



**ACS Submission:  
Home Affairs Committee – Psychoactive Substances Inquiry**

1. ACS (the Association of Convenience Store) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into the Psychoactive Substances Bill. ACS represents 33,500 local shops across the country trading at the heart of communities across the UK. Retailers sell a range of products of grocery products and a number of age restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco.
2. We want to ensure that this Bill provides all stakeholders with clarity around the definition of a 'psychoactive substance', and the products this will include. We welcome confirmation that the Home Office will produce guidance for retailers on psychoactive substances to ensure there are no incidental products that can be sold in stores that would fall within the definition of 'psychoactive substances' and result in erroneous prosecutions.

**Which groups will be particularly affected by a ban on psychoactive substances?**

**What steps can the Government take to educate these groups about the dangers?**

**How will the Government explain the change in the legal status of these substances?**

3. Retailers sell a range of products include a number of age restricted products such as alcohol and tobacco. As such, retailers may be affected by the Bill as they may unintentionally stock products that could fall within the scope. ACS is currently surveying members in our Voice of Local Shops survey on how many retailers stock products that could fall into the Home Office's definition of a psychoactive substance.
4. We welcome and understand the need for a wide ranging definition of 'psychoactive substances' included within the Bill: "In this Act "psychoactive substance" means any substance which is capable of producing a psychoactive effect in a person who consumes it". However, further clarification on exactly what falls into the definition is required in additional guidance.
5. We welcome Home Office Minister Lord Bates confirmation, that clear guidance will be provided on the detail of how the Psychoactive Substances Bill will affect retailers. We urge the Home Office to work with the industry in the development of additional guidance for retailers on the types of substances and products that will be included under the definition. We want to ensure that retailers do not unintentionally stock products that could fall within the definition of psychoactive substances and result in a prosecution.
6. The development of any guidance should be included within the scope of primary authority scheme so that all retailers can receive legally assured advice on the psychoactive substances.
7. ACS launched its own Primary Authority scheme in 2014 in partnership with Surrey County Council that is accessible to the smallest convenience retail businesses.

Through ACS' Assured Advice, small retailers have access to the same expertise, previously only available to the biggest companies with expensive in-house compliance departments. ACS' extensive collection of retailer advice guidance [here](#) which details all areas of compliance that retailers can consider. These guides provide retailers with complete assurance about what is legal and not legal and would be ideal to promote what a psychoactive substance is.

**Do the enforcement agencies have the necessary powers and resources to effectively enforce the proposed new laws?**

8. There should be a focus from the Home Office to prevent psychoactive substances entering the supply chain by targeting producers/suppliers of psychoactive substances and not focusing solely at the end of the supply chain.

**For more information on this submission please contact Julie Byers, ACS Public Affairs Executive at 01252 515001 or email [Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk](mailto:Julie.Byers@acs.org.uk).**