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# Exploring Novel Psychoactive Substance (NPS) use and its consequences for police practitioners and substance users in the North East of England

Dr Michelle Addison and Dr Kelly Stockdale  
*Northumbria University, York St. John University*



# OVERVIEW

Aims of the study

Main findings

Dissemination

Publications

Impact

Other Research

Future Directions

# Aims of the Study

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1

To understand how NPS impact on users and police staff

2

To gain insights into the challenges posed by mental health and NPS use

3

To understand how NPS users experience police custody

4


Identify key areas of priority

# Overview of NPS

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- Novel psychoactive substances (aka 'legal highs') contain one or more chemical substances
- Effects similar to other 'traditional' drugs
- NPS are generally manufactured overseas
- Different categories: stimulants/downers/Hallucinogenic drugs/ Synthetic Cannabinoids/ Disassociative



A horizontal bar with a teal segment on the left and an orange segment on the right.

# The UK Psychoactive Substances Act: 26 May 2016

# The Study

Fieldwork - conducted between June-Sept 2016.

- **Police Staff** n=15 semi-structured interviews conducted:  
n=4 female and 11 males; n=1 Sergeant, n=1 Senior Police staff, n=13 DOs
- **NPS Users**  
N=25 semi-structured interviews conducted: n=9 female, n=16 male; 1846 years old; n=8 infrequent user; n=12 current user; n=5 ex user; n=25 Caucasian; n=3 self identified as LGBT



Benzo Fury



Annihilation



Black Mamba



Gogaine



Herbal Haze



Green Beans



Pink Panthers



Sparklee



# Understanding the impact of NPS

# Impact on Staff

01

*"I mean, we've got a duty of care to make sure they're safe, and that's the real problem ... if they start harming themselves ... it puts officers and staff at risk. It's also resource intensive; we might have to handcuff them, we might have to leave an officer with them on close proximity supervision, and it's just very resource intensive. And it's possibly dangerous for us, and dangerous for the individual that we're trying to restrain"* NPSDO2



- Drain on time and resources
- Additional stress
- Require more care than other detainees



# Impact on Users

## 01

*“Some of them come in kicking and screaming, and kicking off. Some of them come in quite calm, but get worse as they’ve been in here ... They’re absolutely horrendous. I’ve seen people hallucinating, screaming, sweating, violent, extraordinarily strong for their size”* NPSDO2



- Unknown effects
- Different behaviour
- Challenge to manage

# Links to mental health

## 02

'I've already been pulled off the bridge twice last week, off the High Level. I got pulled, well I didn't get pulled off I got talked off by the police just saying, "Now mate it's not worth jumping and this, that..." I go, "Here mate you haven't lived a life like I lived.'" Male, NPSUR03



# Experience of Custody

## 03

'I will ask for things like blues or even yellows [...] To calm me down so I can get some sleep because police stations are noisy. They don't seem to get the whole grasp of addictions [...] If you haven't got any legal high in your system then it is like a war zone going on inside your body because one wants to be sick, one wants to have a shit and the other is telling to you shout. The other one saying, "I need to get to sleep." Sweat It is just not nice.' Female, NPSUR16



# Key Priorities

## 04

- Understanding **intersections** with other substances
- Managing issues of risk/safety for users and staff in custody – **training and custody nurse**
- Quantity, potency and mix of substances create unpredictability – **Harm reduction messages**
- **Care pathways** for existing NPS users





# Dissemination



NPS Conference, UK

Public Health England North East Clinical Commissioning Group

North East Crime Research Network Conference

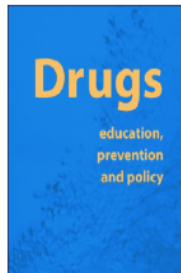
The Association of Forensic Science Conference

N8 PRP Conference, Greater Manchester Police HQ

N8 PRP Policing Innovation Forum

The VI International Conference on Novel Psychoactive Substances,  
Maastricht.

# Publications



Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy



ISSN: 0968-7637 (Print) 1465-3370 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/idep20>

**Exploring the intersections between novel psychoactive substances (NPS) and other substance use in a police custody suite setting in the north east of England**

Michelle Addison, Kelly Stockdale, Ruth McGovern, William McGovern, Iain McKinnon, Lisa Crowe, Lisa Hogan & Eileen Kaner



# Publications


ADDICTION

REVIEW

SSA SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ADDICTION

doi:10.1111/add.1444

## Which individual, social and environmental influences shape key phases in the amphetamine type stimulant use trajectory? A systematic narrative review and thematic synthesis of the qualitative literature

Amy O'Donnell<sup>1</sup> , Michelle Addison<sup>1</sup>, Liam Spencer<sup>1</sup>, Heike Zurhold<sup>2</sup>, Moritz Rosenkranz<sup>2</sup>, Ruth McGovern<sup>1</sup>, Eilish Gilvarry<sup>1</sup>, Marcus-Sebastian Martens<sup>2</sup>, Uwe Verthein<sup>2</sup> & Eileen Kaner<sup>1</sup>

Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK<sup>1</sup> and Centre of Interdisciplinary Addiction Research of Hamburg University, Department of Psychiatry, University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**Background and aims** There is limited evidence on what shapes amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) use trajectory. This systematic narrative review and qualitative synthesis aimed to identify individual, social and environmental influences shaping key phases in the ATS use trajectory: initiation, continuation, increase/relapse and decrease/abstinence. **Methods** MEDLINE, PsycINFO, EMBASE, and PROQUEST (social science premium collection) were searched from 2000 to 2018. Studies of any qualitative design were eligible for inclusion. Extracted data were analysed according to key phases within drug pathways, and then cross-analysed for individual, social and environmental influences. **Results** Forty-four papers based on 39 unique studies were included, reporting the views of 1879 ATS users. Participants were aged 14–58 years, from varied socio-economic and demographic groups, and located in North America, Europe, Australasia and South East Asia. Reasons for initiation included: to boost performance at work and in sexual relationship; promote a sense of social 'belonging' and help manage stress. Similar reasons motivated continued use, combined with the challenge of managing withdrawal effects in long-term users. Increased tolerance and/or experiencing a critical life event



# Publications

THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigour, journalistic flair

## Spice and police custody: there must be a better way

May 10, 2017 11.33am BST

BORIS ROESSLER/EPA

## Spice and police custody: there must be a better way

May 10, 2017 11.33am BST

A string of shocking videos showing users of the drug “spice” in frozen and catatonic states on Britain’s streets and in prisons have sparked a national debate about how to deal with the substance and its users. But these disturbing images are just a snapshot. The true cost is yet to be counted and it is frontline police staff who are bearing the brunt at a time when they are least prepared to face such a worrying phenomena.

### Author



**Kelly J. Stockdale**  
Research Associate, Teesside University







# Impact



## The Home Office

Shared the outputs of our research on NPS

## BBC Panorama

Invited to take part in BBC Panorama programme – had to decline



## ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

Submitted evidence to the *Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs: Call for Evidence Custody/Community Transitions (2018)*



## Links to Other Research

**NPS in  
prisons**

**ATTUNE**

**The  
Wellcome  
Trust**

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Spice, Spice Kick, Clockwork Orange, Sonic Blue, Ramshot, Zombie Mario Mind Trip, Royal Exodus, Red Exodus, Blue Exodus, Black Exodus, Mephedrone, Red Dragon, China White, Salvia, Pandora's Box, Pandora Unleashed, Pandora Reborn, Space Cadet, Blue Cheese, Hummers, Insane Joker, Bubble, Poppers, and Ching.





# Thank you

## Research Team:

Dr Michelle Addison, Dr Kelly Stockdale, Dr Will McGovern, Dr Iain McKinnon, Dr Ruth McGovern, Dr Lisa Crowe, Chief Inspector Lisa Hogan, Professor Eileen Kaner

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