

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Infrastructure
DATE	27 August 2015
TITLE OF REPORT	Briefing - New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks to provide members with information on New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) and how Aberdeen City Division and partners are addressing the health and antisocial behaviour problems commonly associated with their use.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are asked to note the paper.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

N/A

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) are often misleadingly referred to as 'legal highs'. These substances are designed and produced to mimic the effects of drugs such as Cocaine, Cannabis and Ecstasy but have been created so that their chemical structure is different enough to avoid being controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction's (EMCDDA) early warning system, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of new substances being detected, with more than 450 currently being monitored.

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NPS commonly manifest themselves as powders, herbal material, liquids and pills. They are usually packaged and marketed in a manner designed to appeal to a young, though not exclusive, target audience. Some of the more common and attractive names are 'Burst', 'Exodus', 'Bombay Blue', 'Annihilation', 'Clockwork Orange' and 'Gocaine'.

NPS are purchased from a variety of vendors including; 'head-shops', newsagents, fast food outlets, garages or from online websites. Generally, individuals who purchase and consume NPS believe they are 'legal highs' however this is not always the case.

Previous analysis of NPS has shown that they can contain controlled drugs. Many NPS are new chemicals and haven't been tested on humans. Many have been found to contain harmful and toxic contents.

Analysis of drug related deaths in Scotland in 2013 revealed that NPS were found to be present in the person's body in 113 cases. NPS was found to have been implicated in the person's death in 60 of those cases. In 2012, NPS was present in 47 deaths and implicated in 32. Despite drug related deaths falling by 9% over the same period, the involvement of NPS in drug related deaths is increasing.

Many people have reported unpleasant effects to their physical and mental health as a result of taking these substances, such as psychosis, paranoia and seizures.

In October 2014, a UK Government appointed expert panel review of NPS made a number of recommendations, including that the Government should consider a new legislative approach to NPS - an introduction of a blanket ban, similar to that in place in the Republic of Ireland.

The Psychoactive Substances Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech on 27 May 2015.

While we await direct legislation, Aberdeen City Division has listened to the concerns of local communities and included an objective to work with partners on NPS and associated antisocial behaviour in its Local Policing Plan.

There are currently four premises in Aberdeen known to sell NPS:

- Harminasion - 52 King Street
- Goldfish Industries - Unit 10, the Arches, Palmerston Road
- Odyssey - Aberdeen Market
- Claire's - Aberdeen Market

In April 2015, the Scottish Government placed certain substances under a Temporary Drug Control Order under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 effectively making them controlled drugs. These were included in some of the common NPS products such as Gocaine. Police Scotland Officers delivered letters to the four retail outlets in Aberdeen advising them of this change in legislation. This was followed up with a check on products for sale at the premises.

Local partnership approach

In June 2015, the Kittybrewster CPT, through discussion with the Community Safety HUB submitted a request for an **ASB Closure Order**, through Aberdeen City Council, against the Legal High Shop, Harminasion, George Street, Aberdeen. This was primarily due to significant concerns by local residents and businesses around ASB issues they were being subject to, all emanating from the customers who frequented the NPS shop.

The ASB Order was successful and the notice was enforced on 6 June 2015. The shop was closed and shuttered, for an initial 3 month period. This is the first such closure in Scotland and was the subject of significant positive media coverage. A number of other Divisions across Police Scotland requested a copy of this work with a view to following the precedent.

Harminasion has opened another shop in King Street, Aberdeen (as the closure order can only relate to specific premises). The Division has requested that Trading Standards visit the shop to ensure there are no breaches in conditions of sale/supply and we will be constantly monitoring this area to establish any ASB issues that emanate from these new premises.

The Division has developed a **multi-agency awareness raising programme** from an initiative conceived in the Northfield community led by the Local Community Policing Team. It is now being rolled out to schools across Aberdeen.

This work, done under the auspices of the Northfield Youth Action Group, involved an event run at Transition Extreme attended by 278 pupils and 45 adults from across the North Command Area.

The event provided participants with the facts about NPS and the opportunity to speak to subject experts. They were also able to try one

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of the extreme sports at Transition Extreme. Information booklets for parents were distributed. Following the input, each pupil completed a short questionnaire on how likely they would be to take a legal high. The average answer was 'not at all'.

Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Aberdeen Learning Partnership and First Bus provided finance and free transport and the Transition Extreme Alternative Academy students assisted in planning and running of the event. Police Scotland, Crew 2000, Drugs Action, ADP, Barnardos and Aberdeen Science Centre all provided staff to deliver information and presentations.

The '**Know More**' project was launched in response to an increase in NPS misuse in the Tillydrone area. A lack of knowledge of the effects and risks of NPS was identified and a perception amongst young people that because it was 'legal' it was safer than controlled drugs. The St Machar Academy School Based Officer and the Drug and Alcohol Partnership become involved in the initiative, which aimed to educate pupils on the risks of taking NPS, inform parents so they could talk with their children about substance misuse and help school staff to recognise NPS use and engage with pupils on the subject.

The initiative was positively evaluated and awarded the **Healthy Living Award** in the Children and Young Peoples Service Awards 2014

Aberdeen City Division will continue to work with partners to address this issue and will respond appropriately to any legislative changes which enable enforcement of the sale or supply of NPS.

6. IMPACT

N/A

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

N/A

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7215/CBP-7215.pdf>

<http://www.scotland.police.uk/keep-safe/personal-safety/substance-misuse>

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whynotfindout.org

www.knowthescore.info

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Adrian Watson, Local Police Commander, Aberdeen City Division,
Police Scotland, Queen Street, Aberdeen
Email: Aberdeencitylocalpolicecommander@scotland.pnn.police.uk