offenders. Such beliefs held by the public could lead to self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948) and labelling (Newburn, 2007), ultimately causing individuals to return to drug use and criminal activity. Therefore, gaining an understanding of drug use offenders experiences in and out of prison\_first-hand, allows for in-depth exploration of their rehabilitation and resettlement. Subsequently, recommendations can be made to overcome these challenges thus enhancing an offender's likelihood of success and reducing recidivism.

## **Materials and Methods**

A mixed-methods approach was applied using semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire.

The iInterviews aimed to collect rich detailed information related to a drug use offender's experiences in and out of prison, while the questionnaire measured public perceptions of offenders. Ethical approval was gained by the Ethics Committee Board at University Campus

Oldham, with further efforts to follow guidelines by the Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society (2009).

#### **Instruments**

Experience of the Drug Use Offender

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to enable <u>for</u> an understanding of the events experienced by <u>the</u> drug use offenders. The schedule focused on six key areas: upbringing, criminal background, drug use history, experience inside prison, experience outside prison, and individual motivation. Open-ended questions allowed for unstructured responses that were rich with qualitative information of the individual's attitudes and opinions (Rosenblatt and Shelley, 2011). Caution was taken to <u>ensure that noavoid</u> leading questions <u>were asked</u>, and questions were suitable for the research aims wanting to be achieved. Those who were interviewed met the specific criterion of being 1) an offender, 2) an addict to drug substances, 3) currently being placed on a methadone program and 4) being aged 18 or over. A self-selecting sampling method was implemented to recruit both males and females. On approaching a local pharmacy, a supported vetting process also occurred to ensure that participants suited met the inclusion criteria and were willing to voluntarily take part within the study.

# Public Perception

To measure how the public views of drug use offenders, the Attitudes Toward Prisoners (ATP) (Melvin *et al.*, 1985) questionnaire was implemented that consists of 36 items which requiringe a Likert Scale response ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 5 (agree strongly). The questionnaire satisfies test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Melvin *et al*, 1985)

therefore being a <u>useful and</u> reliable tool to measure public perceptions of offenders. Questionnaires were administered to individuals above the age of 18. An opportunity sampling method was used with questionnaires being distributed in the selected areas of a local pharmacy, children's play <u>centercentre</u>, and annual scouting event. It was hoped that this sampling technique would lead to a multitude of people containing various ages, cultures, and professions for example.

#### Procedure

#### Interviews

An agreement was made with a local pharmacy to grant the use of their consultation room, thus allowing for a confidential space to conduct the interviews. Participants volunteered to take part, being recruited after undergoing the vetting process to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. An initial conversation explained to the with participants outlined the purpose of the study and interviewing process. After confirmation that participants were still willing to continue, a subsequent interview with the primary researcher (XX) was arranged and consent form completed. Participants were reminded throughout that they could refuse to answer any questions that they wished to and that they could withdraw at any time.

Each interview lasted a minimum of 30 minutes, with participants being reassured that any information provided would be kept confidential. A full debrief was executed once the interview ended, this included which included sharing details of the acting supervisor (XX) and contact information for relevant support charities. A final appointment was arranged a few weeks later to allow for member checking. This provided support that the conclusions drawn from the analysis process, reflected participants viewpoints thus increasing the creditability of results (Koelsch, 2013; Birt *et al.*, 2016). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed

using Thematic Analysis to identify themes and patterns within the data (Attride-Sterling, 2001; Clarke and Braun, 2017). A reflective journal was also kept with the purpose of accomplishing bracketing (Newman and Tufford, 2010).

### Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed in a local pharmacy and play center centre by the managers of the establishments. The District Commissioner of a North-West borough of the Scouting Association also agreed to distribute questionnaires at an annual general meeting. After reading an information sheet, participants confirmed their consent and completed the questionnaire. Questionnaires were completed then and there, taking full advantage of the opportunity sampling method. Questionnaires were analysed in accordance with the scoring instructions (Melvin *et al.*, 1985). This involved reversing the responses of 19 selected items, then adding all the 36 items together before subtracting a constant of 36 to give a final score. Final scores are expected to range from 0 to 144, with the higher the score, the more positive attitudes are towards offenders (Melvin *et al.*, 1985).

## **Findings**

A total of five individuals (four males and one female) were interviewed and 106 questionnaires completed. In relation to the participants interviewed, there were a range of offences committed with times scales of incarceration varying from 16 weeks to 21 months. Most participants <a href="https://hat.ncb.nlm

offences such as perverting the court of justice and assaulting another individual with using a hammer. Variation also existed in the type of drugs used ranging from class C painkillers (such as co-codamol) and class B substances (like cannabis and amphetamines), to class A substances (such as cocaine, heroin, magic mushrooms, and ecstasy).

# Experience inside Prison

Generally, participants appeared relaxed when discussing how they spent their time in prison. All participants outlined recreational activities being available like table tennis and pool, as well as some vocational activities related to developing skills or gaining educational qualifications. However, if desired, they could choose to work in the prison aiding in the overall maintenance of the facility and possibly gaining some financial rewards:

"Painting and decorating, maths and English, stuff like that" (Participant H)

Nonetheless, limitations relating to levels of engagement and motivation emerged as an obstacle to taking advantage of these opportunities:

"I just kept myself to myself" (Participant W)

Two participants attempted to explain why offenders lack motivation, claiming that once being released and seeking employment, employers would not recognise the qualifications which an individual may have achieved whilst in prison:

"When you go, they'll offer you a choice between a menial job or education... there a time filler let's put it that way but there not really anything you can come outside and say 'oh look at this certificate', it's not worth what it's printed on basically" (Participant M)

Some of the rehabilitation strategies promoted by the House of Commons (2012) did emerge such as random drug tests, drug free recovery wings, group counselling sessions, and the implementation of a methadone program. Nevertheless, participants revealed that <u>available</u> intervention methods <u>available</u> to individuals in prison varied depending on the location and level of security of the facility. Additionally, the presence of contraband that enabled for illicit drug use to continue was outlined as a major obstacle. Participants recalled in detail many of the methods used to smuggle illicit drugs into prison, ranging from tennis balls filled with drugs being thrown over perimeter walls, to the riskier technique of drugs being exchanged during visits with family and friends despite the presence of drug detection dogs and body searches:

"People can get them off visits... usually the girlfriend or a baby or they'll pass it through their mouth yeh when they're kissing, or they'll pass it under the tables" (Participant M)

Four participants also held the opinion that of prison officials are being aware that of drugs entering the prisons regularly, casting concern on additional factors that may be hindering an individual's ability to resolve their drug use habits and ultimately, criminal behaviour:

"You can't get drugs in a prison without the warden not knowing about it... He'll know that there's drugs' going in that prison" (Participant H)

Participants recollection of their experiences while in prison highlights some of the barriers that exist in relation to existing current rehabilitation processes.

## Preparing Offenders for Release

All participants agreed that they were given short notice of their release, sometimes being told on the actual day itself. This proves problematic for drug use offenders, limiting the amount of time they have to find suitable accommodation thus increasing the risk of recidivism (Hamilton

et al, 2014), as well as causing distress due to the sudden change in environments and circumstances (Bahr et al, 2012):

"They tell you to go and say you gotta go today, if you've done long enough in jail, they'll tell you to go to probation and that's it, on the day" (Participant H)

"They kick you out with one week's worth of money and that's it... you're going out to nothing" (Participant M)

After being released, all participants had continued the methadone program, returning daily to their local pharmacy to collect the drug substitute. Two individuals had reduced in strength, but all participants were indicated their motivations motivated that they were going to reduce and eventually finish usingstop their methadone use. Two participants disclosed having previously stoppinged all drug use but explained how they had relapsed due to stressful personal events. However, they expressed their determination to end all drug use again. Common themes emerged in in relation to an individuals' motivation to stop using illicit substances, with the role of close family members seeming crucial, especially for the female participant who wished to regain custody of her son:

"I wanted my son home that's the only time I've stopped... I wanted my son home"

(Participant W)

Other participants explained that they felt they had grown too old to be a drug user:

"I think I've finally grown out of it" (Participant MS)

Some participants had specific reasons for stopping their drug use, such as their personal health. For instance, one Another participant spoke of -wanting to end their drug use after had suffering a heart attack which acted as a cue to action, therefore linking, thus linking with the ideology of the Health Belief Model as this event could be considered a

<u>cue to action</u> (Carpenter, 2010; Jones *et al.*, 2015). Regardless, eContradicting accounts existed when recalling the level of support available to a drug use offenderupon participants—once released. Two participants explained being offered a detox, while the other three were directed to visit local drug and alcohol services. That being saidNonetheless, all had beenwere instructed to meet with a parole officer.

# Reintegration and Public Perceptions

All participants revealed that upon being released and among the public, that they felt they were viewed differently by the public. Some participants believed that this was due to their drug use behaviour, while others felt it was due to because of their criminal history. Regardless of which component they believed created a differed perception of them, all participants felt that due to their history, their chances of being successful in finding employment or housing, were greatly reduced:

"I mean no one's look at my criminal record, look at my CV, no one's going to employ me" (Participant M)

These feelings and experiences—discussed by participants, supports previous literature documenting how offenders are stigmatiszed (LeBel, 2012; Moore *et al.*, 2015; Moore *et al.*, 2018). The existence of negative perceptions held by the public wasis also supported through the quantitative element of this research. In total, a-106 people completed the ATP with a mean score of 76 (SD= 16.99) being calculated (see Figure 1). Normal distribution of the data was presumed due Central Limits Theorem which states when the sample size is large than thirty (n>30), the data allows for certainty to larger populations (n>100) (Jolliffe, 1995). Nevertheless, a Kolmogorov Smirnov test, further demonstrated normal distribution, D (106) = 0.96, p=.018.

# [Figure 1 here]

A mean score of 76 illustrates the public holding a negative view of offenders who re-enter back into-society, further strengthening findings by Melvin *et al.* (1985) and Kjelsberg *et al.* (2007), as well as reinforcing echoing participants experiences which they recalled in their interviews. Additionally, tThese views create obstacles to a drug use offenders' rehabilitation, linking to labelling (Lanier and Restivo, 2015) and self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948) which consider how an individual may continue to engage in deviant behaviour to meet adhere to perceived stereotypes.

# **Discussion**

This <u>preliminary</u> study aimed to explore the experiences of drug use offenders both in and out of prison, as well as their re-entry into society upon their release. As reported by Like - Sondhi and Day (2012), who also conducted interviews but with a much larger sample of 96, participants recalled incidents that display a discrepancy between rehabilitation expectations and the actual lived experiences of drug use offenders. Findings highlight that more could be done both inside prison and when an offender is released to overcome obstacles that impact successful rehabilitation, such as: the presence of contraband in facilities, the availability of personal development opportunities varying based on the location and level of prison, the small timescale of offenders being notified of their released, and negative perceptions held by the public.

While current methods enforced by the government attempt to discourage offenders from using drugs in prison, the perseverance of individuals to gain illicit drugs through riskypresence of contraband techniques tremendously impedes the likelihood of a drug use offender adhering to the suggested rehabilitation programs provided by prison facilities. For example, in 2010, it was reported that 15 seizures were made of the synthetic cannabinoid substitute 'Spice' in prison facilities in England and Wales (The Centre for Social Justice, 2015). Seizures have since risen to 136 in 2011 and 4261 in 2016 (The Forward Trust, 2016). More control and prevention methods could be implemented to try and deter or prevent contraband entering prisons like having thorough body searches, the presence of drug detection dogs, regular cell searches and possible restrictions on substances which prisoners may be able to purchase, thus limiting the ability for individuals to create their own drug substitutes.

Furthermore, despite the ideologybelief of the dosage of methadone an offender receives being controlled and dictated by a qualified doctor, participants commented on the ease of which they were able to request changes to their dosage. While this is consistent with findings from Asher (2013), the data used in their study was only gathered from two prisons located in the North of England. Similarly, participants in this study had only been incarcerated in three different prisons also located in the North of England. Consequently, this limits the applicability of the findings to all facilities in the UK. Future research could aim to investigate the administration of methadone programs in other prisons across the UK, specifically in the South of England. Nonetheless, the This defective process of doctors abiding by the requests of the an individual offender without thorough investigation and evaluation of their circumstances is a clear issue. Reviews of an individual's medication and progress should therefore be regularly earried outconducted with by medical professionals to ensure that drug use offenders are monitored and offered appropriate guidance. Subsequently, this could aid in motivating an individual to reduce the strength of methadone they are prescribed and eventually end their drug use.

Better preparing individuals for their release is also needed. Participants spoke of often being told of their release at short notice or on the day itself. These experiences are consistent with more contemporary research, such as Jamin *et al.* (2021) who found the preparation of an offender's release to be poor. These findings come from a larger multi-country study that involved 104 prisoners and recently released people being interviewed and participating in focus groups. Therefore, this highlights the continued issue of offenders being unsuccessfully prepared for their release, supporting the findings of this smaller scale piece of research. Providing accommodation and possible employment upon their release was also a common suggestion from participants to decrease their drug use and recidivismreoffending. Indeed, employment would allow for an individual to gain economical security through legitimate means while also reducing the amount of leisure time an individual has to engage in drug use and criminal activity. Thus, supporting offenders to find employment and housing upon their release could contribute towards breaking of the cycle of re-offending and drug use.

Changing public perceptions of a drug use offender proves the most difficult factor to improve and may take a lengthy amount of time. Unlike previous studies that have utilised the ATP to make comparisons between specific groups, such as prisoners, prison staff, and college students (Melvin et al., 1985; Kjelsberg et al., 2007), this project aimed to explore perceptions held by the overall general public. As such, allowing anybody above the age of 18 to participate was hoped to lead to an inclusive sample. Although participants were not asked to disclose their demographic characteristics. Consequently, while normal distribution was judged to be obtained, it is difficult to conclude the extent of which a diverse sample was achieved. Future researchers should attempt to overcome this by asking participants to report their demographic characteristics which would allow for an increased understanding of their sample, as well as providing additional avenues of data analysis by comparing ATP scores in relation to demographic qualities.

Although Despite advancements have been made with changes in legislation, such as it now being against the law to refuse to employ someone due to their previous convictions unless deemed appropriate (Home Office, 2022), more is still needed to change public opinions. Participants spoke of feeling like they were viewed differently upon being released, linking to labelling theory (Lanier and Restivo, 2015) and self-fulfilling prophecies (Merton, 1948). Educating Providing education the public on how labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies can lead to stigma and marginaliszation (Goffman, 1963; Saladino *et al.*, 2021), would raise awareness of the barriers that inhibiting the successful rehabilitation and resettlement of drug use offenders. This would further highlight to the public how encouraging individuals to end their cycle of drug use and criminal behaviour, is also beneficial to society as doing so would reduce the wider negative consequences of crime and drug use activity.

### Limitations

While the research conducted successfully met the intended aims, some limitations can be identified. Firstly, it can be argued that the small interview sample prevented full saturation of the qualitative data to be achieved, thus inhibiting the possible emergence of further themes (Brunce et al., 2006). Additionally, having interviewed only one woman may have resulted in potential sex differences relating to experiences of drug use offenders to be unidentified. Thus, future research should aim to investigate if male and female drug use offenders are exposed to similar rehabilitation techniques and experiences. Furthermore, the number of questionnaires completed (n= 106) could be considered small-scale. Nevertheless, considering the context of the study, being was an undergraduate dissertation, it is suggested that sample sizes are appropriate for what was expected and achievable at the time. NonethelessHowever, future

research should seek to replicate this study on a larger scale, with the added inclusion of individuals from across Englandthe UK, not just the North-West region.

Also, while questionnaires successfully gained an broad understanding of public perceptions, concerns were raised by a couple of participants about the type of offender the questions related to. Participants explained that depending on the facts-details of the offence, their perceptions would alter. Future research should aim to explore how public perceptions of criminal behaviour may change based on the specifics of the an offence and characteristics of the offender. Moreover, the creation of a scale that explicitly explores perceptions toward drug use offenders, would also be advantageous. Furthermore, the way questionnaires were completed (then and there in public) could raise concerns of social desirability (Odendaal, 2015) and influencing participants responses. Thus, future researchers could aim to overcome this by encouraging participants to provide their responses in private, possibly through implementing an online questionnaire that can be accessed by participants when they are alone. Alternatively, future researchers could also seek to include an additional instrument, like the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowe and Marlowe, 1960), in the hopes of being able to identify if someone produces socially desirable answers; such. If so, their data could then be removed to enhance the quality and credibility of the acquired data.

### Conclusion

Overall, this small-scale mixed-methods research aimed to explore rehabilitation and resettlement experiences of drug use offenders, as well as considering public perceptions of this offender group. Multiple recommendations are made based on the findings gathered such as improving practices to decrease the presence of contraband in prisons, continued monitoring of an individual's use of methodone, providing additional support when preparing a drug use

offender for and upon their release, as well as educating the public on barriers that obstruct the resettlement of drug use offenders. Further research is still needed on a larger scale to compare rehabilitation experiences of <u>individuals in different facilities located in the UK and different between the sexes</u>, as well as a slong with examining how details of an offence may alter public perceptions of drug use offenders. Nonetheless, this study contributes to knowledge surrounding the rehabilitation and the resettlement experiences of drug use offenders.

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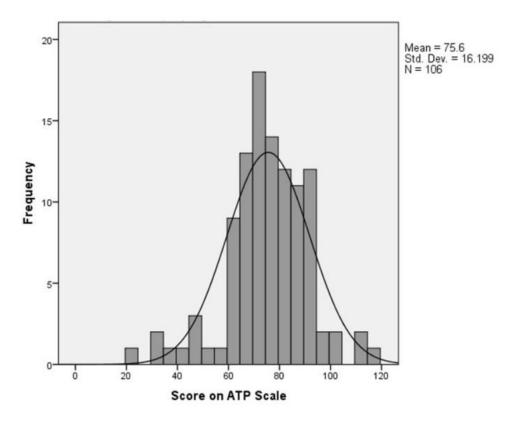


Figure 1: Histogram Displaying Attitude Towards Prisoners (ATP) Scores

Figure 1: Histogram Displaying Attitude Towards Prisoners (ATP) Scores  $188 x 167 mm \; (96 \; x \; 96 \; DPI)$