Written evidence from Connor Farmer

Executive summary
- Decriminalisation of drugs controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Explore a regulated market for cannabis and other drugs

My aim for this submission is to highlight my personal views on how the Government can improve current drug policy with reform, and what I view as the most sensible and evidence-based approach to reducing harm as a result of drug use in the United Kingdom. Ultimately the current model in the UK regarding drug policy is not working.

1. Decriminalisation
In my opinion it would be sensible for the Government to follow the decriminalisation route, implemented by a significant number of countries. An example would be Portugal, where the Government have implemented successful drug policy through decriminalisation where acquiring, consumption and possession of illicit drugs for personal use, with no indication of drug trafficking, results in an evaluation by the local ‘Commision for Dissuasion of Drug Addiction’. The main objective of this evaluation being to investigate the need for any treatment and for the promotion of recovery¹. In my opinion this system makes far more sense, drug users should not be criminalised for consumption, but offered healthcare and support. Criminal justice should focus on traffickers, and those that take advantage of vulnerable people through county lines. The drug reform charity Transform Drugs have reported and considered the significant positives that have come about through Portugal’s drug, health and social care reform.

2. Regulated market for cannabis products
Regulated markets for recreational cannabis exist in North America. Canada has recently federally legalised recreational cannabis. The Government of Canada has published various consultation documents relating to their justification of legalising recreational use of cannabis. One useful document, ‘Toward the legalization, regulation and restriction of access to marijuana: discussion paper’, highlights various reasonings behind the Government of Canada’s decision to pursue a legalised, regulated market. The Canadian framework for a regulated cannabis market ensures that only adults can access cannabis and ensures that taxes on sales are fed back into the country. This then effectively covers any additional costs as a result of legalisation, for example towards addiction treatment, education and regulation².

Transform Drugs have published a range of resources justifying and explaining the benefits of regulation of other illicit drugs, and not just cannabis. I personally think the Health and Social Care Committee should consider regulation and would benefit from considering Transform Drugs' work, https://transformdrugs.org/regulating-drugs/.
References
