

PE1651/JJJJJJJ

Scottish Government submission of 29 May 2018

Thank you for your letter dated 30 April 2018 regarding the above petition; you asked what engagement the Scottish Government is undertaking with regards to Public Health England's review of prescribed medicines. I summarise our engagement below.

The review which Public Health England (PHE) are undertaking was launched on 24 January 2018 with a public-health focus on dependence on, and withdrawal from, prescribed medicines in adults (aged 18 and over). The scope of the review will cover medicines prescribed for anxiety, insomnia, chronic non-cancer pain and depression. The review excludes prescribing in a secondary care setting. Further details on the PHE review can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prescribed-medicines-that-may-cause-dependence-or-withdrawal>

In March this year, Scottish Government officials wrote to PHE to ask them to consider extending their review to Scotland. PHE responded to say that they would be happy to share the outcomes of their review but they took the decision not to widen the scope of the review to include Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales, due to their tight timescales for the delivery of this review.

Although the review will not be extended to Scotland, PHE will take into consideration a variety of international evidence which will apply to Scotland. In addition to this, the Head of the Scottish Government's Effective Prescribing and Therapeutics Branch sits on the group in an observer capacity; a similar arrangement is in place for officials from Northern Ireland and Wales.

Officials are also currently exploring the possibility of taking forward a Scottish focused review which would run in parallel to the PHE review. Discussions are ongoing regarding the possible scope of this work and to consider the next steps that would need to be taken to ensure that the key issues identified as part of the PHE review are also considered from a Scottish perspective.

Finally, I would highlight that the Scottish Government has already committed to a range of measures to help tackle the problem of increased addiction to prescription medicines:

- Committing to continuing the development of a Single National Formulary to reduce unwarranted medicine variation, increase patient safety while ensuring a person-centred approach.
- Refreshing the polypharmacy strategy to tackle inappropriate prescribing.
- Developing a chronic pain strategy that aims to tackle the issue of over-treatment and highlight the issue of high strength opioid medicines misuse.

- Refreshing the drug treatment strategy to better meet the wide-ranging health and social needs of those most at risk as a result of their substance use.

I hope that you find this information helpful.