

Press Briefing



Immediate 24 July 2007

Government's drug consultation hampered by lack of proper evaluation

We need more solid evidence of what works, says Commission

The UK Drug Policy Commission welcomes the drug strategy consultation as an opportunity for government to engage in an informed debate. However, we caution that whilst there are many questions to ask, there are relatively few answers backed up by sufficient evidence. Despite coming to the end of a ten-year drug strategy, we don't know enough about what works or why, which leaves policy makers having to operate partially blind.

Dame Ruth Runciman, Chair of the Commission, said:

"The government spends a considerable amount of money on implementing the drug strategy but only a very small proportion of this goes on research and evaluation. As a result we just don't know enough about what works to reduce drug-related harms in the UK. We need to invest now in a better, independent evaluation of policy and practice so that we can look forward to more effective policies based on solid evidence."

Roger Howard, Chief Executive of UKDPC, said:

"There has been much progress in tackling the UK's drug-related problems over the last ten years and we now need to concentrate resources where evidence of success is strongest. The government needs to resist over-claim where evidence is not conclusive and be open to new approaches and priorities where evidence points to this."

The UKDPC will be engaging with key researchers and academics over the next three months and we will be submitting our response to the consultation in due course.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

The UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC) was launched in April 2007 and its objectives are to:

- Provide independent and objective analysis of drug policy in the UK
- Improve political, media and public understanding of the implications of the evidence base for drug policy; and
- Improve political, media and public understandings of the options for drug policy.

The UKDPC is independent of government and is grateful to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation for its support.

An Analysis of UK Drug Policy was written by Professor Peter Reuter and Alex Stevens and published by the UKDPC in April 2007. The full report and executive summary can be downloaded at the UKDPC website: www.ukdpc.org.uk

The UKDPC Commissioners are:

Dame Ruth Runciman (Chair) Chair of the Central & NW London Mental Health NHS Trust & previously Chair of the Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971

Professor Haleh Afshar OBE Professor of Politics & Women's Studies, University of York

Professor Colin Blakemore Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council

David Blakey CBE QPM formerly HM Inspector of Constabulary

Annette Dale-Perera Director of Quality at the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse

Daniel Finkelstein OBE Comment Editor at "The Times"

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff is a Professor of Palliative Medicine at Cardiff University and President of the Royal Society of Medicine.

Jeremy Hardie CBE Trustee of Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Professor Lord Kamlesh Patel OBE Head of the Centre for Ethnicity & Health at University of Central Lancashire & Chairman of the Mental Health Act Commission

Adam Sampson Chief Executive of Shelter

Professor John Strang Director of the National Addiction Centre (Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College London)

Observer Dawn Austwick OBE (Director, Esmee Fairbairn Foundation).

Chief Executive Roger Howard, former Chief Executive of Crime Concern and Drugscope.