

# Statement to Parliament: Home Secretary statement on medical use of cannabis

With permission Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the medical use of cannabis.

Over the weekend, I issued an emergency licence to allow Billy Caldwell's medical team to access cannabis-based medicine to treat life-threatening seizures caused by a severe form of epilepsy.

This was an emergency procedure which was led by a senior clinician with the support of the Medical Director at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital.

I am pleased to say Billy has now been discharged from hospital. It is now for his senior clinicians to develop a long-term care plan.

I'm sure the whole House would like to join me in expressing my sympathy for Billy and his family who have been going through a very difficult time.

The course of action in this case was unprecedented.

There is strong scientific evidence that cannabis is a drug which can harm people's mental and physical health, and damage communities.

There are currently no legally recognised medicinal or therapeutic benefits.

To date, under successive governments, Home Office policy has been to permit the production, supply and possession of raw cannabis solely for research purposes under a Home Office licence.

The cannabis-based medicine Sativex can however be prescribed in the UK because there is a proven case for its safety and efficacy.

However, cases like Billy's, Alfie Dingley's and others like it, have shown that we need to look more closely at the use of cannabis-based medicine in the healthcare sector in the UK.

Because it has become clear to me since becoming Home Secretary that the position that we find ourselves in currently is not satisfactory.

It's not satisfactory for the parents, it's not satisfactory for the doctors, and it's not satisfactory for me.

## **Review**

I have now come to the conclusion that it is time to review the scheduling of cannabis.

Before I go into any detail of the review, let me be absolutely clear that this step is in no way a first step to the legalisation of cannabis for recreational use.

This government has absolutely no plans to legalise cannabis and the penalties for unauthorised supply and possession will remain unchanged.

We will not set a dangerous precedent or weaken our ability to keep dangerous drugs off our streets.

The approach that we will be asking the review to consider will be no different than that which has been used before for other controlled drugs where there is evidence of medical benefits.

The government review will take place in 2 parts.

Part one of the commission will consider the evidence available for the medicinal and therapeutic benefits of cannabis-based medicines.

Professor Sally Davies, who also serves as the Chief Medical Officer, will take this part forward.

This would then inform exactly which forms of cannabis or cannabis-based medicines should be taken forward in Part 2.

Part 2 will be led by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

The ACMD will not reassess the evidence issued by Professor Sally Davies, but will provide an assessment, based on the balance of harms and public health needs, of what, if anything, should be rescheduled.

If the review identified that there are significant medical benefits then we do intend to reschedule.

We have seen in recent months that there is a pressing need to allow those who might benefit from cannabis-based products to access them.

It will of course take time for Professor Sally Davies and the ACMD to complete their work and for the government to consider their recommendations.

## **Expert panel**

In the short term, the Policing Minister announced yesterday that the government will be establishing an expert panel of clinicians to advise ministers on any applications to prescribe cannabis-based medicines.

This is intended to ensure that advice to ministers on licensing in these cases is clinically led, based firmly upon medical evidence and is as swift as possible.

The chief medical officers across the UK have been actively working together already, and the expert panel will be able to start considering applications within a week.

Earlier today, the Policing Minister also spoke to Alfie Dingley's mum Hannah Deacon, and informed her that we will issue a licence for Alfie later today.

All of the work I have outlined today is about making sure that we keep in step with the latest scientific evidence and that patients and their families have access to the most appropriate course of medical treatment.

And I would like to pay tribute to the Policing Minister for all of his excellent and sustained work on this important issue.

As a father, I know there is nothing worse than seeing your child suffer.

You would do anything to take away their pain.

## **Utmost sympathy**

That is why I have the utmost sympathy for Billy Caldwell, Alfie Dingley and others like them, and for their parents who have been under unimaginable stress and strain.

I know that they are following a gut parental instinct to do whatever is in their power to try and alleviate their child's suffering.

And today I would like to say to this House that I will do everything in my power to make sure that we have a system that works so that these children and these parents get access to the best medical treatment.

I commend this statement to the House.

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## **[News story: Karen Johnston reappointed as Deputy Pensions Ombudsman](#)**

Guy Opperman, Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, has reappointed Karen Johnston as Deputy Pensions Ombudsman for a further 2 years. Following on from a 3 year term, Karen's reappointment will start on the 1 July 2018.

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## **[News story: New chair appointed to](#)**

# improve patient access to innovation in the NHS

The Accelerated Access Collaborative brings together leaders from the NHS, industry and government to identify the most transformative medical innovations, and will oversee a fast-track route to allow these innovative technologies to be available on the NHS up to 4 years earlier.

Under this Accelerated Access Pathway, launching later this year, a number of the most promising products will be accelerated through the clinical development and NHS approval processes to treat conditions such as cancer, diabetes and dementia.

The project builds on an £86 million funding package to help innovators of all sizes gain access to the NHS market and get their products to patients.

Lord Darzi is a former minister at the Department of Health and Social Care, chair of Imperial College Health Partners, and chairman and director of the Institute of Global Health Innovation.

The previous chair, Sir Andrew Witty, resigned in March to avoid any conflicts of interest after he took on a new role as CEO of Optum.

Health Minister Lord O'Shaughnessy said:

I want the UK to be at the forefront of breakthrough treatments and medical innovations – but often it can take too long for products to get from the bench to the bedside.

The Accelerated Access Pathway will speed up this process so patients can benefit from the best technologies far quicker – and I'm delighted to appoint Lord Darzi as the chair to oversee this important work.

Lord Darzi, Chair of the Accelerated Access Collaborative, said:

Britain is world leading in medical science and research, but we need to make sure that people in the UK are able to reap the benefits of this innovation. It is vitally important that patients have rapid access to cost-effective, transformative treatments on the NHS. Doing so will not only improve the health of our patients, but will promote future collaboration between the life sciences sector and the NHS post-Brexit – benefiting the British economy and creating jobs.

I'm thrilled to be building on the great foundations laid by Sir Andrew Witty for the AAC to deliver this.

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## [News story: Home Secretary attends Finsbury Park attack memorial](#)

The Home Secretary attended a commemoration event in Islington to mark the first anniversary of the Finsbury Park terrorist attack this morning.

He joined local community leaders, other politicians, and the family of Makram Ali, who was killed in the attack, to pay tribute to him and all those affected.

Speaking after the memorial, the Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Today we remember the life of Makram Ali and the people whose lives were changed forever by the Finsbury Park attack.

The tragedy is a reminder of the complicated nature of the threat we face, including from far-right extremism.

In the days after the attack I visited the scene and was struck by the bravery, unity and defiance of the local community. This strength has not waned and embodies how the people of this country will not allow terrorists to undermine our way of life.

On the streets of Finsbury Park I promised mourners that we would do everything we could to confront all forms of terrorism – and this determination remains unwavering.

Earlier this month, the government published its strengthened counter-terrorism strategy which explained the increasing threat presented by the extreme right wing and the actions the government is taking to combat all forms of terrorism.

For those that have been affected by terrorism, an anniversary can be particularly upsetting. Information on the different kinds of practical and emotional support available, including peer support networks and advice about talking to children has been published on [Support for victims of terrorism](#) website.

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# [Press release: PM awards outstanding Wales volunteer at No 10 Eid Reception](#)

Moawia has been a driving force for interfaith dialogue and community cohesion in South Wales for over 20 years. He is the founder and chair of the 'Council on Welsh Islamic Relations', which encourages a greater understanding of Islam through talks with local schools, businesses and charities. In partnership with the 'Muslim Welfare Association' in the Vale of Glamorgan, Moawia has provided support and mentoring for young adults in the community on issues such as challenging extremism, forced marriage and honour-based violence, and raised over £50,000 towards its outreach work. He works part-time as a magistrate in order to volunteer for 14 charity boards in Wales and act as an ambassador for the BAME community.

Moawia was presented with his award by the Prime Minister Theresa May at a Number 10 Reception marking Eid, which was also attended by his local MP and Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns.

Moawia is one of the latest recipients of the Points of Light award, which recognises outstanding volunteers who are making a change in their community and inspiring others. Each day, someone, somewhere in the country is selected to receive the award to celebrate their remarkable achievements.

## **In a personal letter to Moawia, Prime Minister Theresa May said:**

Your dedication to improving interfaith dialogue and providing support for young people from diverse backgrounds is truly commendable. Your inclusive volunteering efforts and outreach work is supporting Muslim communities across Wales and promoting a greater understanding of Islam in local schools, businesses, and charities.

## **Alun Cairns, MP for Vale of Glamorgan and Secretary of State for Wales, said:**

I am delighted to hear of Moawia's Points of Light Award for his outstanding voluntary work. I have known Moawia for many years and have seen his excellent work across our community first hand.

Moawia is also a Vale Ambassador and works tirelessly to improve understanding and communication between different faiths in our community. He also volunteers as a Prison Escort and as a Challenging Extremism Instructor working to deter young people from radicalisation.

Moawia is an inspiring young leader and I am delighted that the

Vale benefits so much from his work and would like to take this opportunity to thank him for everything he does.

### **Moawia said:**

I'm honoured and humbled to learn that I've been awarded the Prime Minister's Points of Light Award in recognition of my voluntary work. I never look for accolades or awards when I take part in all my public, charity and voluntary work but feel truly privileged when I do pick up an honour. I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to help make a small difference in society and to peoples' lives. I hope this award will motivate other young people to get involved with charitable and voluntary work across Wales. I would like to thank my family, friends, and mentors for all the support they give me.

Moawia is the 912th winner of the Points of Light award, which has been developed in partnership with the hugely successful Points of Light programme in the USA. Over 6,000 Points of Light have been awarded in the USA, and former Presidents have publicly supported the partnership with Points of Light UK. There is a similar cross-party approach to the UK programme and MPs from different parties often present their constituents with their Points of Light awards

Regardless of whether it's a doctor restoring local monuments in her free time, a father teaching young people life skills, or a local musician giving a voice to lonely people, the Points of Light award honours shining examples of volunteering across the UK.

### Notes to Editors

1. The Points of Light awards recognise outstanding individual volunteers, people who are making a change in their community and inspiring others.
2. The Prime Minister makes daily announcements of the winners to celebrate, encourage and promote volunteering and the value that it brings to the country.
3. If people know someone who could be a Point of Light they should write to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street.
4. Website: [www.pointsoflight.gov.uk](http://www.pointsoflight.gov.uk)