

# ACMD

## Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

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Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Home Secretary  
2 Marsham Street  
London, SW1P 4DF

12 March 2025

Dear Home Secretary,

### **RE: ACMD Work Programme 2025**

As I enter my final year as Chair of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), I would like to reflect on the Council's work over the past year and share how we plan to progress over the next 12 months. During this period the ACMD is committed to completing reviews underway in a number of important areas, including ministerial commissions as well as work the ACMD has chosen to undertake of its own volition. Our update below sets out existing projects and the Council would welcome your prioritisation and direction on future commissioned work.

Over the past year we have continued to build upon our work monitoring and reviewing emerging psychoactive substances. Crucially, the ACMD has continued to advise on the harms of synthetic opioids, including 2-Methyl-AP-237 and updates to our advice on nitazenes and newly identified structurally related compounds. The ACMD also completed several harm assessments, including alkyl nitrites, the veterinary medicine xylazine and synthetic cathinones.

## Government Commissioned Workstreams

### **Ketamine: an updated harms assessment**

**Status: Commencing shortly, expected completion in Autumn 2025**

Following the Government's commission of January 2025, we are convening a working group which will commence an updated assessment on the harms of ketamine.

### **Drivers of powder cocaine use**

**Status: In progress, expected completion by end of 2025**

Responding to a Government commission, the ACMD initiated work looking at the drivers of powdered cocaine use in young people. The scope of this work has expanded to include adults and to feature a review of emerging evidence around the injection of powder cocaine. The work is approaching its latter stages.

### **Internet facilitated drugs markets.**

**Status: In progress, expected completion by end of 2025**

Also responding to a Government commission, the ACMD is undertaking a review aimed at building a more comprehensive understanding of online drug markets. Furthermore, the project aims to inform an effective enforcement guide for monitoring and intervening in drug trafficking on the internet. Since the project commenced, its scope has expanded to include an analysis of not only dark web marketplaces but also clear web and social media platforms.

## Self-commissioned workstreams

### **Drug use in ethnic minority groups.**

**Status: In progress, expected completion by Summer 2025**

Building on prior work in our series of reports on drug use in vulnerable populations, the ACMD committed to investigating drug use and treatment in Ethnic Minority groups. This project is entering its final stages.

### **Semi Synthetic Cannabinoids**

**Status: In progress, expected completion by Summer 2025**

In 2024, the ACMD commenced work on the emergence of Semi-Synthetic Cannabinoids (SSCs) synthesised from the phytocannabinoid Cannabidiol (CBD) including a review of their associated health and social harms. These SSCs have similar psychoactive properties to Tetrahydrocannabinols (THC) but are not all currently controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

### **Drug Use in the LGBT+ Community / Chemsex**

**Status: In progress, expected completion by end of 2025**

Further to the ACMD's review of GHB and related substances, this report is exploring the wider range of substances used in LGBT+ communities, their associated harms and possible harm reduction responses.

### **Pregabalin and Gabapentin Harms Assessment**

***Status: In progress, expected completion by end of 2025***

Gabapentinoids are a group of prescribed drugs licensed for use for conditions such as epilepsy and neuropathic pain. The ACMD's self-commissioned review aims to confirm if current controls of these medications are sufficient. A working group has been established and the review is in the early stages.

### **Etomidate Harms Assessment**

***Status: Commencing shortly, expected completion in Autumn 2025***

The ACMD's self-commissioned review of Etomidate and related compounds seeks to review if they cause sufficient potential harm to justify a classification under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The ACMD is establishing a working group which will commence a review of harms shortly.

Owing to balancing current priorities, the ACMD's review of image and performance enhancing drugs has been paused.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss any of the above work as well as to better understand the Government's priorities for the ACMD under its new mission led approach.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Owen Bowden-Jones', written in a cursive style.

Professor Owen Bowden-Jones  
**Chair of the ACMD**