I feel the any work providing an indication of needs within prisons and ways to assess them is important and this paper with some revisions will add to the knowledge base.

1. Minor Essential Revision - The use of ‘aye’ in the abstract (pg 3) may not mean anything to an international audience. Later in the paper it is explained so is fine but I would suggest for the abstract ‘yes’ is used instead.

2. Minor Essential Revision – Background pg 6 para 3 - Similarly to above I believe the use of the phrase ‘front of mind’ might not translate well to an international audience.

3. Major Compulsory Revision – Methodology pg 10 para 2 and 3 - I am not certain it is clear to readers exactly what the response rate is from the information here. Where there only 259 entries into the prison between Nov 09 and Jan 10 and all but four of them were recruited? If so this needs to be stated more clearly, if not then further outline of how representative the sample was of the population entering the prison in that period is required.

4. Major Compulsory Revision – Whilst you state that the research screening took place at the same time as the Core screening, it is not clear how this relates to the other screening points mentioned. The influence of a clinician led screening taking place before your screening needs to be discussed.

5. Major Compulsory Revision – The timing of the screening also has a significant role in the questions around access to alcohol treatment. Is it possible that access to treatment had simply not been facilitated yet at the point that the screening took place? If so this places your conclusions around prisoners not accessing services (which intuitively I do not doubt is the case!) in question. In addition the range of responses you received when asking about treatment contact (detailed in para 1 pg 13) suggests that the application of and prisoners’ understanding of this question was inconsistent so as to make any conclusions based on this unreliable.

6. Minor Essential Revision – pg 11 para 2 – You outline offences accounting for 58% of prisoners, this still leaves a substantial proportion and there is no mention of acquisitive crime (theft etc.). Some detail of the remaining offence groups would be warranted as would an explanation of ‘dishonesty’ which apart from the fraud offences (I cannot think that 31% of the population was in for fraud) is an unusual offence grouping and may not mean anything to the readership,
especially without a table to support text.

7. Major compulsory revision – pg 12 para 1 – The statement ‘which have limited access to alcohol interventions in Scottish prisons’ needs to be supported by references. As does the statement ‘further emphasising service provision challenges and opportunities’.

8. Discretionary Revision – pg 12 – The text under the heading ‘Prevalence of alcohol related problems as indicated by AUDIT scores’ up to an including the last bullet point would sit better in the methodology.

9. Major Compulsory Revision – At various points throughout the paper you make the assumption that a score of 8 or more on AUDIT indicates an AUD. However, the basis for this assumption is not referenced at any point. A reference should be provided or an explanation of how this assumption was reached.

10. Minor Essential Revision – pg 14 para 2 – The statement ‘reported indications of likely dependency through needing a first drink in the morning..’ is common sense but would be better supported by a reference confirming this is an indication of dependency.

11. Discretionary Revision – pg 15 – I do not feel the para under ‘Analysis of those with high audit scores’ adds anything. It feels like it is stating some obvious points i.e. that those with higher overall scores had got higher scores on each item.

12. Major compulsory revision – pg 16 para 1 – How was the recoding structure decided upon. This needs to be explained (probably in the methodology).

13. Major compulsory revision – pg 18 para 2 and 4 (including 1st two lines of pg 19) – The comparisons stated require an indication of statistical significance

14. Major compulsory revision – Findings pg 19 para 2 – Comparisons that don’t already have them require an indication of statistical significance. If there are no sig. differences, is there value to their inclusion?

15. Major compulsory revision – Discussion pg 19 and 20 – The comparison with the referenced survey is in my opinion flawed due to the different age groups being compared e.g. 40-65 is the study’s oldest group and the comparison group quoted is those over 75. A different comparison group should be used if this is to be included.

16. Minor Essential Revision – pg 20 para 2 – ‘This confirms that value of prisons as a setting for tackling alcohol misuse...’ Replace value with potential as you are not discussing the effectiveness of prison alcohol treatment so cannot claim it has value. Apologies if this seems pedantic but I think it is an important distinction.

17. Discretionary Revision – pg 21 para 1 – The provision of the relevant figures from the study for comparison would be helpful for the reader.

18. Minor Essential Revision – pg 25 – I feel a stronger statement is needed about the difficulties of generalising your findings given the points you make about the differences between your sample and other prisons.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
'I declare that I have no competing interests'