

Introduction

This document describes the key features emerging from case study interviews undertaken by the Office of the Sentencing Council with a small number of women imprisoned for unlawful importation of drugs: many acting as drug 'mules'¹.

This work focused on women in response to documented concerns over the circumstances that may lead to the offending, the roles they tend to play in these types of offences and the impact of imprisonment on women and their families, particularly those with caring responsibilities. These issues have been raised specifically in relation to foreign national prisoners, with stories of women living in poverty who either need the money generated through carrying drugs, or are coerced into it, and for whom imprisonment may be particularly difficult, given their location in a different country² and language and cultural differences.

The aim of the interviews with the women involved in this exercise was therefore to discuss the background and circumstances leading up to their offence, their reactions to the sentence they received and the impact this has had on their lives and that of their families: essentially we wanted the women to 'tell their story' (see Appendix A for these accounts) - to provide a greater insight and understanding into some of the potential reasons for involvement in these offences and to highlight the type of roles they may play.

The information generated through this work has helped inform the Sentencing Council's development of a draft guideline on sentencing drug offences and has complemented a larger research study recently undertaken, examining public attitudes to the sentencing of drug offences more generally³.

Approach

Twelve face-to-face interviews - of up to an hour in length - were conducted with women convicted or charged⁴ of offences associated with unlawful importation of drugs in three prison establishments in England⁵. These prisons were approached specifically because they deal with large numbers of women convicted of these offences.

¹ The Sentencing Council's draft guideline which is currently out for public consultation defines a role that would include a drug 'mule' as a person "Engaged by pressure, influence, intimidation or relatively small reward". See Drug Offences Guideline: Professional Consultation.

² See, for example, the Sentencing Advisory Panel's paper on sentencing drug offences (http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100305172947/http://www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk/docs/drug_offences.pdf) and their paper on overarching principles of seriousness: (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100305172947/http://www.sentencing-guidelines.gov.uk/docs/Consultation%20paper%20on%20over-arching%20principles%20of%20sentencing.pdf>) for a summary of key issues in this area.

³ See Jacobson, Kirby and Hough (2011): *Public attitudes to the sentencing of drug offences*: London: Office of the Sentencing Council.

⁴ Eleven of the interviews were with women convicted of these offences. One interview was with a woman who was on remand but who has subsequently been convicted and sentenced.

⁵ A further interview was conducted in a fourth prison, but this did not meet the criteria for inclusion of being sentenced in England or Wales.

The interviewees were selected either through direct contact with the individual prisons, or via Hibiscus, the Female Prisoners Welfare Project⁶. Although establishments were asked to identify a range of different prisoners to take part – e.g. different ages, drug smuggled, nationalities etc – no strict sampling criteria was imposed.

In order to ensure all interviewees agreed to take part based on informed consent, an information sheet was put together, explaining the aims and objectives of the work, the input required from them, and that any information provided would not affect their specific sentence. They were then asked to sign a consent form stating that they had read and understood the information sheet and that they were willing to take part. In two of the establishments, this also covered consent to record interviews. No incentives were offered for participation. The interviews were conducted by Office of the Sentencing Council research staff.

The work adopted a case study approach in order to collect information directly from the perspective of the women themselves. The interviews were based on a semi-structured pre-designed interview schedule (see Appendix B for further details) to ensure a number of key details were collected. Other information, if relevant to the specific situation and circumstances of the women was also collected if it was raised spontaneously. The main areas covered within the interviews were:

- the interviewee's background and circumstances;
- the offence, and circumstances leading to the offence;
- risks associated with unlawful importation of drugs and awareness of these risks; and,
- impact of the offence/ sentence on the interviewee.

Given the qualitative approach adopted for this work, it is important to note that it does not purport to present any robust, objective information. The interviews were designed to allow the women to tell their own 'stories'; this document therefore needs to be read in the knowledge that the information provides only their subjective perspective and that no attempt has been made to verify the accuracy of the details that have been presented. It also only covers issues specific to the 12 women involved in this work; many other women imprisoned for similar offences may report different issues as being relevant. In addition, the level of information provided varied between interviews, depending on the extent to which interviewees were willing to discuss certain issues, and their fluency in English⁷.

The case studies do, however, highlight issues potentially associated with the circumstances and background leading to participation in unlawful drug importation and provide an insight into the impact of various situations and sentences on the lives of the women involved in this study.

⁶ For further details on Hibiscus please see <http://fpwphibiscus.org.uk/>

⁷ In one interview, a translator was used.

Issues emerging

The women

Most of the women interviewed were foreign national prisoners; two were British citizens. They came from a range of different countries and backgrounds and were of different ages; these characteristics are summarised below:

- *Age:* Ages ranged from 23 to 52 years, with most interviewees being in their twenties and thirties;
- *Nationality:* The women covered the following nationalities: South African, Brazilian, St Lucian, Jamaican, Venezuelan, Bahamian, North American, Barbadian, Portuguese, German and British;
- *Employment status:* Most of the women were working – either full time or part time – at the time of the offence, covering a variety of jobs, including hairdressing, secretarial work, shop work, public sector work, and childcare;
- *Housing issues:* At the time of the offence, the women were living in varied types of accommodation (owned or rented) - either with partners and children, or shared with family or friends. One woman was living on the street;
- *Childcare responsibilities:* Most interviewees had either one or two children, ranging from 11 months to 29 years old. A small number had no children.

Just under half of the interviewees described, to varying degrees, chaotic, difficult and stressful lives. Financial difficulties were raised by a number of the women, with reports of difficulties with paying household bills, providing for their children or getting out of debt; several were on benefits and some had moved into accommodation with family or friends to help relieve financial pressures. Several women also reported being regular drug users, which included use of cannabis, cocaine, crack cocaine, and methaqualone.

Some women did, however, describe a more comfortable way of life, having previously lived in their own homes and being relatively financially stable.

The offences

The majority of interviewees had been convicted of bringing cocaine into the UK - amounts ranging from 154 grams to 6 kilograms, with most bringing in 1 kilogram or more. Cannabis was also imported by one woman (11 kilograms) and one woman was convicted of being 'knowingly concerned' in the importation of drugs⁸. The method of importation for all of the women in these interviews was through concealment in a suitcase (often in concealed compartments inside the case); no one was made to swallow drugs and no one had drugs strapped to their person, although a small number had been asked to carry them in this way.

⁸ This means that although no drugs were found with her on arrest, she was convicted of being an organiser/ supervisor in an operation importing 15 kilograms of cocaine.

The origin of the drugs was generally the interviewee's home country, although those living in the UK tended to be bringing drugs back from either a holiday destination or from a visit to various family members. Some of the journeys with the drugs involved multiple stops before reaching the UK and almost all journeys were scheduled to end in the UK.

The circumstances

The majority of the women told us that they did not know that they were carrying drugs when they arrived in the UK, although several admitted being suspicious at times during the journeys - for example, Case Study 7 indicates that the interviewee actually asked her friend if she would be carrying drugs. This woman and some others admitted that in hindsight there were signs that they should have picked up on in relation to something potentially suspicious/ illegal happening but: "...at that time I wasn't thinking rationally".

One interviewee also knew that she was carrying a package that contained goods which it was unlawful to import, but thought this was something other than drugs - in her opinion something much less harmful: in her own words, "*drugs hurt people*" and consequently she said she would not have carried the package had she known it contained cocaine.

A small number of women did admit travelling with the specific purpose of smuggling drugs - these were often the women reporting desperate financial pressures whereby they needed to make some quick money - for example, Case Study 1 shows that this interviewee needed money to fight for custody of her son who had been kidnapped, and the interviewee in Case Study 6 needed money for accommodation for herself, her boyfriend who had just left prison and her baby:

I was scared, at that point, I have a baby... At that time we have no money, nowhere to live... I was with my son. I have to do this, it was a pressure. Big pressure on me. That person come to me and say [sic] "look I got a lot of money", ridiculous amount...

These women had all been introduced to 'someone who could help them', either by a friend or family member, or a friend of a friend, and in some cases they described what would appear to be organised networks for smuggling drugs where all arrangements (passports, flights and accommodation) were made for them. The woman who knowingly carried what she thought was something else illegal also reported needing the money to leave what she described as "*an abusive relationship*" (see Case Study 10). The involvement of someone the women trusted was a key theme across the interviews and appeared to be a considerable factor in many of the womens' involvement in these offences.

Some of the women mentioned elements of coercion being involved; passports/ documents being taken away from them once journeys had started, being chaperoned on the journey, being told what to do/ say (including what not to do/ say), receiving threats before or after travel. Some felt that they would have had to have gone through with the plans even if they changed their minds (see, for example, Case Study 6). Threats that were received typically related to causing harm to friends or family if they did not proceed or if they told anyone who else was involved in the offence.

As most of the women reported not being aware of the drugs in their suitcase there was little consideration of the risks associated with carrying them. Several of these women indicated that if they had known they were carrying drugs, they would not have done it, indicating an awareness that this was something that was wrong. Of those who commented, they knew that if they got caught with drugs they would receive a custodial sentence. Those who knowingly smuggled drugs also seemed to give little consideration to the risks - they were under the impression that they would not get caught (see Case Study 1), or if they did they would just be returned to their home country or could bribe or blackmail officials to send them back (see Case Study 6). They went ahead despite the risks, due to their desperate situations or because they were coerced into it. Sentence length was not a factor that was considered in any detail. The women who refused to swallow drugs had considered the health risks associated with this; these seemed to be based on stories they had heard where things had gone wrong when other people swallowed drugs (one actually said her friend had done it and had experienced stomach problems – see Case Study 1).

Almost half of the women had been promised payments for making these journeys, whether they knew they were carrying drugs or not. These payments ranged from the equivalent of approximately £2,000 to £4,400. Several also reported having holidays arranged (and sometimes paid) for them by friends or new suitcases given to them.

The Sentences

The women received varying sentences. The women convicted of unlawful importation of cocaine, a Class A drug, received custodial sentences of between 4 and 11 years, with most of these sentences being 8 years or less. The longer sentence here - of 11 years - and an additional one of 15 years - are likely to reflect the absence of a guilty plea and the nature of the offence, respectively (the woman receiving a 15 year sentence - Case Study 8 - was not sentenced as a drug 'mule', but rather as a supervisor/ chaperone in a wider operation). In contrast, the conviction for unlawful importation of cannabis, a Class B drug, received a much lower sentence of 15 months. The women had served between approximately a month and a half to three years of their sentence at the time of interview. One woman was on remand.

Impact on the women

Many of the women we spoke to described the impact of being caught unlawfully importing drugs as significant and several as "*devastating*". They often felt betrayed by family or friends who had been involved. This sense of betrayal, coupled with their time spent in custody (and for the foreign national prisoners this being served so far away from home), had led to breakdowns in relationships – indeed, some of the women reported that they had lost touch with children and other family members or had separated from partners. Those in work had largely lost their jobs and some would be homeless on leaving prison. Some reported experiencing health problems, including depression, since being caught.

Others reported the effect their offence had actually had on their family - some family members had found the situation very hard to cope with or had not wanted to be associated with them. Many had had to make

arrangements for children to be looked after in their absence with some expressing concern or worry about how their children were and that they were missing them. Foreign nationals had generally not seen their children since they left their country of origin; this was as much as several years ago in a few cases, although they were often in regular telephone contact. Several women reported a particularly bad effect on their children; impacts such as depression or not doing well at school were mentioned. A few women were very negative about the effect it would have on their lives when they were released from prison, in terms of finding work, accommodation and life being harder in general.

A minority of the women reported either receiving threats from the organisers of the offence before travelling with the drugs or whilst they were in prison, or that family members had received threats after their arrest (sometimes meaning that they had had to move away). These threats related either to the return of the drugs (and a suspicion on the organiser's behalf that the woman had absconded with the drugs) or were personal threats relating to safety (tied in with the organiser's fears that they would be reported to the authorities).

On a more positive note, some women reported that being caught had helped them to refocus their lives, with a few now being 'clean' from drugs. Some had gained qualifications whilst in prison and most of the foreign national prisoners planned to work on their return to their home country. Many of these women had been receiving help to draw up business plans for their return, to tie in with funding available on the Facilitated Return Scheme to encourage them to return to their home country⁹.

Conclusion

This small study has demonstrated that a range of different women, with different backgrounds and circumstances, can become involved in operations as drug 'mules'; some of these women admit to knowingly transporting drugs in this way, whilst others report travelling with no knowledge of the drugs. What is common amongst most of the women is the involvement of a trusted person in making arrangements or paying for their trips - either a family member, a friend or a friend of a friend. As a result the impact of the offence and sentence on the women was significant, with many reporting family betrayals, relationship breakdowns, health, housing or employment problems.

⁹ The Facilitated Return Scheme, launched in 2006, works in line with the Early Removal Scheme, and is designed to help provide incentives (to set up a business, with educational or vocational studies, help with housing and medical expenses) for foreign national prisoners from outside the European Economic Area to return to their country of origin on release from prison.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our contacts in the individual prisons for their help and support in setting up these interviews and Hibiscus, for their input into the development of the research materials, liaison with prisons and interviewees, and for providing chaperones for some interviews. Permission to conduct research with offenders was granted by the NOMS National Research Committee, to whom we are grateful. Above all, we are extremely grateful to all the women involved in this study – for agreeing to take part and for their willingness to tell us their stories.

The Authors

Emma Marshall and Karen Moreton
Office of the Sentencing Council

Appendix A: Individual case study accounts

Case study 1: African woman in her forties arrested with five kilograms of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'A' was living in a house with some members of her extended family; she had been living in the family home of her husband prior to their relationship ending. There were two other adults and two children in the house. She was self-employed but wasn't making much money. Her teenage son had been kidnapped and she needed money to pay legal fees to gain custody and to provide a stable life for him. 'A' had been introduced to drugs by a former partner and they would smoke cannabis, cocaine and methaqualone, every day if possible. She was still using drugs at the time of the offence.

A friend said that she knew someone that could get her some money quickly and introduced 'A' to him. Initially they would meet once a week to discuss arrangements; after a while she was introduced to more senior members of the organisation and after four months they agreed to make the necessary arrangements (including a passport). She was told that once the drugs were delivered to the UK and she had returned to her home country she would receive payment to the equivalent of approximately £2,600.

Once the passport had arrived, flights and accommodation were arranged for the trip which involved a stop in South America before travelling on to the UK. 'A' stayed in South America for a few weeks and during this time heard of a few other girls that were involved in similar arrangements. A suitcase containing the drugs was brought to her at the hotel and she was taken to the airport for her flight to the UK. 'A' had been asked to swallow the drugs but she refused. A friend of hers had swallowed drugs to transport them on a different occasion and had experienced stomach problems as they had got stuck.

Upon her arrival in the UK, 'A' was caught with five kilograms of cocaine in her suitcase and received a custodial sentence of six and a half years following an early guilty plea. At the time of the interview 'A' had served two and half years of her sentence.

'A' reported that she hadn't thought much about the risks that might be involved in bringing drugs into the UK as everything had been organised for her. She thought everything would be okay and hadn't heard of others getting caught. She said that if she'd thought she would be caught, she wouldn't have gone through with the trip.

'A' had mixed feelings about whether she regretted her involvement. She explained that her family and son were devastated about the situation but described going to prison as having helped her. It had made her more positive about life and more assertive and she had received help for her drugs problem.

Her son had been located and lived with 'A's family now. They spoke together once or twice a week. A friend she met in prison was helping her to arrange some State accommodation for when she returned home but she may have to live with her family first. She hoped to work on her return to her home country (she will need to pay for her son's education) – and would like to work in an area that is similar to her previous job.

Case study 2: European woman in her thirties arrested with 2.68 kilograms of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'B' was living alone in a flat with her two young children. She was not working at the time as her son was less than a year old. Prior to his birth, she had been doing secretarial work. 'B' described her financial situation as "okay" - she was on benefits and had additional money from her job: "I wasn't in silly debt or anything like that".

She had previously been on holiday to the Caribbean and made friends with people living there who she'd kept in touch with. One of the male friends contacted her and asked if she wanted another holiday, saying he would pay for the flight. She had previously declined the same offer. This time 'B' agreed and a contact of the friend arranged the flight and accommodation for her and her children once she had told them when she wanted to go.

'B' reported that things were fine when they arrived in the Caribbean; however it became clearer over time that something was being planned. She had seen her male friend on and off during the stay and at the end of the holiday he said that she needed to move to another hotel because he wanted to spend the night with her.

When 'B' arrived at the hotel with her children - which was in a remote area - there were two suitcases which she was asked to take to the UK. 'B' reported that it was obvious she had no choice - she was told she wouldn't be going home otherwise. She didn't want to argue as her children were there and she did not want them to worry, and she had been told the owner of the hotel was in the apartment next door. When her friend left, he locked her and the children in the room overnight.

The following morning she was told to take the children out shopping with strict instructions on when to come back. When they returned, she was told to transfer their belongings into one of the cases. She was shown the inside of the cases, but could not see anything - she did suspect, however, that something had been placed inside. Because of this, she recognised the potential risk of travelling with the cases, and was concerned about any risk involving the children.

Upon her arrival in the UK, 'B' was caught with 2.68 kilograms of cocaine in concealed compartments in her luggage. She reported being very worried about getting caught with whatever had been put in the cases when she went through Customs, but also that she felt almost relieved when she was stopped and searched; at this point she admitted she thought that something was in at least one of the cases. She received a custodial sentence of eight years for the offence, after entering a guilty plea. She had served almost two years of her sentence at the time of interview.

'B's children were living with family and she said she saw them on a regular basis. She reported being aware that she was missing out a lot in terms of her children growing up and knew that everything would be harder when she left prison. She hoped to eventually have a house but would have to live with family when she was first released. 'B' had learnt hairdressing in prison and might look to work in this area. She reported not wanting to be involved in anything like this again: "It has changed [my life] completely and it will be changed completely when I get out....It's always going to be with me. I'm always going to know that I've missed out on this chunk [of life]".

Case study 3: South American woman in her thirties arrested with one kilogram of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'C' was working in the retail sector and living with two family members. One had health issues and could not work. She described their financial situation as "critical": they were not well paid and had just paid for their father's funeral and for medical care for the family member with health issues. They did not make enough money to pay the rent and bills and were four months behind in paying their rent.

A friend that 'C' had known for a while knew of her financial situation and said she knew some men that could help her. Her friend arranged for her to meet the men, telling her that they had a job for her. It was only when she met them that she learnt that it involved smuggling drugs.

'C' reported not wanting to do this, but the men would not leave her alone after this first meeting. They kept on calling her and her friend and so she agreed to meet them again. At the third meeting they gave full information about what was required. They also threatened her family, saying they would kidnap and may kill them. They told 'C' that she had to take the flight as they already had a flight ticket as someone else had dropped out and they did not want the ticket to go to waste. The men told her that nothing would happen to her if she was caught, but she knew that if this did happen, she would be arrested or worse. They told her that a lot of people had done the same thing and not been caught.

'C' described what appeared to be an organised process that only took two weeks from applying for a passport to taking the flight to the UK from her home country. Her ultimate destination was not the UK but elsewhere in Europe. The men paid for her passport and the flight was arranged for her. They promised a payment on her return that was equivalent to approximately £2,500. The day after her passport arrived 'C' was taken to a house where the drugs had been prepared in pellets, but she refused to swallow them - she was worried about the risks associated with this and there was a large quantity of drugs. She had never done it before and was worried about her health if something went wrong. She had heard of people swallowing drugs before through the media.

Everything had been arranged for her to travel the following day. She was told that she would take the drugs in a suitcase, placed in a bag under her clothes. She was driven to a taxi which was then followed as it took her to the airport. She took the first flight to the UK; when she arrived, she was caught with one kilogram of cocaine when she went through Customs.

'C' reported that she felt that the men were part of a big organisation doing this kind of thing. She also thought that her friend was involved with the gang as a 'recruiter' – family had told her they'd heard of her looking for other people to recommend to the men. She said that these men had tried to find her since she was caught through contacting her family, but didn't seem to believe she was in prison as they didn't think she would have been searched in the UK. She had been told that they had asked for the name of the prison she was in.

'C' received a six year sentence with an early guilty plea, of which approximately a year and a half had been served at the time of interview. She reported that being in prison had had a significant impact on her life. She was far away from her family and did not know where they were now as they had been moving a lot since receiving threats from the gang. She had not spoken to them in over three months. She was not sure about what would happen when she returned home. She hoped to stay with her family and find work.

Case study 4: Caribbean woman in her twenties arrested with 700 grams of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'D' was doing secretarial work and also hairdressing for friends some weekends. She was living in a house with three adult family members. Everyone was working and she described their financial situation as being "very good".

'D' was due to visit family in the UK; a family member living in the UK contacted her to say that someone from her husband's family would drop off a package for 'D' to take with her. A man visited her at home in the Caribbean and gave her the package. 'D' explained that she could not see in the package but assumed it contained seasoning/ spices; she explained to the interviewer that it was common practice for this to happen in the Caribbean when visiting friends/ family living in other countries. She did not therefore question what was in the package and put it in her suitcase.

'D' was caught with 700 grams of cocaine which was found in a bottle of pepper sauce when her baggage was searched at UK Customs. At first she was told that it was two kilograms, but the quantity was later reduced. She received a sentence of seven years for this, with a guilty plea. She had originally pleaded not guilty but changed her plea at a later stage. When asked what she thought of her sentence 'D' commented: "*what I hear from other people...I had 700 grams...I got a year for each 100 grams...and other people who have 3 kilograms/ 5 kilograms will come out with 5 years...but I got more.*" At the time of interview 'D' had served almost two and a half years of her sentence.

'D' commented that she was not sure if the family member who had contacted her to say the package would be delivered knew that it contained drugs – this individual and their partner have since denied any knowledge. She explained that she found the situation upsetting as it was a family member who gave the man in the Caribbean her contact details. She reported that the family member's partner was now in prison and suspected that it was drugs-related.

When asked about the effect getting caught had had on her family's life 'D' commented that her parents and boyfriend were finding it very hard to cope with the situation: "*My dad and my mum are finding it very hard...only when I get out they will be okay.*"

She spoke to them every week and still had some contact with other family and friends. Her mother no longer spoke to the family member in the UK as she denied any involvement with the package. When 'D' goes home she hoped to start a hairdressing business with the funding she expected to receive on the Facilitated Return Scheme.

When asked, she said she was not aware of people being given drugs to take to other countries in packages before she had gone to prison and that if she'd known there were drugs in the package she was carrying, she would have refused to take it. She reported knowing as soon as she was told there were drugs in her bag that she would go to prison but she didn't know how long she would go there for.

Case study 5: Caribbean woman in her twenties arrested with 500 grams of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'E' was living in Europe in a house with her young daughter and boyfriend; sometimes other friends would live there too. Her second child (also quite young), was living with her father in the Caribbean. She had been working as a hairdresser and was in a lot of debt – more than £5,000, but was not sure of the exact amount. Half of her rent was being paid for by the State but she explained that she could cope with paying the other half herself.

She decided to visit her family in the Caribbean and bought her own flights. Two weeks before she was due to travel, a family member asked if his girlfriend could travel on the same flight. 'E' knew the girl, they were friends, and so they travelled together. 'E' was told by the family member that they would be given something to bring back by a man in his family, but 'E' didn't question this as she assumed it would not be illegal and trusted him. She was told to give the package to the family member when reaching the UK and was not to receive any payment. She explained: *"I did not go with the intention to bring anything back"*.

'E' travelled to the Caribbean and whilst she was staying with her family a man visited and gave her a laptop bag - which appeared to be empty - to take back to the UK. She was told that it was a really good laptop bag from America and that it could only be bought over there. As she had been told that the man's brother lived in America she believed what she was told. The family member's girlfriend who had travelled with her was also given a similar laptop bag.

Upon entry to the UK, the two women were stopped by Customs and cocaine was found in concealed compartments in the two laptop bags they had been given and which they had packed inside their suitcases. 'E' was told that 500 grams was found in her case and she received a nine and half year custodial sentence for the offence (no guilty plea was entered). She had served almost two and half years at the time of interview. The other woman received a lesser custodial sentence of seven and a half years (for a similar amount of cocaine) after an early guilty plea was entered and after admitting to having done it before. This lesser sentence was frustrating to 'E' who saw herself as being innocent: *"[I didn't enter a guilty plea]. I thought...why am I going to answer to something that I know nothing about?"*

'E' had heard of this kind of thing happening before but as it was a family member who asked her to transport something she didn't question it. When asked whether she was aware of the risks involved in transporting drugs she answered that she was aware of them and of the likelihood of going to prison. However she explained that she was not thinking about this at the time as she didn't know there were drugs in the bag.

'E' had not spoken to her daughter in the Caribbean for over a year. She described the effect this had had on her: *"I went into depression. I lost my daughter...because of this her dad won't let me speak to her [starts to cry]"*. She sees her other daughter regularly when she visits with her father ('E's boyfriend). 'E' speaks to her father and mother on the telephone and her father, in particular, is very supportive. She is clearly upset about the things that have happened in the family and the effect on her health. She explained that as the family member who contacted her about the package to be transported was on her mother's side of the family, this had had a negative impact on her relationship with her mother and that they had not really spoken about it.

On her release from prison, 'E' will be deported to the Caribbean. She would like to open her own hairdressing business there and had been doing some business planning for this whilst in prison. She was not sure if she'd have contact with her daughter that lives there as this would depend on her father. Her boyfriend had said that he would visit her there whenever he could and bring the other daughter with him.

Case study 6: South American woman in her twenties arrested with six kilograms of cocaine

Woman 'F' was largely brought up by family members other than her mother and lived in South America. Eventually she moved in with her mother and mother's partner but her mother started drinking a lot and 'F' was subject to physical and sexual abuse at home. She reported being used as a "slave" at home and being very scared. She left her mother's house in her early teens and started living on the street. 'F' and her boyfriend were both involved in using drugs - cannabis, cocaine and crack cocaine - and also selling them. While living on the street she had a baby and explained that there was no option but to sell drugs to get by; she did not want to work as a prostitute.

This was 'F's first time bringing drugs to another country. Her boyfriend had been in prison and when he came out they had nowhere to live, no money and she was worried about her baby. She was under a lot of pressure to get some money from somewhere. A friend of her boyfriend approached her and said that she could make a 'ridiculous' amount of money (a sum equivalent to approximately £2,000) taking some drugs to the UK. The money would have helped them secure accommodation and living expenses for a few months. 'F' had heard of other girls, especially young girls, taking drugs to other countries and getting lots of money. Some of them got lucky and didn't get caught, others were caught and some got kidnapped or killed: "It's just how lucky you are and the people you are working with".

She already had a passport but the friend bought the flights and arranged accommodation, in a stop-over country and in the UK (where she expected to stay for three weeks before returning home). She was taken to a hotel the night before the flight and her passport was taken from her. She was asked to swallow drugs but refused to do so. She was also asked to strap drugs to her body but refused, and therefore the drugs were placed in a suitcase. The next day she flew to the stop-over destination and the day after she flew onto the UK with four people accompanying her. A woman was telling her what she needed to do during the journey and when they were caught she was telling her what to say to the police whilst they were on remand in prison.

When she went through UK Customs she was found to have six kilograms of cocaine in her suitcase underneath some clothes. 'F' explained that once she had committed to transporting the drugs she could not change her mind "Once you say yes, you cannot hold it back". She was worried about doing it, but also worried about the consequences of not doing it. She thought there was a 50/50 chance of getting caught but didn't know anything about what would happen to her if this happened. She trusted the friend, as they had told her it would be easy and that she would receive payment on her return. Another friend told her that if she got caught she would be able to bribe officials and return home. She believed what she was told. 'F' received a custodial sentence of seven years after entering an early guilty plea and had served three years at the time of interview.

After being caught and whilst on remand, she received threats from the friend via the woman who had accompanied her on the flight (who was in the same prison). He said he would "do something" to her family and take her son away if she reported him to the police.

'F' had stopped using drugs since going to prison, but her boyfriend had since died in prison in South America. She talked to several family members every month or when she could. She last saw her baby over a year ago - he was being cared for by a family member. When 'F' leaves prison she'll be sent back to South America. She hoped to work but didn't know what she'd do as the only qualifications she had are the ones she had got in prison. She wanted to look after herself and live with her son and the family member caring for him. 'F' reported she would not take drugs to any country again; she would not want to go to prison again or leave her son. 'F' did not think that the amount of time in prison would make a difference to deterring someone from offending in this way.

Case study 7: Caribbean woman in her 30s arrested with 1.9 kilograms of cocaine

At the time of the offence woman 'G' was living in a house in the Caribbean with her son, a friend and her friend's mother and daughter. She had separated from her husband and had difficulty paying rent/bills and buying school supplies and other items for her son. 'G' was in approximately £15,500 debt. She thought living with her friend would help both of them as they could share the bills as her friend also had financial difficulties - for example there was an outstanding electricity bill to pay.

Another friend knew about 'G's financial difficulties and approached her asking if she would transport a bag to North America to a friend. At first, 'G' was sceptical about what was in the bag but she'd known the friend for 15 years and had seen her travel, often taking things from one place to another. 'G' had previously asked her what the trips involved and if she was transporting drugs. 'G's friend denied drugs were involved and showed her as an example a suitcase that was due to be transported which didn't seem to have any drugs in it. 'G' therefore agreed to transport the suitcase as she trusted her friend. The friend promised her payment of a sum of money equivalent to approximately £930 upon collection of the case at the destination in North America.

The friend arranged the flight and brought the suitcase for transportation to 'G's house. She asked her which hotel she wanted to stay in and arranged for a man at the destination to pay for it. 'G' travelled to North America with the suitcase and the man met her at the hotel to take the case and paid her the £930. She was due to stay there for two days before returning to her home in the Caribbean; however, the man said he needed the case transported to the UK. 'G' phoned her friend and asked her if she thought it was okay; the friend said yes *"it'll be fine, go ahead"*. The man also explained that upon her arrival in the UK she would be given some cash to transport back to the Caribbean. He explained that this would be within the legal limits of transporting cash between countries. She was due to receive an additional payment equivalent to around £3,100 upon safe receipt of the case in the UK.

The man paid for the flight to the UK and 'G' was again asked to choose which hotel she wanted to stay in; this was arranged for her. She was due to stay there for three days and had planned to go sightseeing and shopping. She described it feeling like a paid holiday. The man brought the suitcase back to the hotel; 'G' searched it and couldn't see anything in it. He explained that someone would visit her in the hotel in UK to collect the case and make arrangements for the transportation of the money back to the Caribbean.

On her arrival in the UK, 'G' was caught with 1.9 kilograms of cocaine in hidden compartments in the suitcase. She was sentenced to seven years in custody following an early guilty plea. She said that she did not consider herself as being guilty as she was not aware of the drugs; however she knew a guilty plea would reduce her sentence. At the time of interview, 'G' had served a month and a half of her sentence.

'G' explained not feeling obliged to take the suitcase. She explained having considered what the risks might be, especially in relation to transporting drugs, and that she comforted herself with the fact that she'd not seen anything illegal inside the suitcase. She was less concerned about travelling to the UK as she had already been through Customs and nothing had been found. She explained: *"at that time I wasn't thinking rationally"*. She knew, when asked, that being caught with drugs would result in a custodial sentence. If she had known there were drugs in the case she would not have transported it due to the *"huge risk of being caught and imprisoned"*.

'G' was really concerned about her son who was now being looked after by her friend. Going to prison had been really hard because of this. Her son used to be top of the class but he was now finding school difficult. She talked to him and her friend regularly. She did not know what would happen when she returned and whether she'd still have a job; she just wanted to take good care of her son and find work.

Case study 8: European woman in her thirties arrested for being 'knowingly concerned' in the importation of drugs

Woman 'H' had been living in Europe with her husband and young son and was working in a hospital. At the time of the offence, she had recently moved to another country to study an arts course. Her son had moved with her and was shortly due to start school. She had moved a month early and was working in a factory. Her financial situation was "okay" as her husband was also helping to support her.

'H' wanted to go on holiday before her course started and booked to go to the Caribbean. She had been to a few travel agents to ask about holidays and had bumped into a friend, who she knew through another friend. Her friend said that he had just arranged for three people to go to the Caribbean through a travel agent that he used and that she could join the trip if she wanted as it would keep the costs down. He had said that the three others were also going on holiday. He offered the best price so she booked it through this friend.

Everything was booked for her (flights, accommodation) and she stayed there for a week. 'H' didn't see the people she travelled with when she was there but they did travel together. On the way back, they were arrested at a UK airport. She was arrested after she had collected her bag and been through Customs and was waiting for a bus. 'H' thinks this was because she was travelling with other people who had been arrested with drugs on them (five kilograms of cocaine each) – she was not caught with drugs. Her friend who had organised the trip also got arrested after going to the airport.

'H' was charged with being 'knowingly concerned' in the importation of drugs and received a 15 year sentence (no guilty plea was entered). At her trial, she was accused of being the organiser of the operation as they had found out that she had been in touch with her friend who had arranged the trip for her. All the other defendants pleaded guilty, but she pleaded not guilty despite knowing she would get a lesser sentence if she did so.

'H' reported that this situation had really affected her: *"It's too much [the sentence]. I'm not an organiser, I'm not a supervisor. So I can't accept it, for 15 good years... It's too harsh..."*

She said that she talked to her son and husband every day, who were now living together again. She also talked to her parents and another family member, who visited her. Her parents didn't actually know what had happened, but her siblings did and they did their best to support and encourage her. Her husband was supportive. She said that she hoped to go back to work at the hospital when she returned home and was using her time in prison to study.

Case study 9: Northern American woman in her fifties arrested with 1.394 kilograms of cocaine

Woman 'I' was living a comfortable, financially secure lifestyle in North America. She had worked for many years in the public sector and lived in a large house with her husband; she had a grown up son in his twenties. She divorced her husband, took a year off work and went on a trip to South East Asia. Whilst on this trip, she met a new partner before returning home. She returned to stressful times, however, as she was told it was not certain that she could return to her old job due to a recruitment freeze.

To help deal with this, her partner suggested she visit his brother in South America for a break. They had never met before, but she was not concerned as she was a fluent Spanish speaker. She cashed in some jewellery to make the trip. When she arrived, she stayed in a hotel and met her partner's brother. Whilst with him, she mentioned she was thinking of ending her relationship - his brother tried to persuade her not to, suggesting she take a trip to London to help her relax. He offered to pay for this trip as she didn't have the money for it. 'I' agreed but said she needed new suitcases to replace her old ones. Later, new suitcases arrived which did not feel heavier than normal, along with an envelope containing flight tickets for the next day. The brother said he would call later, but this did not happen.

'I' took flights initially to the Caribbean, where there was a long stopover and she stored her luggage in the left luggage department. Her case was opened during check-in here and nothing was found. When she arrived in the UK, she went through the 'nothing to declare' section. She was stopped, but was happy for her luggage to be checked as she did not think she was carrying anything. Her bag was x-rayed and then cut open, although she did not witness this. Cocaine was found in the bags – initially it was said that this weighed 5 kilograms, but in court, this was cited as being 1.394 kilograms.

'I' entered a guilty plea at committal stage. She received a sentence of seven years and four months and had served around two years of this.

She attributed the planting of drugs to her partner's brother, but was not sure whether her partner was involved. She said that she was not experienced with drugs and was not a habitual criminal, but admitted that in hindsight there were signs that something was strange that she dismissed. She was not sure how the drugs were due to reach the brother in the end – she thought that maybe a robbery would have occurred in the UK in her hotel room or that she would have been told the truth so that she could return the drugs.

'I' said that there had been a huge impact on her; she reported that it had "*devastated*" her life. She was homeless, jobless and had credit problems – she would need to apply for bankruptcy on her return home. She had no family support - she was an only child and her parents were deceased. The experience had had health implications for her.

She planned to return to North America. She was preparing her CV and planned to search in advance for jobs, although felt that her age would not benefit her. She had applied for Facilitated Return Scheme funding to help her and said she may look to set up an online business. She didn't plan to get involved in anything like this again.

Case study 10 – European woman in her forties arrested with 1.6 kilograms of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'J' was living with her partner and had one daughter in her twenties; she was not working. She reported her relationship as "abusive" and knew she would need money to leave it - as a couple, they were financially secure as her partner earned a good wage overseas; however, she had no money of her own.

She was visiting her mother in another country when another family member said that he knew of a deal via a friend in which she would get paid the equivalent of approximately £4,400 for transporting a package of goods that, although not unlawful itself, was in a large enough quantity to want to avoid declaring for tax purposes (and was therefore unlawful). He said he personally wouldn't be able to do this for legal reasons. 'J' agreed to do this – she felt the contents of the package would hurt no-one (she had checked) and although she knew it was wrong, couldn't see the harm. She made a clear distinction between this and transporting drugs: "drugs hurt people".

She returned home and was given an email address and password where she would pick up messages. A friend of the family member put money into a bank account for her and she travelled to pick up the flight, having booked tickets online. She met the friend who bought her suitcases and told her what route to take to fly to South America (where she stayed for a few days with someone swapping over the suitcases), then to two different locations in the Caribbean, and finally to the UK. She didn't know where in the cases the package was stored and was told to text the friend when she got back so that he could meet her in a hotel.

'J' was found with 1.6 kilograms of cocaine in the corners of the case. She received a sentence of 12 years for this, with 1 year deducted for her age, character and remorse shown (no guilty plea was entered). She had served 14 months of the sentence at the time of interview.

'J' reported no knowledge of the drugs and didn't consider herself guilty (the reason for not entering a guilty plea). She had never been arrested before for anything. In terms of thinking about the risks, she reported that she didn't really do this. She thought she could get caught (for transporting goods evading tax), but had been told that no-one had been caught and if they were, there were good solicitors who could help. She did worry, but had put this out of her mind and didn't think she would go to prison for her actions.

She had had no support during this situation - her partner had ended the relationship and she had had no contact from the family member who suggested this to her. Her mother had also recently died and her daughter wouldn't speak to her and had not been in contact; she had no wider family.

'J' described the impact on her as "devastating". There had been an impact on her physical health - she was in a lot of pain - and found it hard to come to terms with the impact this had on her family. She said she was not sure what she would do at the end of her sentence.

Case study 11: Caribbean woman in her twenties arrested with 154 grams of cocaine

At the time of the offence, woman 'K' was making money through hairdressing and occasional work. Neither seemed to be particularly regular, more on a needs must basis (typically when there were bills to pay). She was living in what she described as a 'shed' in her mother's backyard which she had paid to have built; this was for her and her two young children to sleep in and keep their belongings in. When they needed to use a kitchen or bathroom they would use the facilities in her mother's house. Her mother lived there with 'K's brother. Her mother was not working and therefore 'K' would help to pay the bills.

'K' described her financial situation as "okay". She could make approximately £60 a day doing hair which would typically be spent on treats for her children, contributions to her mother, pocket money for her brother and some on cannabis. She was also receiving around £40 a week from the welfare system. She was able to save some money for shopping trips outside of the country where she lived and had previously been to the UK on a shopping trip as it was cheaper to buy certain things there.

Just before she was due to go on another shopping trip and to visit friends in the UK, 'K' bumped into a friend who she knew was a drug dealer. She told him that she was going to the UK and that she had nowhere to stay as a family member had dropped out of going at the last moment and she was supposed to have been staying with the family member's friend. The friend that she bumped into offered for her to stay with his friend and she agreed, saying that she wouldn't be at his place much anyway. She had also mentioned that she needed a new suitcase.

On the day she was due to travel the friend arrived with a suitcase. It was new and in the original packaging so she did not worry that there might be something illegal in it despite her mother warning her to be careful.

She travelled direct from the Caribbean to the UK. At the airport in the UK her suitcase took a long time to emerge and two immigration officers were there when she collected it from the carousel. They questioned her about the contents of the suitcase and put it through an x-ray machine. They found 154 grams of cocaine (16 per cent pure) in concealed compartments (although she had been told originally that it was 900 grams, this was eventually cited as 154 grams). She received a four year custodial sentence for this (with an early guilty plea)¹⁰.

Her friend from home had not told her she needed to give the suitcase to anyone. He had not been in touch since she was arrested and neither had the friend of his that she was supposed to be staying with in the UK.

In terms of impact, 'K' reported really missing her baby and worrying about her other child - she was worried that her mother wouldn't take proper care of them. Her mother was angry with her and said that things were very hard back home. They spoke every two or three weeks. The interviewee said that she spoke to a friend; the friend checked on the children to see if they were okay.

Whilst in prison 'K' planned to do a lot of writing. She reported wanting to make her own money and to have her own house and raise her children properly when she was released.

¹⁰ Confirmation of conviction and the sentence length was provided at a later stage through contacts within the prison; at the time of the interview, 'K' was on remand.

Case study 12: European woman in her twenties arrested with 11 kilograms of cannabis

At the time of the offence, woman 'L' was living with her partner and they both worked at a bar. She had previously been working in childcare and had started studying for a qualification but had not finished the course. She described their financial situation as "comfortable" and that they were "getting by ok". They had to pay approximately £15 a week towards rent and the State would pay the rest. They had to pay bills on top of this.

'L' was due to go on holiday with her boyfriend to the Caribbean and to go to a family wedding. Her boyfriend was from the Caribbean but as she had never met his family before she had said that she would prefer to stay in a hotel. Her boyfriend later found he could not go; she therefore went on her own as she didn't want to waste the money they had spent.

After a week she had to return home for medical reasons and she called her boyfriend to tell him. At the airport in the Caribbean, her suitcase was searched thoroughly (including testing liquids, etc.) and she was searched and made to do a urine test. No drugs were found. She described her bag as having been "destroyed" during the search process. At times the bag was taken out of her sight.

When she got to the UK, her suitcase was the last bag on the conveyor belt. She noticed it felt very heavy. 'L' was then stopped by Customs officials and asked questions about her holiday. She noticed there was a padlock on the suitcase that wasn't hers, but presumed it had been put on the bag after it had been searched at the airport in the Caribbean. She did not have the keys for the padlock and explained to the Customs officials that it was not her's. They searched the suitcase and she noticed that most of her belongings were no longer there. They found a large amount of cannabis (11 kilograms) under a towel. She was very worried that it could have been cocaine.

'L' believed the cannabis was put in her bag when it was searched at the departure airport and that her boyfriend's friends were somehow involved - they were the only ones that knew the details of their holiday and they were at the flat when she called him to tell him she was coming home early. She described these friends as being "people that she trusted" as she had known them for a long time. Her boyfriend had since said that he thought they were involved as they had told him that "it wasn't supposed to happen like that" - someone they knew was supposed to go to the Caribbean for the drugs but couldn't. 'L' thought that they must have paid someone at the airport to put the drugs in her suitcase.

'L' received a custodial sentence of 15 months after entering a guilty plea. She had served five months of the sentence at the time of interview.

She said that she had heard of people transporting drugs between countries before but didn't think that going to the Caribbean was a risk. She had never been there before and her boyfriend's family lived there. She just "thought it was a nice country".

Her sister was the only person from her family that knew she was in prison and she spoke to her at least once a week. She came from a big family and no-one apart from herself had ever been involved in crime. She thinks that her mother would blame herself. She speaks to her boyfriend every month, but had not seen him for five months.

She had lost her flat as both her and her boyfriend were in prison and were in arrears with their rent (although would appeal this decision as she can provide proof that she was in prison). She would like to finish her studying for her qualifications and go back to childcare work when she was released - she wanted to "work [her way] up the ladder". However, she was not sure if she would be able to do this with a criminal record.

Appendix B - Drug 'mules' interview topic guide

INTRODUCTION

- Thank you for agreeing for me to come and talk to you today.
- My name is [NAME] and I am a researcher working for the Sentencing Council. This is an organisation that sets guidance for judges to use when they make decisions about how to sentence someone who has gone to court after committing a crime.
- We are doing some research to contribute to new guidance for judges on sentencing drug offences. One part of the research involves talking to a small number of people who have been convicted of a drug offence, like yourself. This is so that we have a better understanding of why people commit these types of crimes. Our talk today will not affect your sentence or the time you spend in prison and is completely confidential.
- Our talk will last up to an hour and I would like to ask for your permission to record it. The reason I'd like to record it is so that I can concentrate completely on what you are saying rather than having to write everything that you say down. Your name will not be on the recording and once we have finished the research it will be deleted. When we write our report no one will be able to identify you from what has been said. **Can I check if you are happy for me to record our talk today?**
- As a researcher I am interested in hearing about your experience only. You should not tell me any names of people involved and you can stop our conversation at any time. If there's anything you would rather not talk about, or do not understand, about please let me know.

ASK ALL:

- Do you have any questions about our talk today?

A. THE OFFENCE and CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO OFFENCE

- 1) Could you tell me a little about yourself?
 - **PROBE** What country are you from?
 - **PROBE** How old are you?
 - **PROBE** Are you married/single/divorced/in a relationship?
 - **PROBE** Do you have children? If so how many and what age? Were you their primary carer?

- 2) Could you tell me about your situation in your home country before you were caught for this offence?
 - **PROBE** Were you working? Were you studying?
IF WORKING: What kind of work were you doing?
IF STUDYING: What were you studying?
IF NEITHER: Were you a housewife? Were you doing something else?

- **PROBE** Was your husband/partner working? What kind of work were they doing? (If not working, probe around study, etc.)
- **PROBE** What kind of accommodation were you living in? Were you sharing this with anyone? Who were you sharing with?
- **PROBE** What was your financial situation?

Thank you very much. I'd like to move on to the reasons you are here today.

- 3) What type of drug did you bring into the UK? How much did you bring?
- 4) Did you bring the drugs into the UK from your home country? If not, where did you bring them from?
- 5) How did you bring the drugs into the UK?
- 6) Could you tell me about what led to you being involved in bringing drugs into the UK?
 - **PROBE** How much did you know about this type of thing before? What did you know and where from? Did you know someone that had done it before?
 - **PROBE** Had you heard of people doing it before? What had you heard?
 - **PROBE** Did someone you know tell you about it? If so who? What did they tell you?
 - **PROBE** Did someone else tell you about it? How did you know this person?
 - **PROBE** Did this person encourage you to do it? If so how did they encourage you? What did they say?
 - **PROBE** Did you know that you were carrying drugs into the UK? Did you know when they were put in your bag/luggage?

IF NOT ALREADY COVERED:

- 7) What was your main reason for bringing drugs into the UK?
 - **PROBE** Did you need money? If so, what did you need the money for? When were you going to receive the money? CHECK AMOUNT EXPECTED TO BE PAID IF NOT COVERED ALREADY
 - **PROBE** Did you do it to pay off a debt? If so what was the debt?
 - **PROBE** Did someone make you do it? Why?

ASK ALL:

You told me earlier that [fill in details of method used to bring drugs into the country]...

- 8) Why did you bring them in this way?
 - **PROBE** Did someone tell you to do this? Who was this? How did you know them? What did they say?
- 9) How were arrangements for transportation made? (i.e. flights, transport to airport, etc.)
 - **PROBE** Did you make these arrangements yourself? Were the arrangements made by someone else? If so did you know this person? How?
 - **PROBE** Did you pay for this yourself? If not, did someone else provide the money for this?
 - **PROBE** Did someone else come with you on the flight? If so, did you know this person? How did you know them?

- 10) How did you receive the drugs?
- **PROBE** Did you pick them up from someone? If so who? How?
 - **PROBE** Did someone deliver them to you? If so who? How?
 - **PROBE** Was everything provided for you?
- 11) What sentence did you receive?
- **PROBE** Did you plead guilty? If so when?
- 12) How long have you been on your sentence so far?

ASK ALL:

You've already told me that [fill in details of situation of how they came to be involved]. I'm now going to ask you a few questions about your thoughts on the risks involved in this before you came to the UK. If you didn't know anything about the risks and what might happen to you please say so.

B. RISKS and AWARENESS OF RISKS

- 1) Did you think about the risks involved in this?
- If yes:**
- **PROBE** What did you think the risks were? Probe on risks as set out below (e.g. getting caught/ prison/ health/ threats)
- 2) What were you told by others about the risks involved?
- **PROBE** Who told you this?
 - **PROBE** Did they tell you might get caught? If so what did they say would happen to you?
 - **PROBE** Did they say you would be sent back to where you'd come from?
 - **PROBE** Did they say you could go to prison? If so, how long did they say you could go to prison for?
 - **PROBE** Did they say what would happen if you didn't carry the drugs?
- 3) What did you think would happen if you got caught?
- **PROBE** Why did you think this?
 - **PROBE** Did you think there was a risk of going to prison? If so, how long did you think you could spend in prison?
- 4) How worried were you about getting caught?
- **PROBE** Where you a) Not worried? b) A bit worried? c) Very worried?
Why do you say this? (Risk of going to prison? Risk to self? Risk to family? Other?)
IF A BIT OR VERY WORRIED: Did you ever consider changing your mind? If not, why not?
[Probe around the key reason(s) that made them commit the offence]
- 5) What did you think would happen if you didn't carry the drugs?
- **PROBE** Why did you think this?

IF POTENTIAL HEALTH RISK MENTIONED ASK:

- 6) How worried were you about the health risks?
- **PROBE** Where you a) Not worried? b) A bit worried? c) Very worried?
IF A BIT OR VERY WORRIED: Did you ever consider changing your mind? If not, why not?
[Probe around the key reason(s) that made them commit the offence]

Finally, we'd like to ask you a few questions about how this experience has affected you.

C. IMPACT OF PROCESS ON OFFENDER / FACTORS THAT MAY MOTIVATE CHANGE

- 1) What effect has being caught for this offence had on your life?
- **PROBE** What impact has it had directly on you? On your partner? On your children? On your family? On your finance? On your health?
 - **PROBE** What contact do you have with your family/partner/children now?
- 2) What will happen when you go back home?
- **PROBE** Will you have accommodation? (What kind?) Will you see your children? Will you work? (What kind of work?)

ASK IF COERCION NOT A KEY FACTOR:

- 3) Do you think you would smuggle drugs into the UK again?
- **PROBE** If so why? If not, why not?
- 4) Do you think you would smuggle drugs somewhere other than the UK?
- **PROBE** If so why? If not, why not?
- 5) If you knew that you could go to prison how would this affect your decision to do this?
- **PROBE** If not, why not?
 - **PROBE** If yes, how would it affect and why?
- 6) Would the amount of time that you could spend in prison make a difference? If so what kind of difference and why?