



Craig Whittaker MP

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Cannabis

Thank you for contacting me about cannabis.

Substantial scientific evidence shows cannabis is a harmful drug that can damage human health, and there are no plans to legalise cannabis as it would not address the harm to individuals and communities. The latest evidence from the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs is that the use of cannabis is a significant public health issue.

Cannabis can unquestionably cause harm to individuals and society. Legalisation of cannabis would not eliminate the crime committed by the illicit trade, nor would it address the harms associated with drug dependence and the misery that this can cause to families. Despite the potential opportunity offered by legalisation to raise revenue through taxation, there would be costs in relation to administrative, compliance and law enforcement activities, as well as the wider costs of drug prevention and health services.

The Government's approach on drugs remains clear and it is one which I support. Drug use must be prevented in our communities, help should be provided to dependent individuals, while law enforcement must protect society by stopping the supply and tackling the organised crime that is associated with the drugs trade.

There are positive signs that this approach is working: there has been a long term downward trend in drug use over the last decade, and more people are recovering from their dependency now than in 2009/10. The number of adults aged 16-59 using cannabis in England and Wales has declined over the last decade, with cannabis use amongst young adults aged 16-24 and young people aged 11-15 following a similar pattern.

Apart from the drug Sativex, which is derived from cannabis, the UK does not recognise herbal cannabis as having any medicinal use. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published a clinical guideline on the management of multiple sclerosis in 2014 that does not recommend Sativex, a cannabis-derived treatment, as a cost effective use of National Health Service resources.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP