

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care submission 8 June 2022

PE1884/F: Make whole plant cannabis oil available on the NHS or alternative funding put in place

Thank you for your letter of 16 May addressed to Angela Constance MSP, Minister for Drugs Policy in regards to the above petition, and specifically in relation to people accessing cannabis, and Cannabis Based Products for Medicinal use (CBPMs), for medicinal purposes. As CBPMs are within my portfolio area I have been asked to respond.

By way of context, the Scottish Government recognises that there are genuine limitations in our public health approach to drug use whilst the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is maintained in its current form. We are therefore looking at measures which have been successfully implemented across the world which are designed to decrease the social and physical harm caused by drugs. To that end, we continue to urge the UK to amend the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to make more public health measures possible or to devolve the necessary powers to the Scottish Government to allow us to make much needed amendments to drug legislation.

The Scottish Government is aware, from correspondence received, that there are people accessing cannabis through both legitimate and illicit routes for medicinal purposes. We are aware of a number of conditions for which people may access illicit cannabis, including chronic pain, multiple sclerosis and fibromyalgia. We encourage anyone who is self-medicating with illicit cannabis to discuss their treatment options with the clinicians in charge of their care.

We do not hold any information on the number of people accessing illicit cannabis for medicinal purposes, and data on this subject are not routinely collected. Information on prescriptions dispensed for CBPMs in Scotland is collected by Public Health Scotland.

Furthermore, we are not aware of any current or planned programmes run by Health and Social Care Partnerships to allow people to self-medicate with cannabis in a safe and controlled environment. It is important to note

that any such programme would be in breach of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, hence why we continue to call on the UK Government to make suitable amendments to the Act.