

UK Drug Policy Commission statement on Government proposals about the role and membership of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

The UK Drug Policy Commission at its meeting today (7 December) called on the government to revisit the proposals set out in the recently published Police Reform & Social Responsibility Bill which affect the role and membership of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

The Bill proposes two things:

- (i) Removal of the requirement for the ACMD to have members with certain specified scientific expertise.
- (ii) The introduction of new powers to make temporary banning orders for new drugs, and

On ACMD membership

Dame Ruth Runciman, Chair of the UK Drug Policy Commission said,

“We have some sympathy with Home Office Ministers desire to have some flexibility with regard to membership of the ACMD. But in removing any formal requirement to have scientists as members they are at risk of ‘throwing the evidence baby out with the bathwater’. The UKDPC suggests that the Misuse of Drugs Act could easily be reworded so that the Home Secretary would, after due consultation, appoint people with a background from one of four broad areas. This would include:

- (a) **Scientists from the natural and physical sciences** (such as neuroscience; pharmacology, medicine and toxicology).
- (b) **Experts from the social and behavioral sciences** (such as epidemiology, psychology; social policy, criminology and public health).
- (c) **Experts with backgrounds in tackling drugs** (for example from drug treatment, health and social care, prevention, education and youth work and criminal justice).
- (d) **People affected by drugs** (eg service users and/or their families).

This approach would overcome the concerns of many people that the role of science, research and evidence is being sidelined”.

On Temporary Banning Orders

The UKDPC also considered the proposal in the Police Reform & Social Responsibility Bill to temporarily ban new substances. This allows the Home Secretary to make a banning order but, unfortunately, does not, as the draft legislation stands, require the Home Secretary to formally consult the ACMD prior to making the order.

The UKDPC believes this oversight could easily be remedied by introducing an additional safeguarding condition (to the two already proposed) that the Secretary of State ***consults with and seeks the advice of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs before exercising the power.***

ENDS.

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UKDPC's report ***Getting Serious About Stigma*** launches on 17 December. Contact
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