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Rt Hon Theresa May MP
House of Commons
London
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VIA EMAIL: mayt@parliament.uk

Dear Home Secretary,

Derbyshire PCC Summit on UK Drugs Policy

On Thursday 25 June I held a summit in Derbyshire to discuss whether delegates felt that current UK drugs policy is working. I realise that this issue has proven to be very politically sensitive and difficult to deal with by governments of all political persuasions but I do feel that there is a growing acceptance that the time has come to hold a comprehensive review of current policy.

Our conference was attended by 102 delegates, predominantly professionals working in Drug Treatment, Policing, Health and Education. I have attached the list of delegate organisations.

Speakers included Dr Liz Austen, Principle Lecturer in Criminology, Sheffield Hallam University who covered current UK policy and law and current global examples of policy. Derbyshire Chief Constable Mick Creedon talked about the challenges of enforcement and policing of current law and the fact that organised crime feeds on the vulnerability of those who have drifted or been groomed into a drugs habit or addiction. He spoke about his view that prohibition has not worked in relation to any substance such as alcohol, tobacco or drugs, nor for some complex societal issues such as prostitution, gambling or even religion and books.

Ron Hogg PCC Durham spoke about 'The Future of Drug Policy'; Tim Allin, a former 'user' spoke about his life on drugs, the effect it had on him and most importantly his family. Derek Ward, Professor of Public Health Derby University gave the health perspective and included the interesting point that every £1 spent on treatment delivers £2.50 in savings and with the difficult financial situation we are all facing this would appear to represent an excellent 'invest to save' opportunity.

In the afternoon we held an all delegate discussion on Health, Education and Law Enforcement in relation to drugs with a panel of people with significant experience in this area of work. I have enclosed the conference programme to enable you to get the full list of panel members.

As you would imagine there was discussion on legalisation or not, decriminalisation or not, harm reduction and leaving things as they are. There was discussion on how effective policing and law enforcement is in removing drugs from our streets. Recent, excellent, policing operations in

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Derbyshire have seen a very large number of individuals sentenced to long periods in custody, yet we know that class 'A' drugs were available on the streets of our towns within a few hours of the operation, in deed Mick Creedon likened this to the Hydra, where you cut off one head and two more grow and move onto the vacated patch.

Delegates were concerned at how public spend is distributed; 64.9% law enforcement; 22.5% social protection; 11.7% health and 0.1% education. We took an interactive vote on this point 'Is an approach that focuses more on health, prevention and education more appropriate than the current criminal justice focussed approach?' 82% agreed.

We concluded the event by asking delegates to sign the following statement;

On the 25th June 2015 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire held a summit that focussed on UK drug policy.

The outcome of the summit was agreement amongst delegates that times have changed significantly since the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and that the entire strategy for tackling the misuse of drugs is due for a comprehensive review.

We call on the new Government to hold a review of UK drugs policy.

89% of delegates have signed this statement.

This statement is not advocating for any particular outcome, rather it is suggesting that as Home Secretary you commission a comprehensive review of drug related policy using the most eminent academics, scientists, specialists, professionals, criminal justice experts and policy makers in this field of work. We feel that the review should also look at how public spend is used and may offer opportunities to not only reverse the current situation but also be far more efficient and achieve better outcomes.

I truly hope that you can give this difficult issue very serious consideration and initiate a societal discussion on how we can improve the lives of individuals dependent on substances, their families who have to deal with the anguish of either addiction or fatality, and our communities often plagued by criminals peddling drugs. I would be very happy to discuss this further with you or your officials.

I have enclosed the summit programme, the list of organisations in attendance and the speakers' slides to give you the full flavour of the event.

In addition I have enclosed a conference report produced by an 'A' level student who was on work placement with Rachel Sidebottom, Integrated Youth Support Officer at Derbyshire County Council. I think this is an excellent piece of work that captures the feeling of the conference in a very balanced way and will give you a full perspective of the discussions.

Yours sincerely



Alan Charles
Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner