ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

ACMD Chair: Prof Owen Bowden-Jones

ACMD Nitrous Oxide Secretary: Matthew Brace & Ruby Pickup

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7 February 2023

Dear Sir or Madam,

**RE: Call for Evidence – Nitrous Oxide Review**

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) is collecting written evidence regarding the health and social harms of nitrous oxide.

In 2015 the ACMD considered the emerging issue of nitrous oxide abuse.[[1]](#footnote-2) In 2021, the then Home Secretary commissioned the ACMD to conduct an updated health and social harms assessment and whether nitrous oxide should be controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.[[2]](#footnote-3)

On Tuesday 7 February 2023, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned the ACMD to expedite this review and provide advice by the end of February 2023.[[3]](#footnote-4) This new commission sets out the Government’s renewed priority to tackle anti-social behaviour and request advice on the below social harms associated with nitrous oxide:

* Links between nitrous oxide misuse and antisocial behaviour
* Associated crime and impact on local communities
* Environmental impact, including littering

Given this pressing timeframe for advice from Ministers, we would be grateful for your written feedback in the attached questionnaire as part of this call for evidence by **Tuesday 21 February 2023**.

We would welcome submissions of evidence from as broad a spectrum of participants as possible, however particularly local authorities and law enforcement. We would therefore be grateful if you could please circulate this call for evidence to other colleagues and relevant stakeholders. We will be using your feedback to assist in formulating advice to Government.

Yours sincerely,

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**Prof Owen Bowden-Jones Prof Roger Knaggs**

*Chair of the ACMD* *ACMD Nitrous Oxide Working Group Chair*

## ACMD Nitrous Oxide Working Group – Call for Evidence

**Please consider the following information before completing the questionnaire:**

Completing the questionnaire

Although your expertise may be better suited to tackling only a subset of the following questions, it would be helpful if you were to consider every question in the questionnaire.

Where possible, please provide supporting evidence in your response. The ACMD considers a wide range of evidence as part of its advice, including published literature, statistics, data from UK organisations and expert and stakeholder opinions.

A free text box has been included in the questionnaire (Section 5) for respondents to include any comments relating to nitrous oxide that they feel have not been covered by this questionnaire.

**Please return your submission to the ACMD Secretariat at**: [acmd@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:acmd@homeoffice.gov.uk).

How we will use your information

Respondents should note that evidence submitted will inform the development of recommendations from the ACMD and could ultimately be published. However, in the interest of confidentiality and protecting commercial interests, any information submitted will be non-attributable.

All data submitted in response to this Call for Evidence will be protected by the ACMD Secretariat in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Furthermore, Section 43(1) of the Freedom of Information Act provides an exemption for information which is a trade secret, whilst Section 43(2) exempts information whose disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

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| **Section 1: About yourself / your organisation**  **Q1. Please indicate below if the following statement is applicable:**  “My submission should be considered a personal response and therefore not representative of the organisation I work for.”  “My submission should be considered as representative of the organisation I work for.”  **Q2. Please describe the nature of your organisation:**  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Section 2: Social Harms of Nitrous Oxide**  **Q3).** **Have you experienced any of the below social harms of nitrous oxide use within your local area? (Please see the below details from the ACMD** [**Standard Operating Procedure**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-operating-procedure-for-using-evidence-in-acmd-reports/standard-operating-procedure-for-using-evidence-in-acmd-reports-accessible-version)**)**  **Q3a) Crime against others** **(Yes or No)?**  *Social harms to victim of crime; loss of economic support for family members; increase in acquisitive crime, growth in serious and organised crime, fear of crime leading to a loss in confidence in formal criminal justice structures; fraud and money laundering; corruptions of public official and public office*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact**.  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q3b) Community costs (Yes or No)?**  *Harms resulting from the impact of drug use, drug markets, and legislative responses on social cohesion, community reputation, perceptions of community safety, and stigmatisation.*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q3c) Environmental damage (Yes or No)?**  *Harms resulting from littering of drugs or drug paraphernalia. Harms resulting from the production of drugs including environmental contamination, deforestation, land (re)appropriation, and unsustainable agricultural and production practices.*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q3d) Developmental** **(Yes or No)?**  *Including family adversity, economic and emotional wellbeing, and harms resulting from adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) directly and indirectly related to parental/family drug use.*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q3e) Dependence potential (Yes or No)?**  *What is known about antisocial or criminal behaviours associated with the drug or with drug-seeking behaviour?*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q3f) Accidents- traffic, industrial or personal (Yes or No)?**  *Including harms related to fatal and non-fatal accidents, property damage, loss of earnings, social costs of injury direct costs (e.g. emergency and health services, courts, traffic delay expenses).*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Section 3: Health Harms of Nitrous Oxide**  **Q4).** **Have you experienced any of the below health harms of nitrous oxide use within your local area? (Please see the below details from the ACMD** [**Standard Operating Procedure**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standard-operating-procedure-for-using-evidence-in-acmd-reports/standard-operating-procedure-for-using-evidence-in-acmd-reports-accessible-version)**)**  **Q4a) Physical health harms (Yes or No)?**  *Mortality, neurological, cardiovascular, respiratory, blood/ nutrition, musculoskeletal, multiple.*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q4b) Psychological health harms (Yes or No)?**  *Intoxication, mood disorders, memory disorders, anxiety, psychological dependence and addiction.*  Yes  No  **If yes, please provide details and supporting evidence on the scale of impact.**  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Section 4: Legitimate Use**  **Q5) Are you aware of legitimate sale of nitrous oxide within your local area (Yes or No)?**  Yes  No  **If yes, what uses are you aware of?**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q6) Are you aware of any shops/suppliers of nitrous oxide that are not ‘legitimate’ within your local area (Yes or No)?**  Yes  No  **If yes, have any steps been taken to target this?**  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Section 5: Current Controls**  **Q7a) Have you introduced Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) or any other powers related to the use of nitrous oxide (directly or as part of larger issues) (Yes or No)?**  Yes  No  **If yes, please detail these.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q7b) If you answered yes to Q7a), do you evaluate the effectiveness of these powers (Yes or No)?**  Yes  No  **If yes, please share your findings.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q8a) Do you have any other local measures in place or other targeted campaigns and activities surrounding the use of nitrous oxide (Yes or No)? For example, promoting awareness of potential harms or harm reduction initiatives.**  Yes  No  **If yes, please detail these.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q8b) If you answered yes to Q8a), do you evaluate the effectiveness of these measures or activities?**  Yes  No  **If yes, please share your findings.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q9a) Do you have any partnerships with other local stakeholders (e.g., housing or police) to reduce the harms of nitrous oxide (Yes or No)?**  Yes  No  **If yes, please detail these**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q9b) If you answered yes to 98a), do you evaluate the effectiveness of these partnerships?**  Yes  No  **If yes, please share your findings.**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q10) How much police time is spent on issues related to nitrous oxide?**  Click or tap here to enter text.  **Q11) Do you have any suggestions for wider controls that could be taken surrounding the use of nitrous oxide? What are your reasons for these suggestions?**  Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Section 5: Any Other Comments**  Click or tap here to enter text. |

1. [ACMD advice on nitrous oxide abuse - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/acmd-advice-on-nitrous-oxide-abuse) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [HS\_letter\_to\_ACMD\_Chair\_\_-\_NO\_\_-\_03\_September\_21.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014671/HS_letter_to_ACMD_Chair__-_NO__-_03_September_21.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Nitrous Oxide: Home Secretary's letter to the ACMD - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nitrous-oxide-home-secretarys-letter-to-the-acmd) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)