

ACMD

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

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Right Honourable Alan Johnson
2 Marsham Street
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25 February 2010

Dear Home Secretary,

At our meeting on 2 February 2010 we discussed our shared concerns regarding cocaine misuse and I outlined to you that I considered it might be helpful if the ACMD undertook a review of the drug. This letter, on behalf of the ACMD, outlines our intentions.

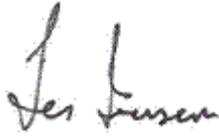
Cocaine is a very harmful drug to individuals and more broadly society and evidence of the continued increasing prevalence of cocaine use is deeply concerning. The British Crime Survey reports that cocaine use among 16-59 year olds has increased from 0.6% in 1996 to 3% in 08/09 (2.4% in 07/08). The increase in use is sharper among 16-24 year olds from 1.3% in 1996 to 6.6% in 08/09 (5.5% in 07/08).

In addition to increases in prevalence, purity has been decreasing with possible implications for harms to users due to an increase in the volume of cutting agents which may be present in a sample. Data from forensic analysis of seized samples of cocaine indicates that the mean purity of cocaine powder has been steadily decreasing to 15.5% in quarter April – June 2009. Recent slight increases in purity do not affect the underlying trend of a continued decrease.

I do not expect our report will advise you on the classification of cocaine since the ACMD believe that cocaine is, and should remain, a Class A drug. The ACMD propose to carry out a review of the harms associated with cocaine and provide you with wider advice on how these might be reduced together with suggestions for further research in this area. I believe that promulgating such advice may help to counteract the increasingly common

misapprehension that cocaine is a relatively safe drug. The ACMD review process is likely to take around 12 months; we intend to start the review once we have completed our advice to you on mephedrone and other cathinones.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Les Iversen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Professor Les Iversen