

ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

Chair: Professor Les Iversen
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16 December 2016

Sarah Newton MP
Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

RE: Scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 and its impact upon research

At our last meeting on 13 September 2016, you requested the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) to report on the impact that Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (as amended) (MDR) scheduling of drugs may have upon the conduct of legitimate research, and whether there were any barriers caused by the current legislative framework. I have referred the initial consideration of this issue to the ACMD's Technical Committee.

The ACMD has not previously undertaken a formal examination of the impact of MDR 2001 scheduling upon the conduct of research, though we are aware that some researchers have offered significant criticism regarding perceived barriers for acquiring Home Office Schedule 1 licences.

A letter to the ACMD from the Home Office's Drugs and Alcohol Unit (July 2014) summarised a scoping exercise carried out by the Home Office in 2013. This found that while acquisition of a Home Office Schedule 1 was not a limitation for most established research organisations; the most important considerations were found to

be ethics approval and the availability of funding.¹ These perceptions of risk associated with research of controlled drugs were from other organisations involved in the research process. The ACMD therefore consider that a consideration of the impact of MDR 2001 scheduling upon research should include a review of other research organisations' perceptions of research involving controlled drugs.

ACMD's Technical Committee will therefore undertake an exploration of the impact of MDR 2001 scheduling upon the conduct of legitimate research by seeking input from stakeholders. We expect to report on our findings in 2017.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Les Iversen', written in a cursive style.

Professor Les Iversen
Chair of ACMD

Cc Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd MP, Home Secretary
Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hunt, MP, Secretary of State for Health
Nicola Blackwood MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health