

PRESS RELEASE

Release time: Immediate
Released by: Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP
Date: 30 May 2008

Sanity from Scotland on drug treatment – will England and Wales follow suit?

Iain Duncan Smith MP, Chairman of the Centre for Social Justice, has welcomed the Scottish Government's new drugs strategy with its 'guiding purpose' to help addicts recover from rather than manage their addictions.

Mr Duncan Smith said:

"Much credit is due to Fergus Ewing, Annabel Goldie and all who have contributed in formulating Scotland's new drugs strategy.

Over the years I have met many drug addicts in Scotland whose lives have been ruined by a failed harm reduction approach overwhelmingly focused on only containing and managing addictions. Many have been left semi-comatose on methadone scripts for five, ten or even fifteen years. The Centre for Social Justice has long called for a re-balancing in drug treatment from harm reduction to programmes centred on achieving abstinence. Our Breakthrough Britain report of July 2007 set out in detail how this could be achieved.

Drug users in Scotland should now be helped to get clean and stay clean, not just told how to minimize the harm of their addictions. Charities like the Maxie Richards Foundation in Glasgow and Bethany Christian Trust in Edinburgh are doing excellent work in helping drug addicts move towards drug-free and productive lives. I hope that the new strategy will ensure such projects are able to fairly access government funding to expand their work. If it does, many lives will be saved and families restored.

As in Scotland until now, England and Wales are similarly over-reliant on methadone and poor-quality harm reduction programmes. Our stark failure south of the border to help addicts become drug-free should lead policy-makers to learn from the new Scottish approach. For the sake of the many individuals, families and communities ravaged by drug abuse, I hope they have the humility and courage to change direction."

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