

Presentation Issues

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Transform's website is currently comparing the costs and benefits of current drug prohibitionist policy and drug control compared to legal regulation. They are likely to pick up areas of the report which highlight the difficulty in assessing VfM and that evaluation of programmes and initiatives are patchy. Withholding release of the report until the publication of the more detailed and current NAO study will help to avoid a focus on the gaps in the evidence base and evaluation of VfM identified by the earlier analysis.		
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Press Office have approved the response. "There was an administrative error in the processing of this FOI and letter was sent out prematurely. Renewed ministerial authorisation is being sought."		
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Handling

11. This announcement carries a medium level of controversy. Transform are critical of the Government's drug policy and are likely to pick out elements of the report and use these to demonstrate a perceived failure of the drug strategy. Transform are likely to be publicly critical, which could attract media criticism. Press office therefore recommends publishing the report on the Home Office website to tie in with the date that the report will go to Danny Kushlick.
12. Once published, Press Office reactive lines to take will explain which elements of the report have incorporated into the drug strategy and will rebut criticisms of any elements that are not included. Press office will work with other Government department press offices to highlight examples of cost effectiveness of the strategy.
13. Key issues that may be raised by Mr Kushlick, or by Transform, are set out at **Annex D**, with brief précis of the Government's position on these issues. Should you agree with the recommendations of this submission, Drug Strategy Unit (DSU) and Press Office will develop lines to take, and DSU will co-ordinate the briefing and handling lines from across Departments and agencies before the release of the VfM report.

Clearance

14. This submission has been cleared by David Oliver, Head of Drug Strategy Unit.

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