

Action to tackle misery of drug misuse

The government has appointed Dame Carol Black as an independent advisor to drive forward progress in tackling drug misuse across society.

Dame Carol's independent review on drugs exposed the scale of the challenge of illegal drug misuse and made clear that a joined-up approach across all parts of government is needed to tackle this issue.

The government is today (Tuesday 27 July) setting out its initial response to parts 1 and 2 of Dame Carol's review. The response commits to a comprehensive, whole-system approach to tackling drugs – actively disrupting criminal supply chains which fuel illegal markets, supporting people through treatment and recovery, and ridding communities of the harm drug misuse causes.

Dame Carol will advise the government on the development and delivery of a new drug strategy – to be published by the end of the year – which will set out a full response to her review recommendations. The strategy will take a genuinely cross-government approach to tackle the supply and demand for illegal drugs simultaneously.

The response also includes immediate actions to deal with the problems of drug misuse, including by expanding Project ADDER – which combines targeted law enforcement against drugs gangs with improved treatment and recovery services – to eight new local authorities with £31m in new funding for the next 2 years.

Project ADDER sites will be set up in 2 London boroughs (Hackney and Tower Hamlets), 3 local authorities in Liverpool City Region (Liverpool City, Wirral, Knowsley), Bristol, Newcastle and Wakefield. The programme brings together partners across health, enforcement, employment and housing to tackle the problems of drugs misuse across the board.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Drugs destroy lives, ruin families, and tear apart communities and I will do everything in my power to stop this poisonous cycle.

We will not let criminal gangs continue to cash in on vulnerable people, which is why we are setting up new targeted projects in eight areas in England to disrupt drug supply and support those in need with treatment and recovery.

With drug misuse costing society £19.3 billion a year, and deaths rising, the need to address this has never been more urgent. I welcome Dame Carol Black's appointment to advise the government as we prepare to launch an ambitious strategy to tackle this problem at its root.

Dame Carol Black said:

Drugs inflict serious and increasing harm on society and, as my review shows, the provision of services for those addicted requires a reformed whole-system approach.

I am pleased that the government have signalled their intention to prioritise this by establishing the Joint cross-Government Unit which was one of my recommendations.

I am also delighted to have been given the opportunity to continue to advise the government which shows that they want to put treatment, recovery and prevention at the heart of the upcoming strategy. I will use this role to keep holding all partners to account and to support efforts to combat the drugs that ruin so many lives.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

Drug misuse can have a tragic impact on people's health, their families and their livelihoods.

Not only is the sale and use of drugs driving serious violence but drug-related deaths are at an all-time high. It is heart-breaking to see so many people needlessly losing their lives.

I am committed to tackling the root causes of substance misuse and working with Dame Carol to ensure high quality services are in place to support the treatment and recovery of drug users in the community.

Further measures set out in the government response include:

- supporting police to expand drug testing on arrest across England and Wales for a wider range of offences where the use of certain Class A drug is suspected to be a contributing factor
- holding a summit with employers, universities, schools and police to explore how a range of partners can play their part in reducing demand, particularly among those who regard their drug use as harmless – it will provide us the opportunity to discuss how to ensure those who misuse drugs, regardless of who they are or when they use, face consequences
- establishing 10 health and justice partnership coordinator roles across the probation service with £700,000 of funding in order to improve continuity of care from custody to the community

- delivering telemedicine in 86 prisons with £1.3 million of funding to enable prisoners to make contact with treatment providers in the community and continue the treatment they need to help them stay away from crime after their release
- a Local Outcomes Framework and a Commissioning Quality Standard to support any future enhancement of the treatment and recovery system will be drafted in consultation with the local system to increase transparency, commissioning standards, joint working and accountability for treatment and recovery outcomes

The response builds on existing work to tackle drugs across society. It follows a [£148m package](#) of new investment, announced in January, aimed at protecting people across the UK from the scourge of illegal drugs. The package included:

- £40m of new money to tackle county lines, bringing the total to £65m since November 2019. So far, this investment has seen more than 1,000 drug lines closed, over 5,800 arrests, over £2.9m in cash seized, and more than 1,500 vulnerable people safeguarded
- £28m to set up pilots of Project ADDER in five areas with some of the highest rates of drug misuse – Blackpool, Hastings, Middlesbrough, Norwich, and Swansea Bay
- an extra £80m to invest in drug treatment services across England to provide support to offenders with drug addictions

The [government response to Dame Carol Black's review](#) has been published.