

Public health approach needed on harmful drug taking say Greens



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- Drug taking needs to be treated as public health issue, not tackled through more punitive measures
- Evidence based policy needed, not Tory and Labour 'war on drugs' rhetoric
- Wider causes of problematic drug use need addressing
- Legalised, regulated system of drug control needed to take power from criminals

Greens have accused the government of adopting a punitive approach to tackling drug use [1] and have called instead for harmful drug taking to be treated as a public health issue. They also call for evidence-based policy including education to raise public awareness of the criminal, health, environmental and international issues around the supply of drugs.

Co-leader Carla Denyer, who is a councillor in Bristol where a safe drug consumption room opened last week [2], said:

"Going after drug users with draconian measures won't address the harm that drug taking can cause. The most harmful drug use is underpinned by poverty, isolation, mental illness, abuse, physical illness and psychological trauma.

"While the Conservatives and Labour attempt to outcompete each other on who can look tougher in a war on drugs, their rhetoric does little to address the tragedy of the lives lost to harmful drug taking every year. This is the

sixth drugs strategy in 23 years, and it follows a now familiar pattern of failure.

“Greens would follow a public health approach which tackles the wider causes of problematic drug use while being honest in communication with the public. We also need a policy that prevents profiteering from the supply of drugs. Greens favour a legalised, regulated system of drug control based on the specific risks posed to the individual, to society and to the environment. This is how to take power away from unscrupulous criminals.

“In Bristol, Green councillors have lobbied for years [3] for the introduction of a safer drug consumption room – a measure that would save lives. Such a room opened in Bristol last week on a trial basis, supervised by staff who are trained to treat an overdose. This progressive approach, which is in operation in many other countries, has been shown to save lives and reduce health, social and crime problems associated with street drug use [4].”

Notes

[1] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-59540781>

[2] <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/britains-first-drug-consumption-space-6289925>

[3] <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/call-life-saving-drugs-consumption-room-bristol/>

[4] <https://transformdrugs.org/drug-policy/uk-drug-policy/overdose-prevention-centres>

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