

# Looking Beyond the “Tip of the Iceberg”

## *“Legal Highs: An Action Plan for Change”*



*Findings from the New  
Psychoactive Substances  
Conference 2014*



ANGELUS FOUNDATION



Solve It

## Letter to Party Leaders, Houses of Parliament

Drug taking is very often a hidden issue and never more so when it comes to Legal Highs. In the last five years there has been nothing short of a revolution in the range and harms presented by these new and unpredictable drugs. It must be said the Government response has been slow and has not recognised that a new approach is needed.

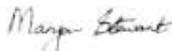
Our recent conference was full of expert practitioners from prisons, probation, police and charities who are in the front line. They have witnessed first hand the devastation these substances have done to individuals and their families. The harms are very often caused by ignorance of the drug's effects and that these are untested drugs. Ignorance is at the heart of the problem.

We are calling upon all political parties to join forces to tackle what is becoming an epidemic among young people. Government Departments should be seeking ways of getting simple health messages out on the risks and consequences of taking these substances. We need to find innovative ways and forge partnerships in reaching these young people.

Our children deserve it.



Kevin Shapland  
Chair of Trustees, Solve It



Maryon Stewart  
Founder, Angelus Foundation

### What are New Psychoactive Substances?

In addition to alcohol and drugs, a new global market has developed in recent years in new psychoactive substances (NPS) or so-called 'legal highs'.

Many of these synthetic compounds are not sold surreptitiously on street corners and dark alleys but openly in 'head shops', at festivals and over the internet. Little is known about the chemical make-up of these substances or the potential impact on those who consume them. Reported serious side effects include depression, panic attacks, and difficulty breathing.

Since 2005, NPS have been blamed for 70 deaths in the UK, which has led to legislative changes to make many illegal. However, keeping up with new substances can be slow.

Parents concerned for their children should look out for signs such as anxiety, restlessness, agitation, fear, aggression, paranoia and chest pain.



**Angelus Foundation** is a drugs charity founded in 2009 by Maryon Stewart following the death of her daughter, Hester, from GBL, then a 'legal high' now a controlled drug.

The aim of the Angelus Foundation is to educate, encourage and assist individuals to be more knowledgeable about the risks to their health and wellbeing of using 'legal highs' and other new psychoactive substances, so they may be more responsible for the choices they make, and lead more wholesome and safer lives.



**Solve It** was established in 1989 as a service dedicated to the prevention of Volatile Substance Abuse, the original 'legal highs'. It now works to promote understanding, awareness and education of the consequences of 'legal highs', including new psychoactive substances amongst young people, adults, professionals and organisations. Solve It also works towards the prevention of deaths, illness, accidents, crime and the impact abuse has on families and communities.

## Message from the Rt Hon Norman Baker MP, Minister of State for Crime Prevention



I have made the challenge of new psychoactive substances a top priority, which is why [in] December last year I announced the expert review. As you are probably aware, the purpose of

the review is to consider how our current response to new psychoactive substances can be strengthened and the harms these substances cause severely reduced.

The panel consists of members with key expertise in new psychoactive substances and others from a wide variety of disciplines who can provide a fresh look at this issue and provide solutions. The recommendations made by the panel will be used to reinvigorate our comprehensive approach to date. This has included a

world-leading approach to early identification and quick action to ban dangerous substances. In fact, the coalition government has used the current legislative tools to ban over 350 new psychoactive substances to date.

Naturally, the review has significant legislative focus as we want to ensure law enforcement agencies have the best available powers to combat this reckless trade. In addition, in line with the government's balanced drug strategy, I believe it is equally important to focus on how our approach to prevention and education, treatment and information sharing can be further enhanced.

There are clear challenges and evidence gaps that can exist in this area especially in terms of prevalence and harms. We also need to get the right message across to the general public, especially young people, that these substances should not be considered either safe or legal. The panel has considered a

range of different legislative options to take us forward. These have included a blanket ban approach, analogue legislation and a restricted market approach.

Although I entirely understand and indeed sympathise with the calls for prompt action in this area, it is clear from the discussions I have had with the panel that there is no magic wand solution. Therefore, as well as considering the benefits of each option, we need to carefully look at any unintended consequences. The panel will be completing the review shortly. As you would expect, I will give careful consideration to the recommendations before deciding on the next steps.

I would like to thank the Angelus Foundation for its continuing efforts to raise awareness of the harms posed by new psychoactive substances. You have made a real difference and it is by us all pulling in the same direction that we can have a real impact on the issue.

## Executive Summary

In December 2013, 'Drugs: New Psychoactive Substances and Prescription Drugs', a report from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, concluded: *"There is currently an epidemic of psychoactive substances and it is highly likely that the creation of new psychoactive substances will continue to increase in the future unless immediate action is taken."*

The national conference, 'Looking Beyond the Tip of the Iceberg', brought together over 50 organisations with an interest in new psychoactive substances (NPS) in order to explore effective ways of addressing the issues and threats associated with their use.

At the event, representatives from national and local government, law enforcement,

health and non-governmental organisations. Each presented their perspective on the challenges of the recent increase in NPS use in the UK.

During a Round Table Discussion session, delegates identified key issues and challenges and discussed new and innovative ideas for greater collaborative working.

### Recommendations included:

#### More research to fill knowledge gaps:

- The development of better data collection methods
- The creation of a robust, empirical, peer-reviewed research base
- Greater engagement with users to fill any knowledge gaps.

### Resources targeted on education, with a focus on harm reduction:

- The creation of a central depository of resources and information on NPS
- Promotion of the message that 'legal' doesn't mean 'safe'
- Co-ordination from the central but delivery at a local level.

### Clearly defined roles and responsibilities:

- National government to develop a clear legislative framework, act as a central point of co-ordination, and develop messages
- Local government to deliver treatment, support and enforcement
- Charities to continue their important work in spreading information and messages.

## Introduction

On 26 June 2014, the Angelus Foundation and Solve It hosted a national conference to bring together representatives from organisations with a specific interest in New Psychoactive Substances, or NPS. The aims of the event were to debate the issues and share experience of dealing with these so-called 'legal highs' and to find a coordinated response to the threats posed by NPS.

More than 50 organisations sent delegates to the conference, including drugs and NPS charities, police forces from across the UK, local government, education and health bodies, the Prison Service and Trading Standards. [More on delegates]

"All of us gathered here today have some experience and knowledge of NPS and

the harms they can cause and many of us are already taking action to help reduce and combat these dangerous substances," said Jan King, Chief Executive of the Angelus Foundation. "However, I think we all recognise that much more needs to be done. The Government is currently undertaking a review of NPS and it is very much an aim of this conference to provide

## A Police Commissioner's Perspective

### *Adam Simmonds, Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commissioner*

The rise of NPS should be a matter of concern to everyone. According to the latest statistics, 70 deaths in the UK have been directly attributed to NPS\*. It is a tragedy when any young person becomes involved in drugs but, if we are to tackle this scourge, we need to educate our young people and their parents about the dangers of both legal and illegal substances.

We must focus on the eradication of drugs. As a society, we should not just 'walk on by' when we see drug use and we must challenge the perception that drug taking is an acceptable activity or 'rite of passage' for young people.

Prevention is better than cure and I want the police to become more involved in this area. Yet, the police cannot combat the threat of drugs alone. With an ever-diminishing pot of resources, we need to think innovatively about the future, pooling budgets and working together with the community to find effective solutions to these issues. Central government is also an important

player. For years, governments of all colours have struggled to define their position on drug-related issues and while they take time over how to legislate on the growing problem of NPS they are legitimising their use. I believe the government needs to take a clearer and firmer stance.

It is easy to underestimate the challenges we face. We need a police force and criminal justice system that is fit for the 21st century, we need more prevention and better education, we need society to be less tolerant of drug use and we need law enforcement to continue to send a tough message that illegal drugs will not be tolerated. However, we also need to work more closely together to rid our society of the impact of drugs – organisations like Solve It, schools, county councils, prisons, rehab services and health workers. If we work together, I believe we can make Northamptonshire a safer place.

\* National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths, 'Drug-related deaths in the UK Annual Report 2013'

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*"New psychoactive substances are narcotic or psychotropic substances often, but not necessarily, newly created which have recently come to be used to the similar physiological effects of drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. NPS are mostly synthesised chemical substances, the molecular content of which is often changed or designed in order to circumvent existing control under law."*

*Definition of New Psychoactive Substances, Association of Chief Police Officers.*

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### *Ian Goldsborough, Detective Inspector, Metropolitan Police Drugs Directorate*

In the three years I have been involved in new psychoactive substances, I have seen the trends, issues and problems associated with their use grow exponentially. There are many definitions but I will not be calling them 'legal highs' because some of the substances are not legal and it gives people the impression they are safe. However, law likes definitions so the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has developed a working definition (*previous page*).

The protection of life and property is the prime response for any police activity. We are law enforcers with a duty of care, not educators, or experts in health or harm reduction. We don't make the law, we enforce it, and if no law exists that prohibits an activity, the police have problems in taking action. With NPS, we have learned to work with partners, especially when the products involved are found to be uncontrolled but are still causing harm.

Last November, the Home Affairs Select Committee asked APCO to report on what it was doing in relation to NPS, information that was added to the input from many other organisations. The subsequent report from the Committee concluded: "Chief Constables and other law enforcement agencies are failing to understand the impact of new psychoactive substances. We recommend that police forces start a process of data collection immediately in

order to establish the challenges they face locally. This will enable them to develop an effective strategy in tackling the problems presented by NPS, both in pursuing those who are selling substances which may contain illegal drugs and producing an appropriate education strategy to potential users."

The prime piece of legislation used in relation to both NPS and controlled substances is the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, which describes, explains and classifies prohibited substances. The problem is that 'mimic' drugs – new substances created by chemically altering controlled substances but which retain very similar physiological actions – fall outside the descriptions and, therefore, fall outside the Act.

As a consequence, we have looked at other pieces of legislation: the Drugs Act 2005, which again relates only to controlled drugs; the Medicines Act 1968, which manufacturers try to circumvent through 'Not For Human Consumption' labelling; and, the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985, which prohibits the sale of certain substances to those under the age of 18. We have even looked at the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, under which it is an offence to knowingly administer a poison to another person, however, the overall opinion of law enforcement is that current legislation is, at best, only partially effective.

A number of barriers to action have been identified. Although testing is an essential part of any action, there is a lack of testing kits and scarce resources to pay for laboratory testing services. There is a lack of knowledge and naivety within the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, with everyone 'learning as they go'. Finally, a number of prosecutions have been brought in relation to NPS but sentencing has been low, raising questions around whether the outcomes are commensurate with the possible harms and whether the cost of action is justified.

In addition to the work that police forces are doing across the country – for example, regular attendance at premises as a deterrent and education of officers – several 'next steps' have been identified:

- Partnership is essential in order to share information and experience, and develop a coordinated response;
- More research is needed to better understand what's happening on the ground. This research will inform government, senior law enforcement and Police and Crime Commissioners and help them to decide what actions need to be taken;
- More local accountability for NPS is needed; although law enforcement is accountable locally, very few police areas have drugs enforcement clearly placed in their strategies.

## A Health Perspective

### *Dr Jack Leach, GP, Royal College of General Practitioners, and substance misuse consultant*

Most General Practitioners are more concerned with delivering day-to-day healthcare than dealing with NPS, which are simply not a priority for them. Their main areas of concern are addiction to OTC and prescription medicines. As a result, GPs know very little about NPS.

When asked, most GPs say that tobacco addiction is the area they feel most confident in: they understand the related health problems; they feel it is part of their job to help patients; they are confident they have the knowledge about the subject; and, they know there is support and treatment available. When it comes to NPS, they don't feel they have the knowledge or that it is part of their jobs to deal with them. They

also don't know about the available support and treatment.

GPs are also less likely to come in contact with users as they are not seen as the right person to seek support from. People worry it will go on their health record, that others might find out and that the doctor might be judgemental.

If GPs do come in contact with someone using NPS, it is usually for a minor, self-limiting illness not drug use. If the GP is aware of other health problems, which might put the patient at risk, they might pick up on a cue. However, GPs not good always good at picking up on cues of illnesses that one would expect to see alongside addictions.

Nevertheless, GPs could be useful in the fight against NPS. They are ideally placed to identify NPS use, to assess associated health problems and to monitor the person's progress. They have unique access to a wide range of health and social services so they will have resources that could help.

GPs will need to be persuaded it is worth their investing the time and they will need training and services to support them. However, as NPS probably have a limited number of effects on the body, GPs don't need to be overwhelmed by all the different ones. Instead, they simply need good understanding about how the general classes might affect the body.

## A Local Government Perspective

### Mark Norris, Senior Adviser, Local Government Association

When the LGA got involved in NPS in 2013, we took soundings from local authorities to better understand the situation on the ground and identify key issues. Our survey revealed that there was good awareness of NPS among local authorities and that concerns had been raised but that the situation was very different in different parts of the country.

Local authorities find it very difficult to take action around new psychoactive substances because current legislation was not designed to deal with the sale of these kinds of products. Legal definitions are unclear with NPS and we are very much in an exploratory phase, looking to take action through other pieces of legislation, the so-called 'Al Capone' approach. The most commonly used approach among local

authorities is using consumer protection legislation. However, this route is not ideal as the principle behind the legislation is to help businesses remain open, when we sometimes want to close premises selling NPS down.

A key issue is the availability of resources. If local authorities are to take action against head shops, they need to have the financial resources to test products on sale, as they would with a pint of beer in a pub or food in a supermarket. Testing tells us whether a product contains a controlled substance, information we can pass on to the police or use as leverage to tackle recalcitrant head shop owners.

Looking forward, there are many options under consideration including a

licensing approach. From a local authority perspective, a system that regulates head shops would need to be very robust as a licence gives a clear signal that the products on sale are safe. Such a system would need to ensure that the substance inside the container was the same as the label and that it was safe, as well as looking at issues like dosing and interactions with other substances, including alcohol.

At present, local authorities are in no position to be able to resource a comprehensive licensing regime. We would need something from central government and from the industry to demonstrate that a product had been properly tested and was safe, which would in turn require a robust testing regime.

## A NGO Perspective

### Andrew Brown, Director of Policy, Influence and Engagement, DrugScope, and Chair of the Prevention Subgroup of the Home Office's NPS Review

One thing I have learned in the eight or nine years I've been working in the field of education and prevention is that good intentions aren't enough. Education and prevention in the field of NPS is challenging because we don't know as much as we should do about their use and prevalence. Even targeted surveys such as the Global Drug Survey (GDS), don't seem to show the true extent of their use. The most recent GDS found that only 13% of respondents had used a known legal high although 10.9% reported they had used a 'mystery white powder'. Yet, while these results suggest that prevalence is down, harm levels are increasing. For example, there has been an increase in people seeking treatment for drugs such as mephedrone.

Given that the NPS market is estimated to be worth some £1bn, it is clear that either what we are measuring isn't capturing the right data or we are asking the wrong people. If we are to develop effective prevention and education strategies we must understand who is using NPS and what drives that use. If we don't know who and why, we can't create services that will work.

We know that different groups favour

different NPS. Older teens tend to use mephedrone and white powders while younger teens go for synthetic cannabis with lurid brand names\*. Equally we know that the internet is not a big market as users can easily source it directly from head shops, petrol stations, takeaways, etc. We also know that it is not just young people who use NPS.

To make sure the systems in place are suited to each potential user group, we need to understand how each group accesses specialist services. However, we clearly need different systems in place to support users of all ages, wherever they are in life.

We also need to focus on the root cause of the behaviour rather than the behaviour itself. If we can identify the risks early on we can do something about them. We can help people develop the skills and values they require to make better or more informed choices. Of course, this education must go beyond schools and universities. We need to take a holistic approach, involving the community, the family and, where appropriate, the workplace.

\* DrugScope survey in 2013

### Official advice for schools

"New psychoactive substances should be included in the school drug policy as unauthorised substances and treated as such. If there is uncertainty about what the substance is, it should be treated as a controlled drug."

*DfE and ACPO drug advice for schools (2012)*

"Teachers should be mindful not to deliver individual sessions on NPS, or specific legal or illegal substances. Instead, the focus should be on the essential developmental skills, proven to be effective in building young people's resilience in relation to risky behaviours and substance misuse."

*'Legal Highs' and Novel Psychoactive Substances (2014), ADEPIS*

### Matthew Spall, Suffolk Trading Standards

When we entered this arena back in 2010, we in Trading Standards had very little knowledge of NPS and very few authorities had undertaken any work or understood the issue. More worryingly, there was a belief that NPS was not a Trading Standards issue, which could not be further from the truth. NPS fit squarely in the work we do as an enforcement authority.

In Suffolk Trading Standards, we focus on the small minority of people who wake up in the morning with the sole intention of making as much money as they can regardless of the law. The main piece of legislation we use is the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations (CPRs), which a great piece of law but we have encountered two major stumbling blocks. Firstly, we are required to show that an 'average consumer' has been influenced by misleading information, such as when

NPS are labelled as 'bath salts' or 'plant feed', yet, most consumer know exactly why they are buying these products and so are not being misled. Secondly, we must apply the 'average consumer' test, yet those taking NPS are not average consumers as they have a better understanding of this environment.

We are also exploring other avenues, including looking at the safety of these product under the General Product Safety Regulations 2005. These require manufacturers to provide sufficient information to enable a product's safe use and it is my opinion that 'Not For Human Consumption' labelling does not constitute sufficient information. However, opinions differ. Finally, we are looking at technical issues, such as the requirement that products carry a manufacturer's name and address or that a 'chemical' product have a technical file listing the active ingredients and the testing regime.

The situation is evolving rapidly. In the past, when labelling was very poor, we felt confident seizing goods but, frustratingly, manufacturers seem to be one step ahead and NPS are becoming much harder to 'screen test' on a site visit. The internet also presents issues as it is difficult to engage with a business hiding behind a webpage and trends are difficult to track; after all, who would have guessed five years ago that Facebook would now be the main place to buy counterfeit goods?

Moving forwards, education is essential, both for consumers and for colleagues in other agencies. We must work together and adopt a multi-agency approach to NPS if we are to tackle the issue. In terms of enforcement, whether the government adopts a licencing system or not, it is absolutely essential that we have bespoke legislation for NPS.

## Action on the ground

### The Angelus Foundation

The Angelus Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness of the risk of using new psychoactive substances. "Our aim is Keeping Young People Safe by providing information and messages that will help them to make informed choices," said Jan King, Chief Executive, Angelus Foundation.

The Foundation achieves its aim by visiting schools and engaging with young people directly as well as maintaining a website, always providing information in a non-judgemental way. "However, merely presenting facts is not enough so we are increasingly engaging with social media to get our messages across in ways young people understand," said Jan, citing an innovative partnership with Yourvine. "We have developed an online game where the

player is put into the position of a supplier and accumulates points to win festival tickets. What becomes clear as they play the game is how reckless and haphazard NPS are and how there are people selling them who do not have your best interests at heart." Feedback from the game shows that the messages are getting across.

Angelus also provides information for parents, including a Parents Handbook, free to download from its website. "Drugs are a very difficult subject for parents. What's more, the area that is constantly changing and psychoactive substances available today are very different from those parents may have known or even taken when they were younger. Our data shows that 86% of parents know nothing

about NPS and when they do find out, it can be a real shock."

In targeting young people, Angelus recognises that the places where they are most vulnerable are social events like clubs, parties and festivals. "We recently linked up with the Association of Independent Festivals and, earlier this year, 25 festivals blacked out the front pages of their websites to help communicate NPS messages, generating a lot of press coverage and awareness," said Jan. The Foundation has also worked with comedians to develop films that communicate serious messages in a light-hearted way, and is currently looking to extend its reach to university students.

[www.angelusfoundation.com](http://www.angelusfoundation.com)

### The Oasis Partnership

The Oasis Partnership is a local charity that provides Open Access Social Inclusion Support (OASIS) to people experiencing drug or alcohol problems in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

"New psychoactive substances first came to our attention because there was a head shop near our treatment centre," said Service Manager, Roy Walsh. "People recovering from addiction

through an abstinence-based programme were forced to walk past the shop." A nearby post office was also selling NPS in "a clandestine, under-the-counter operation", said Roy.

In response, Oasis developed a harm reduction model designed to raise awareness of the risks of NPS. "In the summer of 2013, we targeted festivals as there are quite a few in Oxfordshire but as soon as we mentioned drugs, doors were firmly closed. We decided to use guerrilla marketing, disguising and then setting up stalls inside, handing out as many leaflets as we could before Security arrived," said Roy.

Oasis has since established several partnerships including one with Gingernut Creative to develop educational materials, and the Angelus Foundation, promoting its

website and [whynotfindout.org](http://whynotfindout.org). From its work in NPS, Oasis opened a drop-in centre aimed at 18-26 year olds. "We invited young people inside and they've made it their own, spray-painting the walls, and once they come once they tend to return," said Roy. "In fact, the retention rate is very high, around 96%."

The charity also opened a clinic, responding to the increase in reports of mental health issues around NPS. "We are seeing a lot of young people with psychosis, especially self harm. A local GP has now set up a clinic that will run at the same time as the drop-in centre to deal with these issues."

Partnership working is essential in tackling the issues around NPS, said Roy. "I have attended a lot of events around NPS recently and there are too many groups replicating the same work. We're wasting time and money trying to reinvent the wheel, we must work together and share experience and material. By reaching out to mental health services and A&E we now have access to huge amounts of data that have been fundamental in moving our campaigns forwards and addressing this issue in our community."

[www.oasispartnership.com](http://www.oasispartnership.com)

## KCA

KCA Young Persons' Services is a Kent-based voluntary sector provider commissioned to deliver early intervention and specialist treatment to 10-17 year olds who have a problem with drugs or alcohol. While 60% of KCA's work in 2013 was linked to cannabis it has increasingly been tackling NPS. It is now working to educate more young people and disseminate information to users.

The use of NPS in Kent varies from town-to-town. While some have high usage rates others have very little. Anecdotally, there is a correlation between the increase in NPS use and the rise in the number of head shops – larger towns are served by at least two head shops on average. These are either the traditional type serving older customers or the modern variety that is seemingly only there to grow the business and who serve all ages.

One of the biggest challenges in tackling NPS is the limited information young people are being given in schools and from other youth services. "Following cutbacks in local services, we are being asked to give basic Tier 1 information in schools, where we traditionally provided supplemental information. There are also fewer role models so if kids don't feel comfortable talking to their parents, there is nowhere else for them to turn," said Rick Bradley, Early Intervention Lead, KCA Young Persons' Services.

KCA has also begun working with shops to engage users. "Head shops are a useful way to get information out. The shop in Canterbury, for example, is happy for us to leave leaflets on the counter and put posters up to raise awareness of the risk of overdose or news about contaminated products."

In addition, KCA recently teamed up with the Angelus Foundation to produce an educational video, for which it was important to use the right terminology. For example, the term 'Legal Cannabis' is a misnomer because it is not the same drug, the effects can be different and it can lead to overdosing – especially as the synthetic cannabis is so much stronger.

"Finally, we need to acknowledge that some people using NPS know precisely what effect it has. They use it in the same way as others might use alcohol or cannabis. They do their research and they use the drug in an informed way." In Maidstone, one head shop even shares the same building as KCA.

[www.kca.org.uk](http://www.kca.org.uk)

## Crew 2000

Crew 2000 provides specialist drugs and substance use information, advice and support in Scotland. Set up by a group of clubbers in the early 90s, it initially worked with users but now focuses on prevention with younger age groups.

Crew 2000 has been working with so-called legal highs since 2008 and, so far this year, 47% of all drug concerns reported to the group have been about NPS, up from a third last year. The top selling drugs in Scotland, based on feedback from users, include MPA, Etizolam and MDAI.

"One problem faced by those tackling NPS in Scotland includes the fact that they are so easily available, not just in head shops but also through the internet, which has grown dramatically. Also of concern is the normalisation of using NPS, their

potential for dependency and their impact on health due to the potency of some of these substances," said Carole Kelly, Chief Executive, Crew 2000.

In response, Crew 2000 has developed the Step Care Approach, which consists of four elements from prevention to treatment: inform and educate, advice and care, therapy and support, and recovery support. Under this approach, Crew 2000 has a government-funded NPS worker who trains practitioners around NPS. In addition, it has a website and a resource pack for youth workers and teachers, and has set up monitoring groups.

Crew 2000, which frequently contributes to government drugs policy, also offers advice and care through brief interventions, running a support line and welfare provision

at festivals and super clubs, where those under the influence receive support. Finally, it has developed an smartphone app that helps users track their NPS use and measure its impact on their lives.

"Moving forward, there is so much more those involved in NPS could be doing," said Carole. "If we work together and pool our resources, we could really make a difference. It is hard to identify effective responses to issues around NPS because there is so little data. As we can't identify the true scale of problem, we can't tell how effective we are being although anecdotal feedback shows are making a difference. Now it is time for the governments to step up and provide more resources so we can continue to make a difference," she said.

[www.crew2000.org.uk](http://www.crew2000.org.uk)

# Findings from the conference

## What do we know and what do we not know about NPS?

**“We simply don’t know enough.” There are too many knowledge gaps about both the use of NPS and their long-term effects. We need to:**

- Develop better data collection methods, including evidence gathered from medical institutions
- Promote the creation of a robust, empirical, peer-reviewed research base for prevalence, harms and long-term effects
- Better inform local authorities so that they can take a more consistent approach to enforcement
- Fill gaps in our knowledge through greater engagement with users
- Designate a single point of contact at a regional level to co-ordinate and disseminate information
- Investigate the interaction with other substances, such as alcohol
- Add all NPS to the prohibited lists in all prisons
- Know the level of other crime associated with the use of NPS compared to illegal drugs and alcohol.

## Where should we direct resources to tackle NPS?

**Resources should be targeted on education. We need to:**

- Target young people to inform them about the risks of NPS use
- Agree that priority must be on harm reduction regardless of whether this is achieved through education or enforcement
- Provide resources to create and maintain a central depository of resources on NPS, including a hub for professionals to share anecdotal information
- Educate young people starting at primary school
- Promote the message that ‘legal doesn’t mean safe’
- Co-ordinate from the centre to ensure a consistent and coherent national response
- Deliver education at a local level, allowing for campaigns to be tailored to target specific user groups
- Produce a set of tools to measure the effectiveness of local campaigns
- Promote information sharing between interested parties to avoid duplication.

## Who should deliver?

**We need clearly defined role and responsibilities for national and local government, and non-governmental organisations if we are to tackle the issues around NPS. We need:**

- National government to develop a clear legislative framework
- National government to acts as the central point of co-ordination
- National government to develop of unequivocal messages for use at a local level
- Local government to delivery of treatment and support
- Local government to deliver enforcement at a local level, because local agencies are best placed to identify and tackle issues specific to their area
- Charities to continue their important work in spreading information and messages.

**We also need to:**

- Ensure greater clarity of the roles of each type of organisation, governmental or NGO
- Promote greater information sharing locally to ensure effective local delivery and early identification of trends
- Integrate the role of social services and the NHS around public health
- Designate a single agency to take the lead for each target group, such as young people, adults, offenders
- Use mobile units for delivery of services as they are better able to respond to evolving trends
- Make additional funds available – a ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’ approach will not deliver effective programmes
- Consider how the private sector can help, potentially with marketing and media campaigns.