Home Office

Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State for Policing and Crime
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home

Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP
Chair of the Home Affairs Committee

15 October 2026

Dear Dame Karen

Thank you for your letter of 9 July following the Home Affairs Select Committee evidence session on 1 July on the impact of serious and organised drug-related crime on local neighbourhoods. I am responding both as Minister for Policing and Crime in the Home Office, and as Minister with cross-government responsibility for drugs to reflect the whole of Government approach we take to tackling illicit drugs. Your questions, along with responses are set out below.

1. *Is the Home Office continuing to implement the previous government's drugs strategy: 'From harm to hope'? If so, can you provide an update on the progress of implementation in tackling supply chains and reducing demand?*

2. *Why have the annual progress reports, committed to in the drug strategy, not been published in this Parliament?*

3. *If you are not taking forward the previous government's drugs strategy, what new policies has the Home Office adopted on illegal drugs?*

The threat of illicit drugs to society is significant and manifests in a number of ways: violent and exploitative criminal gangs supplying drugs into and within the UK; vulnerable people struggling with drug dependence disorder, often sleeping rough and facing mental and physical health problems; and a wider group of people, especially children and young adults, experimenting with drugs and facing harms from overdose or gradual dependence.

Against this challenge, we are considering the overall approach of the 'From Harm to Hope' strategy to examine what changes may be needed, including whether there are key areas where we should increase focus (including on new and emerging threats). This will also consider the approach to reporting on progress. We will update the committee as this work develops.

In the meantime, we are continuing to drive forward key strands of activity through a relentless determination to restrict drugs supply into the UK and to disrupt the organised criminal gangs behind the trade; continuing to improve the treatment and recovery support that vulnerable people using drugs need; and developing the evidence on what works in prevention to reduce demand for drugs.

There has been measurable progress in a number of areas. The latest published figures show that 329,646 adults were in contact with drug and alcohol treatment services in England in 2024–25. This is the highest number since reporting began, with 169,542 people starting treatment during the year. The Government has continued to invest in treatment and recovery services with £3.4bn over the next three years and a strong focus from DHSC on improving the quality of treatment, reducing drug and alcohol related deaths (including by expanding access to naloxone) and working closely with MoJ on treatment for those in the criminal justice system. In addition, DHSC leads the Early Warning System to gather data on the threat posed by synthetic opioids and enable escalation as necessary. DHSC also continues to work with DWP on their expanded Individual Placement and Support programme which provides tailored employment support for people in drug and alcohol treatment to get into paid work.

On tackling drugs supply, the latest published Home Office management information shows that, from July 2024 to March 2026, County Lines Programme-funded law enforcement activity resulted in 4,556 line closures and 12,697 arrests. Drug seizures at our border are at record levels, and UK law enforcement agencies continue to work with international partners to disrupt the global drugs supply chain.

In the Home Office we have legislated to control harmful new synthetic opioids, with further controls laid in Parliament in recent weeks. We have legislated to expand police powers in relation to drug testing on arrest to enable more people to be diverted into treatment where appropriate and we are making good progress in our work as a member of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs and bilaterally with partner countries to stem the sources of drugs, target supply routes and build law enforcement capabilities.

There is, however, much more to do across Government and the challenge has evolved over recent years. There are new and emerging threats from synthetic opioids and other potent drugs, changing patterns of organised criminal exploitation, online supply, pressures across prisons and probation, and changing demand in community treatment and recovery services. Our response must have an increasingly sharper focus on the harms, risks and pressures now facing the system.

In addition, on his first day, the Prime Minister announced his commitment to end rough sleeping. There is significant overlap between drugs, alcohol, mental health and rough sleeping. Cross-government drugs activity is supporting the work of MHCLG on this commitment, including their work with DHSC to improve treatment access and recovery outcomes for people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping through the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment (RSDAT) and Housing Support programmes.

In support of this wide agenda of work, we continue to work with Dame Carol Black, the government’s independent advisor on drugs, to better understand the problem and drive forward progress. Her initial work this year has been developing insights into drug-driven prolific offending, in particular shop theft, following several visits to the frontline to see partnership working between different agencies. Alongside this Dame Carol is supporting DHSC on their focus on improving the quality of treatment, including for women in the treatment system.

She has also carried out visits to several prisons to follow up on her previous review into drug use in prisons and prison leavers and explore what progress is being made.

Departments continue to monitor progress in tackling drugs and drug harms through ministerial and senior official governance arrangements. On reporting more widely, work is underway to strengthen the way progress is measured through further development of the National Outcomes Framework[1] so that Ministers, Parliament and the public have a clearer understanding of whether the Government approach is reducing drug related crime, deaths and wider harms, improving treatment and recovery outcomes and strengthening local partnership responses.

4. *Where in the Home Office does responsibility lie for the development and implementation of drugs policy? Who is the senior Home Office official with responsibility for drugs policy?*

Marcus Starling is the Deputy Director leading the Joint Combating Drugs Unit (JCDU). JCDU facilitates cross-government coordination, evidence gathering and system performance oversight. It is well placed to convene senior leaders on this complex whole-of-society problem. Accountability for aspects of policy and delivery remains with the responsible departments.

The Home Office has a key role, including responsibility for UK drug legislation, restricting the flow of drugs, county lines, organised drug supply, policing and crime reduction in England and Wales. Other departments are responsible for policy and delivery within their own remits, including treatment and recovery, prisons and probation, housing, employment, education and support for children and families (see Annex A).

In addition, the devolved governments have significant responsibility for many aspects of work to tackle drugs in their respective nations, including for example education and healthcare. We will continue to work with them on shared challenges.

5. *Since July 2024 what changes in strategic priorities, if any, have been given by the Drugs Strategy Ministerial Forum (DSMF) to the Combatting Drugs Partnerships (CDP)?*

Several DSMF meetings have been held since July 2024 and activity following these meetings has focused on the importance of understanding local needs and taking a balanced, whole-system approach to addressing drug threats and harms, driven at local level by the Combating Drugs Partnerships (CDPs).

[1] The National Outcomes Framework was published in 2022. The framework sets out the three strategic outcomes of reducing drug use, reducing drug related crime and reducing drug related deaths and harms. These were delivered through the intermediate outcomes of reducing drug supply, increasing engagement in treatment and improving recovery outcomes.

This government continues to support a partnership approach at the local level through work with CDPs to support joined-up delivery across public health, policing, criminal justice, treatment, housing and wider local partners.
A recent evaluation of the effectiveness of CDPs is available from www.gov.uk/government/publications/process-evaluation-of-combating-drugs-partnerships/process-evaluation-of-combating-drugs-partnerships.

I hope you find this information useful and can I wish you and the Committee every success with the rest of your inquiry.

Very best wishes,



Sarah Jones MP
Minister of State for Policing and Crime

Annex A: Departmental responsibilities

MoJ is responsible for courts, prisons and probation, and for reducing reoffending in England and Wales and providing support to offenders across the CJS and on release to improve their engagement with treatment and recovery services

DHSC is responsible for drug treatment services in England, as well as wider health and social care services. This includes delivery of health services, including drug treatment, in prisons by NHS England.

Home Office is responsible for UK drug legislation, working with the National Crime Agency and police forces on restricting the flow of drugs, tackling organised crime and county lines, as well as broader policy on policing and crime reduction in England and Wales.

DWP is responsible for policies on employment support and social security in England and Wales, this includes schemes to provide intensive employment support for those with drug and alcohol dependency, including through the use of peer mentoring

DfE is responsible for the welfare and safeguarding of all children in England, children's mental health and wellbeing in education and preventative interventions to divert children from entering care, as part of wider Children's Social Care Reform bid

MHCLG is responsible for tackling rough sleeping in England through specialist drug and alcohol treatment and support services and the Changing Futures programme targeting those with multiple complex needs