

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

26th March 2019

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about medicinal cannabis.

There is strong scientific evidence that cannabis is a drug which 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 the healthcare sector in the UK. This is why the Government decided it was appropriate to review the scheduling of cannabis.

The decision of the Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, to reschedule these products is welcome. This decision 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 and provide further initial advice on synthetic cannabinoids by summer 2020.

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.

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 strict controls are necessary to develop clinical expertise and an evidence base for this treatment's effectiveness.

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.

Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, I was unable to attend the Parliamentary drop-in event on 12 March.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP