

Legal highs and bureaucratic lows

By [Ciarán Morrissey](#), Comment Editor (2015/16)

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Image: Philippa Willitts

The Psychoactive Substances Bill has been shelved for the moment, but it still looms over us, with Home Office sources suggesting that there are still plans for it to come into force later this year.

That the Home Office can, with a straight face, draft a bill banning 'psychoactive substances' in general should be incredibly worrying. In reality, any substance that is fit for human consumption is psychoactive in some form. This doesn't mean that the distinction is meaningless, just that it's a bit nuanced.

Eating a piece of chocolate and getting cosy with some fine Colombian cocaine are two entirely different sorts of high, to the point where it's not really sensible to compare one with the other, however this bill would do exactly that; it just shows the sort of ignorant and chronic fun-sponge mentality that lies behind this legislation. Like suburban yummy mummies who tut loudly if you walk past their (trendily unvaccinated) kids with a fag in hand, this is more about being seen to be doing something, and doing it as loudly as possible, than being informed, principled, or consistent.

The focus on legal highs is a desperate attempt to make it seem like the situation is under control, when in reality we already have good reasons to believe that these substances will not go away. Mephedrone (known as 'bubble' to the cool kids; 'miaow miaow' to tabloid journos) started off life as a legal high and is now a Class B drug, with the only appreciable difference being that it's now a bit more costly to buy and is of a substantially lower quality.

This Bill is more about the reactionary, 'I-Don't-Like-It' elements of British society trying to dictate the terms of our private lives, showing a mind-boggling misperception of the issues through everything from its scope to its wording.

Just like the Snoopers' Charter, this is nothing but ideologically driven puritanism that seeks to invade our private lives. Theresa May can't handle the concept of Brits out on the sesh, and instead of accepting this and taking a harm-reducing approach, she's going to make it more dangerous for everyone.



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