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Ms Sarah Newton
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering
Extremism

Home Office

{REDACTED}

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9 November 2017

Dear {REDACTED}

It was a pleasure to meet you at the British Irish Council meeting in September. I found it particularly useful to hear from the other nations on how they were progressing with their individual substance misuse strategies and it was heartening to realise that all are largely moving in the same direction.

As I mentioned at the BIC meeting, we in Scotland have recently announced our intention to refresh our own drug strategy and build on some of the successes of the 2008 publication, 'The Road to Recovery'. This will continue to emphasise and promote a message of recovery, whilst also recognising some of the new challenges which are emerging, such as responding to increasing drug related deaths.

Alongside this refresh we are also keen to explore a number of topics which are currently outside of the powers of the Scottish Parliament. These include such things as medicinal cannabis and the introduction of a pilot supervised consumption room in Glasgow, a move which is seen as essential by the Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership as they seek to address a significant HIV outbreak amongst a population difficult to reach.

While there are many common features of the challenges we share, the nature and intensity of the patterns of substance misuse in Scotland are harrowing. In bringing substance misuse policy into the Health portfolio, the First Minister was clear that we must approach this as a public health issue.

I write to ask you to meet me to explore how these issues can be addressed in Scotland with a view to bringing the powers here to make progress. This would allow us to consider a range of additional options when thinking about how we deal with some of the significant

challenges currently facing those using substances, their families, and wider society in Scotland.

I look forward to hearing from you and to working together to progress some of these issues.

AILEEN CAMPBELL

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Victoria Atkins MP
Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability
2 Marsham Street
London
SWIP 4DF

Email: {REDACTED}

February 2018

Dear

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability but also thank you for your reply to my letter of 9 November.

I had written to you regarding a number of drug policy matters including a refresh of the Scottish drugs strategy, medicinal cannabis and the options available around introducing a supervised consumption room in Glasgow. In my role as the Minister responsible for tackling problematic substance use in Scotland I look forward to working with you on these complex matters. As you state in your letter it would be useful to meet and discuss in more detail what steps can be taken to address them.

I will ask my Private Office to liaise with your Private Secretary to make the suitable arrangements.

I look forward to meeting with you.

Aileen Campbell

Victoria Atkins MP
Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability

Home Office

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www.gov.uk/home-office

Aileen Campbell MSP
Minister for Public Health and Sport
St Andrew's House Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear

Aileen,

I write in response to your letter of 9 November regarding the establishment of a drug consumption room in Glasgow.

As we have previously expressed, There is no legal framework for the provision of Drug Consumption Rooms in the UK and we have no plans to introduce them. A range of offences is likely to be committed in the operation of drug consumption rooms. It is for local police forces to enforce the law in such circumstances and, as with other offences of this type, we would expect them to do so.

Drug control under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 remains the responsibility of the UK Government and it is essential there remains a robust, consistent and stable legislative framework to prevent the sale and supply of these substances. We have no plans to devolve this important responsibility.

With regard to cannabis and cannabis products being used in medicinal settings, I'm mindful that the evidence base is still developing. The World Health Organisation's Expert Committee on Drug Dependence will be carrying out a pre-review of the dependence potential and medicinal application of the constituent parts of cannabis in May, prior to making a decision on whether to undertake a full critical review. The UK Government will monitor the WHO's review with interest and will consider any outcomes when they emerge

On the wider issue of a substance's status under Schedule 1 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) is currently considering whether there are still any barriers within our current licensing and regulatory framework which prevents research into Schedule 1 substances, and therefore their development into medicines. I am keen for us to maintain and develop our proportionate system to allow research into controlled drugs such as cannabis and to ensure that Government does not stand in the way of this process to the detriment of patient needs. The ACMD has provided interim advice on this matter and will provide full advice later this year.

I am pleased to hear that you are refreshing your own drug strategy and while there may be areas on which we disagree, I would be very happy to meet you to discuss our common ground and the steps that we can both take within the current legal framework to address the current challenges associated with drug misuse.

*Yours sincerely,
Victoria*

Victoria Atkins MP

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Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

By email:
PrivateOfficeH41@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

1 August 2019

Dear Ms Patel

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your new appointment as Home Secretary and I look forward to working with you in the future.

As you are no doubt aware, on Tuesday 16 July 2019, we received the tragic confirmation that 1,187 people had lost their lives to drug-related deaths in Scotland last year. I wrote to your predecessor on 19 July 2019 (copy attached), raising the issue of drug-related deaths and the impact on Scotland and its people.

I am writing to you, copied to the Health and Social Care Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland, to request an urgent meeting to discuss how we can work together to help stop this increasing number of drug deaths and to save more lives in Scotland.

While there are options available to us within the current devolved powers which we are pursuing, there are additional innovative and bold measures, which would see us taking a public health approach to the issue rather than a criminal justice one that have the potential to significantly reduce loss of life, such as establishing supervised consumption facilities. A proposal for the piloting of such a facility which has come forward from Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership and is backed by Glasgow City Council and a majority of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament.

At her recent meeting with the Prime Minister, the First Minister raised this issue and urged the Prime Minister and Secretary of State to listen to the public health experts and to take steps to help us address this problem. I understand the Prime Minister indicated he would take that advice and that he saw the role of his government as being to help Scotland.

I hope that commitment will lead to early constructive engagement between us with a view to taking the steps needed as quickly as possible to avoid more unnecessary and tragic loss of life.

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Indeed such engagement would echo the statement of the Health and Social Care Secretary, Matt Hancock, on 23rd July acknowledging the opioid epidemic and the severity of the drug problem in which he stated that whilst public health and the NHS are devolved to the Scottish Government, the UK Government would put aside party politics to try to tackle this very serious problem.

It is my firm belief that there is no need for this to be an issue of dispute between the two governments as it has been in recent months. There are simple steps you can take to support Scotland in addressing our unique circumstances and we wish to accept the additional responsibility that would bring.

I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss arrangements for your attendance at a summit in Glasgow, which the Scottish Government is organising, on this issue. There is cross-party support in Scotland for this summit which will be attended by government representatives, local authorities and the chair of Scotland's new Drug Deaths Taskforce and which will ensure the voices of those with experience of using drugs, and their families, are also heard. The outgoing Scottish Secretary, David Mundell, had confirmed that there would be UK Government representation at this event and I would welcome confirmation from yourself on that.

I look forward to hearing from you on how we might engage immediately on this matter in order to make progress.



JOE FITZPATRICK

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The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

By email: mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk

1 August 2019

Dear Mr Hancock

As you know, on Tuesday 16 July 2019, we received the tragic confirmation that 1,187 people had lost their lives to drug-related deaths in Scotland last year. I wrote to Sajid Javid on 19 July 2019, raising the issue of drug-related deaths and the impact on Scotland and its people. We in the Scottish Government want to take innovative and bold measures in order to save the lives of those most at risk, addressing this as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice one.

I was encouraged by your recent comments during Health Questions in the House of Commons where you acknowledged the opioid epidemic, the severity of the drug problem and that the UK Government would put aside all party politics to try to tackle this very serious problem. I have used recent interviews, and my appearance earlier this month before the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, to make a plea to the UK Government to engage with the Scottish Government on this important issue.

I am therefore writing to you and the Home Secretary to request an urgent meeting with UK Government Ministers to discuss how we can work together to help stop the increasing number of drug deaths. While there are some options available to us within the current devolved powers, there are additional treatment options, such as legalising drug consumption rooms to reduce the harm caused to those who use drugs, which we are not able to enact as they currently lie out with our legal jurisdiction.

I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss arrangements for your attendance at a summit in Glasgow, which the Scottish Government is organising, on this issue. There is cross-party support in Scotland for this summit which will be attended by government representatives, local authorities and the chair of Scotland's new Drug Deaths Taskforce and will ensure the voices of those with experience of using drugs, and their families, are also heard. The outgoing Scottish Secretary, David Mundell, had confirmed that there would be UK Government representation at this event and I would welcome confirmation from yourself on that.

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