

Letter from Jan King, CEO, Angelus Foundation, to Chair of the Committee, dated 18 September 2015, regarding the oral evidence session on 15 September 2015

I would like to express our thanks for the opportunity on 15 September to give evidence to the Committee's Inquiry into the Psychoactive Substances Bill.

At the end of the session, you invited us to write to the Committee should we wish to raise any additional points. The issue of ongoing education provision around harms from NPS was touched upon during the session and in our submission. We would like to see a substantially greater commitment to helping schools in getting safety messages to school students. We acknowledge that Government policy around the school curriculum somewhat precludes a central policy of requiring subjects such as drug education to be delivered through PSHE. Nevertheless, there are other means of achieving the same objective.

The website TalktoTrank has been the Government's main vehicle in spreading drug awareness for some years. However, a lack of investment has resulted in it becoming a passive resource which young people are much less likely to use. The website does generally contain accurate and helpful information. A relatively modest but imaginative investment in short informative films while creating a social media presence could revitalise this resource. Teachers and others working with young people could be encouraged to use the films as the basis of lessons around NPS and so stimulate discussion around risk from them and other substances. We are currently formulating a proposal of how this could work in practise.

At the end of the evidence session, one Committee member, Nusrat Ghani MP approached us around enhancing these kind of educational resources. She kindly asked to see some examples of our films for the committee's benefit. Below are links to three short (3 min) films, which are used, in different settings. I would be grateful if they could be circulated to the membership.

- The first '[Why Gamble with your Life?](#)' is our main schools film. It is recently re-edited and presents the issue without judgement provoking students to decide for themselves on the scale of risk.
- [The second is called 'Vortex'](#) and is aimed at an older age-group such as university students. It shows how the legality of the substance can suggest safety when the effects can be unpredictably powerful and dangerous.
- [The third 'Labrats'](#) is more comic in its portrayal of the reckless manner these substances are produced and marketed.

The issue of education was also raised on numerous occasions from all sides during the Lords' stages of the Psychoactive Substances Bill. The Government has made clear how the issue of public protection from the harms of psychoactive substances is a priority to them but little has yet been articulated about equipping young people with the basic knowledge to resist experimentation. We would suggest the Committee raises these matters formerly with the relevant Education Minister to establish how enforcement is to be complemented with prevention.

Should any Committee members have any need for any points to be clarified around new psychoactive substances, we would happy to assist.

Yours sincerely, best wishes,

Jan King
CEO
Angelus Foundation