

**FAO**

Commissioners of Health and Justice  
Services and Health and Justice Portfolio  
Leads for circulation to providers

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Dear colleague

**Guidance for management of drug dependence in adult prisons**

This letter is to update you on the current position in respect of guidance for management of drug dependence in adult prisons, and to ask you to contact your providers concerning this.

As you may be aware, NHS England is working with experts and partner organisations including Public Health England (PHE) and the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) to redraft guidance on the clinical management of drug dependence in adult prisons in England. This is an on-going piece of work and linked to the redrafting of the NICE guidance on managing substance misuse (the 'Orange Book'), planned for publication in the second half of 2016.

But until this is complete, the existing guidance published in 2006 ([The Clinical Management of Drug Dependence in Adult Prison Settings](#)), remains extant. As Chair of the NHS England Health and Justice Clinical Reference Group (CRG), may I ask health and justice commissioners to disseminate this letter to providers as a reminder of the importance of adhering to the existing guidance when managing substance misuse in secure and detained settings including those individuals using novel psychoactive substances (NPS).

We do recognise however, that since publication of the existing guidelines there has been an increase in presentations of NPS and this presents increased challenges and risks for professionals owing to the paucity of evidence based guidance on the treatment of NPS and the variety of presentations.

We therefore ask providers to ensure services given are based on sound clinical practice and where guidelines are limited to seek out networks to support with the clinical management of such cases as follows:

- through good standards of assessments and risk management;
- accurate recording of symptoms and appropriate diagnosis and treatments;
- and

- use of external resource and multi –disciplinary teams to share approaches in managing complex cases.

We do appreciate the current challenges facing clinicians working in prisons; the Health and Justice CRG remains committed to the identification of ways to provide improved support to healthcare teams to meet complex care needs particularly where formal guidance is lacking. I will of course as Chair, ensure that you are informed when the amended guidelines are published so you can inform relevant stakeholders accordingly.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact.



Dr Linda Harris  
**Health and Justice Clinical  
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