

## **Joint Statement from the Home Secretary and the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs**

The Home Secretary and the ACMD met on 10 November to discuss working together collaboratively in the future.

The Home Secretary outlined the value he put on the ACMD's advice, and the important contribution the ACMD makes to government drug's policy. The ACMD summarised their concerns regarding how their advice is received by the Home Office and over the dismissal of Professor Nutt.

Both the ACMD and the Home Secretary agreed that it was important to concentrate efforts on ensuring the best advice is available to government on the important issue of drug misuse working together with the common purpose of reducing drug related harms in the UK.

The following ways of working were discussed:

1. The Home Secretary emphasised that he would not pre-judge the ACMD's advice in advance of receiving a report.

2. The Home Secretary said he would like to meet with the ACMD Chair on a regular scheduled basis in the future and that he would meet with the full Council annually.

3. The Home Secretary and ACMD agreed that the Home Secretary would continue give careful consideration to all ACMD reports. In doing so it was agreed:

i) The ACMD would publish its advice concurrent with its presentation to the Home Secretary. The Home Office gave assurance that it would give appropriate consideration of the advice before issuing its response;

ii) If government was minded not to accept the ACMD's advice, the Home Secretary suggested that he would, before making a final decision, meet with the Chair of the Council to discuss the issue;

iii) If the advice is not to be accepted the Home Secretary will write to the full Council setting out his reasons for rejection. This will be ahead of any public comment by the Home Office on the matter.

4. The Government's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor John Beddington is considering Lord Rees of the Royal Society's letter to the Prime Minister, enclosing the 'Principles for the Treatment of Independent Scientific Advice'. Professor Beddington will report on these by Christmas. The ACMD asked for clarification from the Home Secretary how their academic role was impacted by their membership of the Advisory Council. The Home Secretary agreed to put into practice the outcome of Professor Beddington's report with his dealings with the ACMD and all the other scientific committees that advise him in the Home Office.

5. The Home Secretary outlined the process for recruiting a new Chair of the ACMD following the guidelines of the Office of the Commissioner for Public

Appointments. It was agreed that both the ACMD and the Home Secretary need to have the utmost confidence in the new Chair. As such the ACMD accepted the Home Secretary's offer that one of their members would be part of the interview panel during the recruitment process.