



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FEBRUARY 12, 2018**

## **West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Calls for Harm Reduction**

The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson has published a set of important recommendations aimed at reducing drug harms, protecting communities, and making better use of limited resources. Find out more [here](#).

Niamh Eastwood, executive director of Release, said:

“The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s recommendations for reducing the harms of drugs are based on evidence and would undoubtedly save lives if implemented.

Diversion schemes for possession of drugs have been successfully implemented by both Durham and Bristol police forces, with both areas reporting reduced reoffending for people who are diverted away from the criminal justice system. Prosecuting people for drug possession causes unnecessary suffering, creating negative outcomes in terms of employment and education, and negatively impacting on people’s relationships with family. We welcome the WMPCC’s call to divert people who use drugs away from the criminal justice system. By offering treatment or education instead of criminalisation, diversion schemes improve outcomes for people who use drugs, and for the communities in which they live.

The WMPCC’s call for a consideration of drug consumption rooms (DCRs) is rooted in evidence and must be welcomed. By providing a safe and sterile place for people to use drugs, DCRs can save lives, provide treatment access, reduce strain on emergency services, and make the streets safer for everyone. DCRs are already saving lives in 8 European countries, Canada, and Australia, and have been endorsed by the British Medical Association. Opioid-related deaths are now at a record high in the UK, and DCRs can help put a stop to this crisis. No one has ever died from an overdose in a DCR, anywhere in the world.

Lives could also be saved by implementing the WMPCC’s call for increased access to overdose-reversal medication naloxone. Many local authorities across the country are not providing enough take-home naloxone to people who need it, as [Release’s research](#) has shown. This failure is leading to needless deaths that could be easily prevented with naloxone, a cheap medicine which has no potential for misuse and can be administered by anyone.

Yet again, the police are leading the way in the debate for drug policy reform while the Government continues to pursue the failed approach of prohibition and criminalisation. The Government must consider the insight of police officers, many of whom are on the frontline of the so-called war on drugs, witnessing the horrific impacts that prohibition has on communities every day.”

### **Note to the editor:**

[Release](#) is the UK’s centre of expertise on drugs and drug laws, providing free and confidential specialist services to professionals, the public, and people who use drugs. Release also campaigns for the reform of UK

drug policy, particularly the removal of criminal sanctions for possession offences, in order to bring about a fairer and more compassionate legal framework to managing drug use in our society.

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