



Home Office

Jeremy Browne MP
Minister for Crime Prevention

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Dear Festival Organiser,

Over the last three years, my predecessors have written to you to highlight the Government's concerns about the potential presence of illegal drugs and so called 'legal highs' or new psychoactive substances (NPS) at music and dance festivals across the UK. I would like to thank you for your continued support.

We have seen a number of festivals taking measures to stop the open sale and availability of NPS as well as the more established illegal drugs.

I am writing to provide an update on the latest evidence gathered under the Home Office's Forensic Early Warning System (FEWS). You will be already familiar with the fact that NPS are marketed as "legal" and misleadingly labelled – such as "not for human consumption" or "research chemicals" and have the potential to be harmful, carrying similar health risks to illegal drugs. They are also marketed as branded products and often contain a range of compounds – including illegal drugs – which are rarely consistent and different to those advertised on the packet, or at the point of sale. More recently, we have also identified NPS that are sold in the form of pre-loaded paper doses ('blotters' or 'tabs') and potentially have similar psychedelic and hallucinogenic effects to LSD.

The results from FEWS last year reaffirms that the more established illegal drugs – such as MDMA, cocaine, cannabis and amphetamines – continue to remain the majority of drugs encountered at summer festivals. However, we have seen a rising number of white powders and pills of NPS both in single substances as well as mixtures, and in many cases, mixed with illegal drugs.

I also wanted to highlight the concerns we have about the availability of gases such as nitrous oxide which were seen at summer festivals last year. These also have the potential to be harmful. Whilst there may be legitimate reasons for nitrous oxide to be present at your festival for catering purposes, I ask that you remain alert to its availability for misuse, whether in small canisters or in cylinders, and take steps to prevent its sale at events.

The full results from FEWS will be cascaded to your local police force and the senior responsible officer(s) who may be in charge of policing your festival. If you wish to find out further information about the results, please contact your local police force. If you would like general information about the Home Office FEWS, my officials can be contacted on 020 7035 3533.

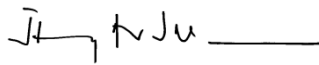
Please continue to refer anyone seeking information on the risks and dangers of so called "legal highs" or NPS, as well as illegal drugs, to the FRANK website (www.talktofrank.com) or the confidential helpline (0800 77 66 00).

I recognise your commitment in ensuring that your festivals are enjoyed in a healthy environment.

I wish you a very enjoyable summer festival season and appreciate your effort in ensuring our great summer tradition is held with public safety at its heart.

I am copying this letter to your local authority and police force.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Browne', followed by a horizontal line.

Jeremy Browne MP
Minister of State