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Professor Les Iversen
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Dear Professor Iversen

ACMD advice – ‘third generation’ synthetic cannabinoids

I am grateful for the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs’ ongoing review of the generic definitions used in the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and its latest advice to update our drug controls on synthetic cannabinoids.

The Council’s report is telling of the challenges posed by the evolving trade in new psychoactive substances, in particular synthetic cannabinoids. I am again pleased to see that the Home Office’s drugs and forensic early warning systems have assisted the ACMD in its considerations.

I note that you have adopted a different approach with this latest generic definition which will cover the “third generation” of cannabinoids we have seen. My officials have considered this definition in detail, helped by the guidance you attached to your advice to assist with its interpretation. I understand that, after further consultation, the need for a simple addendum has been identified to cover necessary exemptions from the broad definition provided. It is on this basis, and that the addendum will be provided shortly, that I accept the ACMD’s advice now. We will prepare draft legislation ready for laying in Parliament as soon as possible.

I was particularly concerned to learn that some synthetic cannabinoids are now advertised for sale as e-cigarette refills for ‘vaping’. FRANK information on synthetic cannabinoids has been reviewed to reflect the latest evidence and advice of the Council.

I am grateful for the Council’s ongoing support to the department on this work, including your consideration of a new approach to how we might in future control synthetic cannabinoids with reference to their effects on the brain rather than their chemical structure.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Lynne Featherstone MP
Minister of State