

Edinburgh MP claims the drug laws don't work

by **Tommy Sheppard MP** for Edinburgh East

Last year 1187 people died in Scotland from a drug related death. This is a crisis. And the vast majority of these deaths did not need to happen.

Drugs laws are made at Westminster for the whole of the UK. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 hasn't seriously been reviewed for nearly fifty years. It's no longer fit for purpose. As a member of the Scottish Affairs Committee – I'm seeing the evidence of that in our current inquiry on drugs.

We've been hearing from experts, people with lived experience of addiction and those on the front line about how drugs policies in Scotland have been working – or, more accurately, not working.



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People are dying. We can't keep waging a War on Drugs that we can never win. We need policies and laws based on evidence. Harm reduction must be our chief aim. Where countries have taken bold action, like decriminalisation and drug-consumption rooms, drugs-related deaths have dropped sharply. And contrary to opponents' claims, there's no evidence of more people

taking drugs.

Only 10% of users have a problem with drugs. It's frequently those who've already been let down by society who become 'problem' users – people who've experienced trauma in childhood or mental illness. Stigma is rife. We need to provide treatment, not punishment. And we need it now.