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PARENTS' ACTION GROUP ANNOUNCES PLANS TO SET UP 24/7 SUPPORT LINE FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY CHILDREN'S DRUG ABUSE

The parents' group Talking About Cannabis is setting up a 24/7 telephone Support Line to provide help for families whose children are abusing cannabis. The line will be staffed by fully trained volunteers, all of whom are parents who have had the experience of having children and teenagers who have smoked cannabis in childhood and have been adversely affected.

Since it was set up just over a year ago the website talkingaboutcannabis.com has had a massive response from thousands of parents who have been in touch with Debra Bell, the founder and mother of a son who became psychotic after beginning on 'skunk' at age 14 at his school, Dulwich College, in South London. Many have written their own stories for the site, detailing their pain and frustration on seeing their children become badly affected by cannabis, use of which has become the norm in schools and communities over the country. Most families report who alone they feel with the problem, and that no help is available for them or their children. The group is also preparing educational packs for schools with a strong prevention message, written by drugs experts.

Debra Bell said today:

'We are delighted that the government has listened to voices like ours, and is going to reclassify cannabis, but now steps need to be taken to ensure that the message gets out to young people that using cannabis can cause severe mental illness, and ruins lives, which is where prevention education comes in. Our first priority, though, is to provide the support that is missing for parents who are faced with the daily misery of coping with a child or teen who is using drugs at school-age. It is a national scandal that the government has provided nothing for these families. Government is now recognising that something needs to be done about youth crime, especially knife and gun crime, but little is being said about the fact that many of these crimes are drug-fuelled, and the drug of choice for many young people is 'skunk' cannabis which fries young brains and can cause violent behaviour due to the psychotic effect.'

TAC is due to receive charitable status by next month and is now applying to central government for urgent funding for its activities.

For further details please contact:

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Talking About Cannabis

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Talking About Cannabis supports people whose lives have been affected by cannabis. Please sign up to our Campaign at www.talkingaboutcannabis.com/signup