

Public Health Minister requests meeting with the Home Office on drugs deaths

Public Health Minister Joe FitzPatrick has called on the Home Office to work with the Scottish Government to help stop the rising number of drug deaths.

In a letter, the Minister asks Sajid Javid for a meeting and urges him to ensure that an appropriate UK Government minister is represented at a proposed summit on the issue in Glasgow.

The text of the letter is as follows:

19 July 2019

As you are aware, the unacceptable rising number of those losing their lives as a result of drug taking in Scotland is a concern to us all and I take seriously the impact this has on individuals, families and communities. On Tuesday 16 July, we received the tragic confirmation that 1,187 people had lost their lives to drug-related deaths in Scotland last year.

In response to these shocking statistics, I am inviting the UK Government to work with the Scottish Government to tackle this problem which claims so many lives. I am now writing to request an urgent meeting to discuss how we can work together to help stop the increasing number of drug deaths in Scotland.

I would like to discuss arrangements to host a summit in Glasgow on the issue and ask that there is an appropriate UK Minister able to contribute. The Scottish Government has already agreed that we will host such a summit, where

government representatives, local authorities and the chair of Scotland's new Drug Deaths Taskforce would be invited, ensuring the voices of those with experience of using drugs, and their families, are also heard. I understand that there is cross party support for this conversation, including from Miles Briggs MSP, who has written to me to offer his support.

I look forward to hearing from you on how we might engage immediately on this matter in order to make progress.

Yours sincerely

Joe FitzPatrick