

21st March 2018

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about medical cannabis.

I sympathise deeply with the difficult situation faced by Alfie Dingley and his family. It is only natural that parents of a child who is in pain would try to alleviate their suffering in any way possible. I know that the Policing Minister wants to explore every option and has met with Alfie's family to discuss treatments that may be accessible for him. No decisions have been made and any proposal would need to be led by senior clinicians using sufficient and rigorous evidence.

Cannabis, in its raw form, is not recognised in the UK as having any medicinal benefits. It is therefore listed as a schedule 1 drug under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. This means that it is unlawful to produce, supply or possess raw cannabis unless it is for the purposes of research. Products must be thoroughly tested in the UK to provide the necessary assurances of their efficacy, quality and safety.

There is a clear regime in place that is administered by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency to enable medicines, including those containing controlled drugs such as cannabis, to be developed, licensed and made available for medicinal use to patients in the UK, as happened in the case of Sativex. The Home Office will consider issuing a licence to enable trials of any new medicine under schedule 1 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, providing that it complies with appropriate ethical approvals. Cannabis-based products should be treated in the same way as all other drugs, meaning that they should go through the normal testing procedures applied to any other medicines.

The current situation therefore is that outside of research the Government would not issue licences for the personal consumption of cannabis. I am aware of differing approaches in other countries and I know the Government continues to monitor the World Health Organisation's expert committee on drug dependence, which has committed to reviewing the use of medicinal cannabis. It will wait until the outcome of the review before considering any next steps.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP