



Home Office

Norman Baker MP
Minister for Crime Prevention

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Professor Les Iversen
Chair, Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
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6 March 2014

Dear Les,

I am writing further to my predecessor's response to the ACMD's advice on tramadol on 22 July 2013.

My predecessor accepted the ACMD's advice to control tramadol as a Class C and a Schedule 3 drug in principle, subject to the outcome of a public consultation to assess the impact of Schedule 3 status. The public consultation on tramadol, which also included a proposal to remove the existing prescription exemptions for temazepam, concluded in October last year. I am informed that the ACMD has been kept up to date with developments. A summary of the responses to the consultation will be published along with the draft Order to control tramadol on the www.gov.uk website.

In light of the ACMD's advice and the consultation responses I have agreed that tramadol should be placed in Schedule 3 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 (as amended) to accompany its Class C control. However, due to the significant concerns raised around the implications of the safe custody requirements across all sectors, I have also agreed that tramadol should be exempted from the requirements under the Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) Regulations 1973. This is not uncommon for Schedule 3 drugs and the legal framework gives us the flexibility to respond in this way. In my view, this will provide an appropriate framework that helps prevent the diversion and misuse of tramadol whilst at the same time minimising the impact on the healthcare sector.

The consultation responses to the proposal to remove the prescription writing exemptions for temazepam has also highlighted that the current exemptions, introduced at a time when all prescriptions for Schedule 3 drugs needed to be handwritten, are no longer warranted. The removal of the exemption will ensure that

the prescribing of all Schedule 3 drugs are treated similarly and this should avoid any confusion.

As the ACMD has not previously provided advice on the issue of prescribing exemptions for temazepam, I would be grateful if it could consider this proposal and provide advice.

As the ACMD is aware, the Coalition Government is concerned about the misuse of prescription drugs. The evidence about the harms and misuse of tramadol reinforces these concerns and the need for us to keep this issue under close scrutiny. I look forward to being updated about the progress of the Advisory Council's enquiry into the diversion and illicit supply of medicines in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Norman', with a wavy, cursive style.

Norman Baker MP
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