



Green London
Assembly Member

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The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
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(Via email)

01 May 2025

Dear Chancellor,

The urgent need for more funding for drug (including alcohol) treatment services

I am writing to you in the context of the upcoming Spending Review to propose that the Government should invest more in drug (including alcohol) treatment services.

Every drug (including alcohol) death could be prevented, and I would urge you to set aside a significant investment into drug (including alcohol) treatment services as part of this spending review.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows an increase in the number of drug poisoning deaths registered in 2023 compared to 2022, with 2023 having the highest number of deaths since records began at 5,448 deaths.¹ In addition, the ONS stated that in 2023 there were 10,473 deaths from alcohol-specific causes registered in the UK – also the highest number on record. Each of these deaths is a grave loss and will leave families and communities devastated and changed forever as a result.

I have a background of working in the NHS and Public Health. As a London Assembly Member, I have met with drug treatment services, groups that work with drug users and other civil society groups. These groups tell me that the UK's drug supply is becoming more toxic and more violent which is why urgent action is needed to save lives and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The independent review of drugs, authored by Dame Carol Black, found that the health harms, costs of crime and wider impacts on society of drugs are more than £19 billion – which is more than twice the value of the market itself and is a similar scale of the costs

associated with alcohol.² The review also highlighted that while £600 million is spent on treatment and prevention, the scale of the costs associated with drug use means that the unmet need continues to grow.

Black's review states that problematic drug use is a "chronic condition that requires earlier and better treatment, and sustained support."³ The review suggests that increased funding should be allocated to provide people with better quality treatment and support those in need of housing and employment.⁴

It is becoming more widely understood that continued investment in policing activity does not change this issue.⁵

In the recent Westminster debate about preventing drug deaths, it was good to hear that 43,500 more people are in drug treatment.⁶ But we still need significantly more capacity, treatment still underserves crack and heroin users as well as some demographics such as women. It's distressing to see drug deaths continue to rise, which is a clear sign that our treatment services need more capacity and flexibility to be able to meet the needs of people who use drugs.

Most people who use drugs (including alcohol) do so with minimal harms, for those with problematic use the causes are commonly trauma, mental health and contextual factors such as homelessness – we must treat people with compassion and give them every opportunity to thrive. Every person in treatment is another person more likely to survive and to be able to participate in their community.

I recently visited Glasgow's drug consumption room, the first in the UK, to see how this is working. It was inspiring to see how the service is taking a health-led, compassionate view of drug use and that the service is structured around the needs of people who use drugs. I heard how the service is building trust with people who have not previously accessed treatment as well as supporting people to access other services like housing support.

A significant investment in drug treatment would also align with several of the Government's national missions: kickstart economic growth, build an NHS fit for the future, safer streets, and break down the barriers to opportunity. The investment into these services will have dividends in many areas across Government and has the potential to save lives and money in the long term.

The funding provided to local authorities for drug treatment since Black's review is very welcome. The 2025-26 extension allows local authorities to fund drug checking services which is a much-needed service. Further extending this to include drug consumption rooms, provision of safe inhalation pipes and the removal of barriers to the delivery of these life-saving interventions is necessary, alongside additional funding for drug treatment services.

Investing in drug (including alcohol) treatment services will allow these services to go beyond the levels of service they currently provide. This will allow them to reach out to those who don't currently engage with the provision as well as providing a higher level of service to each person. This higher quality of service will mean each person is far more likely

to receive the treatment they need, thereby saving lives and strengthening our communities.

I look forward to hearing about future announcements of more funding for drug (including alcohol) treatment services and further harm reduction.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Garbett
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

¹ Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2023 registrations. ONS, Oct 2024
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2023registrations>

² Review of drugs: summary (accessible version). Home Office, Feb 2020
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-drugs-phase-one-report/review-of-drugs-summary>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Project ADDER: Impact evaluation. Home Office, Feb 2025
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-adder-impact-evaluation/project-adder-impact-evaluation>

⁶ Prevention of Drug Deaths. Westminster Hall debate, Mar 2025
<https://www.parliament.co.uk/debate/2025-03-27/commons/westminster-hall/prevention-of-drug-deaths>