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Professor Owen Bowden-Jones
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By email only ACMD@homeoffice.gov.uk

30 March 2021

Dear Professor Bowden-Jones,

The ACMD's report "An assessment of the harms of gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB), gamma-butyrolactone (GBL), and closely related compounds".

Thank you for your report of 20 November on GHB and related substances. The report is comprehensive and detailed, and I would like to thank the ACMD members for the care and expertise that they have once again demonstrated.

I am mindful of the ACMD's advice that the recommendations be considered as a single package, and of the Council's concern to avoid unintended consequences. However, I also agree that action is needed to implement the legislative recommendations that will tighten the law on these substances, and I therefore agree to Recommendation 3 (that GHB, GBL and 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD) be moved from Class C to Class B of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) and Recommendation 4 (that GBL and 1,4-BD are placed under Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, so that industrial users will require a controlled drugs licence). It is my view that we should begin the process of amending the legislation to implement Recommendations 3 and 4, subject to Parliamentary approval, as soon as possible.

I recognise the importance of the remaining recommendations, which address, for example, improved data, toxicology, prevention, treatment, and training of staff in health and social care. It is clear from the report that the harms of GHB and related substances require a broad response. My officials are in discussion with other government departments and agencies to develop a detailed response to these recommendations and I will reply further in due course.

With our best wishes


Rt Hon Priti Patel MP