

Constance heads up new 'national mission'

Scotland's new Minister for Drugs Policy Angela Constance has said that people with lived experience must be at the heart of a new "national mission" in tackling drug deaths.

Speaking after The Scottish Parliament approved her appointment to the new role, in which she will report directly to the First Minister, Ms Constance said: "The scale of Scotland's drug deaths is a national tragedy. In this new post I am determined to lead work across government that will have a more immediate impact to help those at risk of losing their lives.

"This public health emergency needs a national mission to combat it, and one that has people with lived experience – and their families – at its heart. From day one I will work hand in glove with those who have real life and front line experience to shape services and to inform actions we need to take.

"It is my intention to achieve as much consensus as possible. As a first step I have already started to speak with people with lived experience, their families and those with frontline background in tackling this problem. I have also held initial talks with MSPs from across the Scottish Parliament.

"I will continue to reach out in the coming weeks. These

conversations will help set the course ahead of the First Minister attending the Drug Deaths Taskforce early in the new year, after which she has pledged to report back to Parliament.

“Through my career as a social worker, before becoming an MSP, and as a minister tackling inequality, I have a background in dealing directly with some of the issues surrounding drug use, addiction and the toll it takes on lives and on our communities.

“Scotland’s drug deaths problem will not be solved overnight – but with consensus, hard work and renewed dedication to tackling it, I believe next year can be one in which we start to turn the tide.”