



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

23rd October 2020

Dear Constance,

RE: MEDICAL CANNABIS PRESCRIPTIONS.

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns regarding medical cannabis prescriptions, particularly for children suffering from epilepsy; your comments upon which I have read with great interest and compassion.

I understand the impact that epilepsy can have on a person's quality of everyday life and the desire to minimise suffering and pain, particularly for young children. It is vital that our NHS supports people affected by epilepsy, estimated at between 362,000 and 415,000 across England, to live healthy, independent, lives.

Recent cases have shown the need to look more closely at the use of cannabis-based medicine in treating patients with very specific conditions in exceptional circumstances. This is why the Government decided it was appropriate to review the scheduling of cannabis. The decision to reschedule these products means that senior clinicians will be able to prescribe the medicines to patients with an exceptional clinical need. Following short-term advice issued in September 2018, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) are to review the current rescheduling and its appropriateness by November 2020.

Moreover, NHS England has published a review which is aimed at assessing the barriers to prescribing cannabis-based medicinal products where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so. I was also glad to hear that steps have been taken to help ensure people with prescriptions for cannabis-based products for medicinal use do not have their treatment delayed or interrupted, by altering import restrictions. This is a most welcome step towards improving the supply of cannabis-based medicinal products.

The National Institute for Health & Care Excellence (NICE) has also developed updated clinical guidance on prescribing cannabis-based products for medicinal use, including for the management of chronic pain. It is crucial that this country keeps in step with the latest scientific evidence, so that patients and their families have access to the most appropriate and effective course of medical treatment.

My ministerial colleagues have also been clear that given the nature of the medicine, it should only be prescribed by specialist doctors and on a case-by-case basis. I believe these controls are necessary to develop clinical expertise and an evidence base for this treatment's effectiveness.



Notwithstanding the above, however, I absolutely understand the concerns and anguish of patients and their families who suffer on a daily basis and welcome the rapid progress that has been made so far and look forward to further progress in this area, so that patients receive the best, most appropriate treatment and medication, supported by robust evidence.

With best wishes,

Tom

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**