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Professor Sir Michael Rawlins
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Dear Sir Michael

In recent years, my predecessors David Blunkett and Charles Clarke commissioned the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to provide reports on the classification of cannabis. In January 2004, cannabis was reclassified to a Class C drug on the advice of the Advisory Council and with the support of the Association of Chief Police Officers. A review of the classification of cannabis was undertaken in 2005 by the ACMD which resulted in a recommendation that cannabis remain a Class C drug.

Though statistics show that cannabis use has fallen significantly, there is real public concern about the potential mental health effects of cannabis use, in particular the use of stronger forms of the drug, commonly known as skunk. This is in addition to the longitudinal studies undertaken in New Zealand and the Netherlands that link cannabis use to mental health problems.

As Vernon Coaker has already discussed with you, I would like the Advisory Council to again assess whether its position has changed in light of the current evidence. The need to protect society and individuals from the harmful effect of illicit drugs is an important part of the Government's responsibilities to our nation.

An indication of timescales to provide such advice would be extremely helpful. I am grateful for the advice that the Advisory Council can provide and look forward to your response.

Jacqui Smith
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