

Anyone's Child: Families for Safer Drug Control
The Station,
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Sir Keir Starmer MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street,
London,
SW1A 0AA

Re: Request for meeting around the need to review and reform UK drug policy .

Dear Sir Keir Starmer,

We write to you not just as UK citizens, but as bereaved parents, siblings, children who have lost loved ones to drugs under the UK's Misuse of Drugs Act. Every name behind this letter carries a devastating story of preventable loss. For each of us, drug policy and law is not an abstract debate -it is a matter of life and death.

Since the 'Anyone's Child' group formed 10 years ago, there have been over **40,000** drug-related deaths in the UK. That is the equivalent of losing an entire town. And yet, year after year, the numbers continue to rise. We have reached a point where the UK has the **highest drug-related death rates in Europe**. We believe the current approach, prioritising criminalisation, and punishment, has failed. It is expensive and counterproductive - stigmatising marginalised and vulnerable communities and individuals and, for generations now, demonstrably delivering the opposite outcomes of its promise to create a safer healthier society. It has failed our loved ones, and it is failing countless others today. We simply cannot continue with the failing status quo, or worse, doubling down on the enforcement-led 'war on drugs' that has proved such a catastrophe, for the individuals lost, their families, and the wider communities.

Sir Keir, you have often spoken about justice, compassion and the importance of evidence-based policy. As a public prosecutor you have dealt with many drug related cases and must understand the futility of continuing down the same path. Over many years a seemingly endless series of expert inquiries, committees, and reports have come to the same conclusion; We must follow the evidence of what works and reorient away from failed punitive responses and towards proven health and social policies - evidence based prevention, treatment, and harm reduction. We must support, not punish the vulnerable and marginalised.

We must also create an enabling environment for effective health-led interventions by

reviewing and reforming our outdated and malfunctioning drug laws. This involves following longstanding UN guidance to end the criminalisation of people who use drugs, and beginning an adult dialogue about how the violent exploitative illegal trade controlled by organised crime groups can be progressively replaced by a responsibly regulated market controlled by the relevant authorities. Whatever one might wish for, there is no third option in which the drug market disappears. We must manage the reality of drugs in society, not keep pretending there is some magical enforcement solution just around the corner.

We believe this is a moment to lead - to be bold in the face of a crisis that now takes over 10 lives a day . We therefore request a meeting with you to discuss a better path forward, one informed by compassion, evidence, and the voices of those who have paid the highest price.

Please do not let more families go through what we have endured. We owe it to the 40,000 people we have lost, and to those who can still be saved.

We hope to hear from your office soon and would deeply appreciate the opportunity to meet with you directly.

Yours sincerely,