

Conversation 16: The Misuse of Drugs Acts 1971 in 20th Century Scotland

- It is well drafted, well understood but it is not fit for purpose if we are taking a public health approach. Cannot be punished out of addiction.
- Convicting people trying to get their lives back together is counter-productive.
- Language – junkies, scum, neds etc. ‘Othering’ people who are in addiction.
- Sheriffs can punish for failure not the progress they have made. They may consider rehab but Sheriffs are not doctors – not appropriate. Does not address the root causes.
- Anyone in active addiction needs help. We still do not have a humane and responsive justice system.
- Many convicted under the act are those exploited by gangs and are small time users/dealers who are under extreme pressure and it is therefore not safe to go to the police if you cannot immediately re-house these people. **This is the majority of those convicted under the act.**
- Trafficked people are hugely involved. It is extremely hard to prove they are trafficked and are **still being prosecuted in most cases.**
- Mid-level dealers are not likely to be drug users. Most of the big players are beyond reach of the law and are not caught regularly. **Taking the most vulnerable out of the criminal justice system could help break the cycle.**
- Health and wellbeing is the best form of prevention. People are still hounded by police despite their traumatic backgrounds. Misuse of drugs act is creating more problems than solutions.
- Drug deaths mostly involve men. Why is this?
- There are pockets but policing is still mostly resistant to trauma. Leaders in police really need to create the space for forward thinking officers.
- Decriminalising drugs we would reduce demand on police and reduce violence. We need to stop peddling the tough on crime narrative. If your only tool is a hammer, what is the outcome?