

'G' Deaths

**GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) and GBL
(gamma butyrolactone)**

Rob Ralphs

Professor of Criminology & Social Policy

Substance Use & Associated Behaviours (SUAB) Research Centre

Manchester Metropolitan University

Research

- The central aim was to **develop an improved digital offer** that is responsive to the local chemsex support needs of people living in Manchester and the surrounding local authority areas.
- It set out to gain an **in-depth understanding** of the experiences and perspectives of people with personal experience of chemsex, as well as professionals who work directly with them.



Key Findings

- High number of reported 'G' deaths (inc. suicides)
- 26/28 accounts of G related overdose and deaths
- Need for OD awareness and guidance

**High number of reported 'G'
deaths**

'G' Deaths

Almost two-thirds of participant shared a personal experience of losing friends to 'G' overdoses

*So I was quite heavily on the scene and then the **three friends died within a really close time of each other.** Basically, **G overdoses** . . . we all just spiralled out of control and literally people were dropping dead and then like everyone that was. (CDOSUVW02)*

'G' Deaths

*I suppose another one is around the dangers of these drugs, especially G, **I've lost a number of friends to G overdoses.** Some of them were kind of during sex with a partner or with someone that they'd hooked up with, and then others were just kind of at parties. (CDOSURR1)*

'G' Deaths

Three participants reporting losing **20 or more friends to 'G' related overdose**, illustrating the serious risks associated with the use of 'G' and the prevalence of overdose and death.

Suicide

*I'd say about 20 close friends. **15, 20 close friends who have died,** [. . .] Some of them couldn't handle the rattle and killed themselves. (CDOSURR8)*

***In the last two years I've lost four close friends to suicide.** Three of them all had drug problems. [. . .] And if you hear about someone has died. My first reaction as a gay man - did he commit suicide? (CDOSURR4)*

Under-recording G Deaths

*I think the death rates are definitely huge because **a lot of the death rates probably aren't recorded as a death from G** because I don't know if it shows up in the system that easily.
(CDOSURR1)*

***How can we improve the
recording of 'G' related
deaths?***

***How can we reduce the
number of 'G' related
deaths?***

Awareness

Dependency & Withdrawals

*It's the dependency, . . . because it's so cheap, it'll give you a bit of a pick-up. **It's very easy to fall into using it as a crutch in life for everything. It's multifunctional.** It can pick you up, it can put you to sleep. . . . And it's so, so, cheap! (CDOSURR20)*

*G is so, so, addictive. The way he gets when he doesn't have any. Or we can't get him any. The way it is, it's just it kills me. Its physical the shaking and the sweating. The withdrawals from it was so strong. [. . .]. **There is a lack of awareness about that, about the build-up of tolerance.** (CDOSURR15)*

Dependency & Withdrawals

*The people that I've spoken too, you know, it's stopped being about [taking G] to take the edge off coke, and it makes you a bit horny. Before you know it, your brain is loving the fact that it's not having these anxious thoughts, it feels relaxed. [. . .] And **people that aren't aware that GBL is actually physically dependent and actually trying to come off it and withdrawing yourself is life threatening.** (CDOSURR18)*

Anxiety & 'Addiction'

*I don't think people really realise just how powerful a G addiction is, and just how something that can start off with being taken sexually, then becomes become something else. And there are a few people that I know that had been very much into the chemsex scene, and **then become very much dependent on G because, people are just not aware of the dangers of G.** Your brain also soaks up that feeling that G gives you to help you relax. And you know, that feeling is so addictive. (CDOSURR19)*

Improved Detox Awareness & Support

*I've had two detoxes at Manchester Royal Infirmary. **Both are off the back of having to self-detox. I was rushed into hospital after trying to make myself clean,** and they gave me an emergency detox. And then the following year, I had another emergency detox. (CDOSURR18)*

Consequences of Self-Detox

*Them friends were actually people that didn't go to sex parties and stuff like that. They were people that had G to give them a perk at the house with their partner or stuff like that, privately taking it. Not even at a sex party. Then **they got addicted to it, they couldn't handle the three-day rattle, they didn't want to do the shakes. So, they've either killed themselves, or they've tried to take sleepers to come off it.** But at the same time, they're still taking a ml [of 'G'] here and there. Then, next thing, they're gone. (CDOSURR8)*

Overdose Reduction Advice

*The first one would be to reduce A&E admissions for overdose. And it will do that because we know how many people overdose on G, for example, turn up at A&E. And that's every weekend, **Manchester is overrun with people overdosing on G.** (CDOSURR5)*

Risks of Mixing 'G' with other Substances

In specific relation to the use mixing of 'G' with other substances, clear messaging regarding the increased risk of unconsciousness when used with **alcohol** was mentioned by six participants with experience of using 'G' and two professionals.

People don't know the actual 'Do you know this could happen? Do you know if you're on G, and you take Zopiclone at home to go to sleep, you could die?' (CDOSURR8)

Advice on Dosage

G is definitely one because *people don't know how to measure it properly*. People don't get told. (CDOSURR26)

Overdose Response

Responding To Overdose Advice

... certainly, some stuff that's like you know **stopping overdoses, becoming deaths. Just some simple, you know information that could be kept on a website about what to do.** (CDOSURR15)

In fact, informative **information on what to do** ... when someone does go under on G. (CDOSURR20)

Responding to Overdose Advice

*Having some support on what to do and **some information on how to deal with someone who has OD'd.** (CDOSURR14)*

*I think there needs to be the life support information as well at the same time because for example when you go to trouble and you call the 999, **I've waited two and half hours for ambulance handlers to come so you need to know what to do when things go wrong.** (CDOSURR12)*

Overdose Response

*Everyone just thinks 'He can't handle his shit, kick him out'. Then they're kicking people out of the sex party onto the street. Not looking after them. Or someone could be under, **they don't even put them in the recovery position. Don't check on them if they're still breathing.** Because some people don't make a sound when they're under.*
(CDOSURR8)

Responding to Overdose Advice

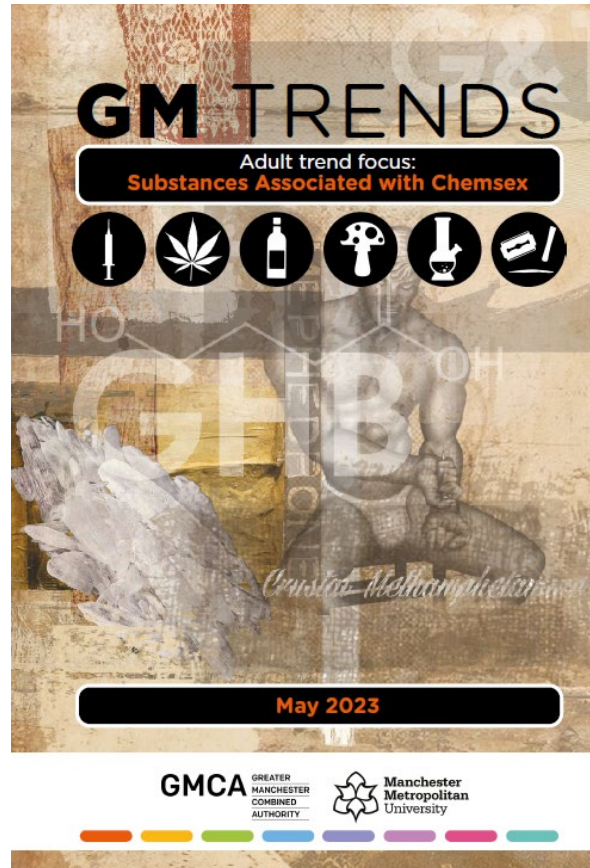
*I suppose **one of the main ones is what to do is if somebody does go under, what do you need to do?** Because I know that leaving it, they can die. **Leaving them on their back they can die because they can choke on their own vomit, that's happened to a couple of my friends.** [. . .] Do you need to call an ambulance straightaway? Yeah, so I suppose there's information [needed] around that.*
(CDOSURR1)

Legal Clarity

I've been with a guy who has passed out, and I didn't know what to do and it's a very scary situation, not knowing what to do. Thinking, **'if I phone an ambulance, will I get into trouble because this person has been using drugs?'** So I guess the legalities of drug use and your relationship with the **emergency services**, I think that needs to be cleared up as well. Because for me, **there was a fear that well, I've just been involved with somebody who's been illegally using drugs, what can I do, will I get into trouble**, those kinds of things could be clearer. (CDOSURR11)

Legal Clarity

*I think there needs to be also what would happen if you got caught? Because some people forget crystal meth, is a class A that can be up to 10 years in prison [...] I mean, if somebody overdoses, you know, **I had a guy pass out on us and we just watched it. We didn't call an ambulance.** We should have done, but luckily, he woke up five minutes later. (CDOSURR23)*



Welcome to

CHEMSAFE SPACE

An evolving digital resource supporting
individuals and communities engaging in
chemsex

***How can we improve the
recording of 'G' related
deaths?***