From Andrew Miller MP, Chair

James Brokenshire MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime Prevention
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

21 December 2010

Dear James,

In your letter of 18 August, you invited the Committee to provide its views on the proposed changes to the constitution of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) which are being considered as part of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill. As I explained, we have no record of receiving your letter and it only came to our attention on 6 December.

We note that the Government has also consulted the Lords Science and Technology Committee, national academies, learned societies, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and the ACMD itself.

On the proposal to amend Schedule 1 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 with a non statutory list of capabilities, we have no objection in principle. The test that we would apply is whether the proposed changes strengthen the quality and independence of the scientific advice provided to government and safeguard the independence of those providing it. It is of crucial importance that, in removing the requirement for statutory members and introducing temporary banning powers for substances such as "legal highs", the Government does not downgrade the vital role of the ACMD in providing sound scientific evidence to ministers formulating policy in this area.

The Committee will follow closely the debates on these provisions as the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill progresses and, if enacted, I expect it will monitor how the Government uses the new provisions.

Yours ever,

Andrew Miller MP
Chair