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Dear Audrey,

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 July 2025 to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs regarding the future of the Leverhulme Research Centre and the National Drug Checking Service. I am responding as this issue largely falls within my Ministerial portfolio.

As you are aware, the Scottish Government is currently progressing work to support the implementation of a Drug Checking Pilot Project in Scotland. Point of care facilities are planned in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, which will be supported by a National Testing Laboratory (NTL), intended to be based at the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science (LRCFS) at the University of Dundee.

We are committed to the delivery of these drug checking facilities and are working with partners to implement them across all our pilot cities as soon as possible. The point of care sites in Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow have submitted their licence applications to the Home Office. After joining the pilot at a later stage, Edinburgh are now working on their licence application.

Regarding the proposed NTL, we are currently working with the University of Dundee to finalise an agreement. This will allow the project as a whole to progress.

As you have noted, the situation at LRCFS relates to external research funding which was already due to come to an end prior to the situation with the University's finances arising in November. However, we were pleased to hear recently that the expertise of university core staff at LRCFS will be retained, and that options are being explored for non-core funded staff beyond the end of the Centre's external research funding in June 2026. Dundee has a strong reputation for forensic sciences and it is important

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this critical mass of expertise is supported into the future.

I would like to reassure you that the Scottish Government remains absolutely committed to delivering the Drug Checking Pilot Project - including both the point of care facilities and the NTL.

We know that delays are frustrating. As a new initiative in Scotland, there are a number of things we need to get right and a number of issues to work through to ensure that drug checking meets the needs of people who use drugs and fits within the criteria set out by the Home Office.

We will continue to work at pace with all partners to deliver these drug checking facilities which will enable services to respond faster to emerging trends.

Yours sincerely



MAREE TODD

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