

Letter from Jim Dobbin MP to Chris Heffer, DoH, March 13, 2012

Chris Heffer
Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Dear Chris,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Deputy Director of Drugs and Alcohol and further to your attendance at meetings between the Public Health Minister, Anne Milton MP and the All Party Group on Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction and most recently the Expert Patients Group on Involuntary Tranquilliser Addiction.

At all of these meetings the Minister has heard the long standing complaint from our campaign that no services are provided by the Department of Health for involuntary tranquilliser addiction. We have established through Parliamentary Questions, Parliamentary debates, correspondence with Ministers, FOI's and discussions at meetings attended by you that the Department of Health is unable to confirm that any services are provided for iatrogenic tranquilliser addiction.

On 29 February 2012 in the House of Lords, Earl Howe rejected amendment 107 to the Health and Social Care Bill, which was tabled by Earl Sandwich, to create an obligation for the Department of Health to provide appropriate services for those suffering from involuntary tranquilliser addiction. Part of the reason Earl Howe gave, for rejecting the amendment, was his belief that drug and alcohol teams are commissioning help for people dependent on prescribed medicines. Earl Howe has since confirmed by email that his answers in Parliament on the subject of iatrogenic addiction are based on briefings from the Department of Health.

The inescapable conclusion has to be that the briefing received by Earl Howe contained inaccurate information and that this inaccurate information was provided by the drug policy team within the Department of Health. I would ask that you confirm the source of this information, whether it originates from within your own section or has been supplied by the National Treatment Agency or the drug and alcohol teams.

In my view, it is unacceptable that Parliamentary legislation should be informed by an inaccurate briefing. It is also unacceptable that the continuing review of policy on addiction to prescribed drugs should be distorted by the inaccurate assertion that government funded addiction centres provide any help for involuntary tranquilliser addicts.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Jim Dobbin MP

cc. Earl Howe
Earl Sandwich