



Home Office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Minister of State for Crime, Policing
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Professor Owen Bowden-Jones,
Chair, Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD)
C/o 1st Floor,
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By email only ACMD@homeoffice.gov.uk

26 June 2023

Dear Owen,

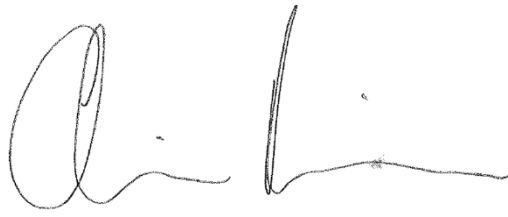
Thank you again for your report of 30 July 2021, “Considerations of barriers to research Part 1: Synthetic cannabinoid receptor agonists (SCRA)”. I responded on 12 December. Since then, I have considered the issue of research with controlled drugs further in discussion with colleagues across Government. It is vital that we make it easier to conduct research that will ultimately benefit patients, and which can also improve UK’s global competitiveness, whilst maintaining appropriate safeguards to prevent illicit use.

We have considered your recommendation to define a “research organisation” whose activities could be exempt from controlled drugs licensing. In my previous letter, I sought the ACMD’s views on options to extend Schedule 2 status for research purposes to all Schedule 1 drugs, which would benefit two types of research organisation, not-for-profit hospitals, and universities. Beyond this, we have not found an appropriate definition of a research organisation that has sufficient legal certainty to prevent the risk of loopholes. We would welcome your views on how this could be defined with certainty.

Our view is that there is nevertheless potential for wide-ranging exemptions for legitimate research with controlled drugs by exploring forms of approved research, including research with clinical trials approval, ethics approval and other equivalent approvals. My officials will present these options in more detail to the ACMD. Given that these approvals would not apply to early-stage research, we would welcome your advice on expanding the concept to also cover early-stage research.

I hope that this clarifies the Government’s position and assists the ACMD in its consideration. I would welcome the Council’s views as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Philp', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire