

ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

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Rt Hon Alan Johnson
2 Marsham Street
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22nd December 2009

Dear Home Secretary,

Re: ACMD consideration of mephedrone (and related cathinones)

The ACMD wrote to you in March to explain that it would be pleased to accede to the Government's priorities that your predecessor set out in her letter of 13 March 2009. Concerning the issue of 'legal highs' the ACMD has provided advice on the synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (Spice), 1-benzylpiperazine, GBL and 1,4-BD all of which we note will be controlled in the legislation on the 23rd December. In the ACMD's letter of 30 September 2009 it was explained that we would next provide you with advice on the cathinones.

Despite the difficulties of the last 2 months the ACMD is committed to providing you with advice on the cathinones. Although attention has focused on mephedrone, five other synthetic psychoactive cathinone derivatives are also widely available. The ACMD explained in a previous letter to you that it has concerns about the apparent prevalence and potential harms of these compounds. Much has been made of these compounds in the media over recent weeks; we find it of concern that this may have had the consequence of bringing such drugs to the attention of a wider demographic sooner than may have been the case.

The ACMD understand that mephedrone, amongst other cathinones, is being marketed as a variety of apparently 'benign' products e.g. bath salts or plant food. Whilst the potential harms of these drugs are not yet fully known, it is apparent that the selling of such unregulated preparations in a form that they are clearly unintended for could have serious public health implications.

The ACMD is mindful that, after recent events, our statutory membership requirements need to be fulfilled before providing formal advice, according to the requirements of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. However, the ACMD would

like to assure you that it will seek to provide you with such advice at the earliest possible opportunity on this important issue.

I would be willing to discuss the issue of the cathinones and, more broadly, new psychoactive substances ('legal highs') and the timing of advice with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Les Iversen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

Professor Les Iversen
(on behalf of the ACMD)