

From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 9NA

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU
permanent.secretary@dhsc.gov.uk

Sent via email to: pubaccom@parliament.uk

04 January 2024

Dear Chair,

PAC Hearing – Reducing harm from illegal drugs

During the Public Accounts Committee hearing on 4 December 2023, I agreed to write to the Committee on three separate points. I have set these out below.

Firstly, I would like to follow up a question where the Committee asked where in the UK is world leading clinical research for treatment and recovery services being carried out. Centres of clinical research excellence in drug treatment and recovery already include the National Addiction Centre, University of Bristol, Imperial College London and University of St Andrews. As committed to in the Drug Strategy, the Government is funding further new and innovative research at universities across the UK via the Addiction Mission, including research into improved treatments and life-saving technologies to accelerate their development and rollout. There are also many high quality research projects focussing on treatment and recovery underway around the UK funded through the National Institute for Healthcare Research and others that are in the process of being commissioned. These include projects addressing research gaps identified in Part 2 of Dame Carol Black's Review of Drugs. The Government is also funding research on developing, evaluating and implementing interventions to reduce and prevent demand for drugs via an Innovation Fund.

Secondly, in response to the Committee's question on the caseload per worker, it should be noted that caseload numbers are not tracked centrally. We're looking at how the annual national workforce census findings and treatment data could be used to model caseload numbers. We have consistent feedback from a large number of treatment providers and commissioners that caseloads are reducing as the workforce expands with the additional drug strategy investment. We're confident that there has been progress from the baseline caseload sizes noted in the Dame Carol Black review of 50-80.

Finally, to answer the Committee's question on the monitoring of turnover rate, we have commissioned a national workforce census this year and last. This census covers the treatment and recovery service provider and commissioning workforce make-up and metrics including turnover. The findings of the first census were published in March 2023 and the second census findings will be published in early 2024.

In addition to the points above where I agreed to write the Committee, I also wanted to set out some further points of clarity upon reviewing the transcript for the hearing. I have set these out below.

*From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald*



Department
of Health &
Social Care

With respect to the workforce plan, DHSC had previously committed to producing a workforce strategy by December 2022. A capability framework was required to better understand the skills and capabilities required for each role and develop long-term plans for improved career pathways, training, and education in the strategic plan. As a result, the intended publication date for the workforce plan was pushed back to late 2023. I indicated in the committee hearing that the workforce strategy would be published before December 2023. However, this was not quite accurate. To correct the record, we are anticipating that the document will be made available early in the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Wormald".

**SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**