

## Written evidence submitted by Simpson House Counselling and Recovery

### **Which groups will be particularly affected by a ban on psychoactive substances? What steps can the Government take to educate these groups about the dangers? How will the Government explain the change in the legal status of these substances?**

- Quite a big problem, especially with the younger (teenage) generation and also with the 'party goers'.
- Poly drug users.
- Children are using as easy to access.
- Media.
- Not criminal – people promote use via phone, Facebook, Twitter. Buy on internet.
- Normalised for young people.
- Media – Coverage drives use and curiosity.
- Education Information – Teachers are not necessarily aware. Get info into schools. There is info available.
- Crew's Curriculum resource for schools and 6 pack for schools where young people are using in school. [www.mycrew.org.uk](http://www.mycrew.org.uk). Crew NPS Booklet for teachers, lanyards and drop in schools work.
- Use what is relevant and targeted; use the right platform and media e.g. for risk takers.
- Services need to raise awareness and risks. Courses on NPS and give out "my crew" cards.
- People who have used – can they share their experience. Use of media – Twitter, Facebook. Info-mercial.
- Education without titillation or scare-mongering.
- Education and support.
- Total ban.
- Communication between services.
- Education – Asking the Questions.
- Education at a young age.
- Try to get someone trained on drugs based in school.
- More education/awareness.
- Leaflets handed out in schools about behaviours your children could have whilst under the influence.
- Videos of consequences publicised etc.

## **What specialist treatment do users of psychoactive substances require? What can be done to counter a shift to using controlled drugs once there is a ban?**

- Motivation to change. We can't stop people taking drugs but we can create the conditions of openness, accessibility, companionship and good quality services for when they are ready and committed to change.
- Need to develop detox / rehab pathways specific to NPS If unsure – ask the person you are working with – builds rapport and trust.
- Joint working.
- A ban won't stop people using. A new service is required – something specific.
- New specific service– share the real stories, don't hide. Specific family support.
- Mental health services – issues caused by legal highs completely difference to mental health issues of other origin.
- Mental health services – Need to safe spaces, mental, might raise fear to engage.
- Services need more specific help.

## **Do the enforcement agencies have the necessary powers and resources to effectively enforce the proposed new laws?**

- Ask – prison staff, carers. Questions and stories so we hear their lived experiences.
- Education and Information. Lack of understanding. Trading standards not working.
- Trading standards need to use their existing powers i.e. entry and investigation and general products safety regulations to control supply.
- Cost of Legislation – impact on treatment services. Loop holes in legislation, may be ineffective.
- Sales will become more underground. Stigma, may not feel able to talk about it.
- Trade will go online to websites registered abroad – even less opportunity to monitor.
- Fear of police/record or jail sentence.
- Increased criminal activity – stigma.
- A blanket ban will mean that medical treatments for legitimate uses may suffer.

**Liz Forrester, Senior Addictions Worker, Simpson House Counselling and Recovery, CrossReach, Edinburgh**