



Home Office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP  
Minister of State for Crime, Policing  
and Fire

2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

Professor Owen Bowden-Jones  
Chair of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD)  
Professor Roger Knaggs  
Chair of the Nitrous Oxide Working Group, ACMD  
C/o 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Peel Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

By email only: [ACMD@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACMD@homeoffice.gov.uk)

7 February 2023

### **Nitrous Oxide – Updated Harms Assessment**

Dear Owen and Roger,

The Government is committed to working tirelessly to crack down on anti-social behaviour and ensuring that communities have confidence that crimes will be quickly and visibly punished. The Prime Minister has been clear that nitrous oxide has a detrimental impact on communities across the country, and contributes to anti-social behaviour.

On 3 September 2021 the former Home Secretary commissioned the ACMD to provide an updated assessment of the health and social harms of nitrous oxide, and advice on whether nitrous oxide should be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. In light of our renewed focus on tackling anti-social behaviour, I am writing today to request that you expedite your work to consider the health and social harms of nitrous oxide, and whether it should be subject to control under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. I request that you complete this work by the end of February 2023 in order to support further action by the Government on nitrous oxide.

I am particularly concerned about the harms of nitrous oxide misuse for young people. We know that nitrous oxide was the third most used drug by 16-24 year olds in 2021/22 (the Crime Survey for England and Wales)<sup>1</sup>. I would be grateful for the ACMD's views on the damage nitrous oxide can do to young people's health, particularly in light of the increased prevalence of misuse of larger canisters.

---

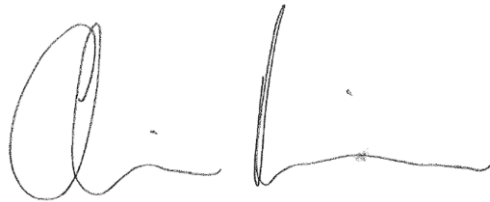
<sup>1</sup> Drug misuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics: [Drug misuse in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/drug-misuse-in-england-and-wales). Accessed on 06/01/2023.

In addition to the health harms of nitrous oxide misuse, I would welcome the ACMD's advice on the available evidence relating to societal harms, including, but not limited to:

- links between nitrous oxide misuse and antisocial behaviour;
- associated crime and impact on local communities; and
- environmental impact, including littering.

As ever, I appreciate the ACMD's thoughtful and considered advice which is an essential part of the Government's approach to tackling the misuse of drugs and protecting communities.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon Chris Philp MP**  
**Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire**