



Public Accounts Committee

Sir Matthew Rycroft KCMG CBE
Permanent Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London. SW1P 4DF

By email

9 May 2024

Treasury Minute response: Reducing the harm from illegal drugs

Dear Sir Matthew,

Thank you for the response to the Committee's report, *Reducing the harm from illegal drugs*. I am grateful for the assurances given, in particular the commitments to develop a strong case for investment at the next spending review and develop a whole-system approach to reducing drug-related harm.

I recognise that departments have been asked to keep their Treasury Minute responses concise, but there are some points on which I would appreciate further clarification.

- In relation to recommendation 5, you point to the on-going role of local authorities for commissioning services to meet the needs of different groups and populations, and the work of DHSC in supporting them. The Committee was concerned that the barriers facing different cohorts of people who use drugs were not properly understood, but your response does not set out how you will seek to address this. I would be grateful for more detail on precisely how such groups are being targeted and how you, as the senior responsible owner of the drug strategy, are seeking to coordinate action and encourage the dissemination of innovative new practices.
- In relation to recommendation 6 concerning the need to develop an evidence-based plan for achieving the strategy's aim of reducing demand for illegal drugs to a 30-year low. You acknowledge that departments will continue to work together to develop the evidence base but also that there is more to do. Given the failure of previous strategies to change behaviours and reduce drug use, the Committee was seeking greater urgency in developing a more ambitious and cross-department response to prevent drug use. I would be grateful for your assurance that the Committee's concerns are being taken into account and would be interested to understand how you propose to address this challenge.

I would be grateful for a response by 10 June 2024.

I am copying this letter to the Treasury Officer of Accounts and to the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Yours Sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts