



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th August 2021

Jean Combréant,

RE: MEDICINAL CANNABIS - REGULATING PRESCRIPTIONS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of medicinal cannabis, specifically about regulating prescriptions; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

There is strong scientific evidence that cannabis can harm people's mental and physical health, and damage communities. However, 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 ACMD reviewed the rescheduling in November 2020, and I welcome the fact that they recommended that no changes be made, enabling senior clinicians to continue to prescribe these medicines where appropriate.

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 delighted to learn that steps have been taken to help to 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 course of medical treatment. Following difficulties in obtaining prescriptions, I am pleased that NICE has recently published a clarification of this guidance. While this does not represent a change in the law, NICE hopes that it will make prescribing medicinal cannabis clearer and simpler for specialists, and therefore easier for patients.



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.

However, notwithstanding the above, I absolutely understand the concerns and anguish of patients and their families, like Alfie Dingley, to whom you refer in your email, who suffer on a daily basis. I welcome the rapid progress that has been made and look forward to further rapid improvements in this area so patients like Alfie receive the best, most appropriate treatment and medication, supported by robust evidence.

The decision whether to prescribe an individual with medicinal cannabis is therefore not a political or financial decision, but a decision by a medical expert, who will have considered whether it is the most effective treatment based on an individual's particular condition.

I will, of course, continue to monitor the roll-out of medicinal cannabis very closely.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove'.

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