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# Public Health England

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5 August 2014

Mrs LJ Hashmi  
Assistant Coroner  
Greater Manchester North  
HM Coroner's Court  
The Phoenix Centre  
L/Cpl Stephen Shaw  
MC Way  
Heywood OL10 1LR

Dear Mrs Hashmi

**Sindy Louise Woodhall Deceased – Date of Birth 13.08.1969 – Date of Death 23.10.2013**

Thank you for sending your regulation 28 notice following the inquest into the sad death of Ms Woodhall.

We share your concern about abuse of volatile substances (VSA) such as butane and propane and have been working with the Department of Health to support their efforts to restrict inappropriate access to these products. A large number of retailers already restrict access to butane lighter refills and some have committed to restricting the sale of multiple canisters in one transaction. The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) was asked by the public health minister last year to urge its members to remove accessible displays and restrict sales to one can per customer. ACS reassured the minister that its members already had policies in place to restrict access to butane.

We understand that Oldham's new service specification for provision of specialist treatment of substance misuse makes clear that the new service should cover all substances, including volatile ones. The local Alcohol and Drugs Strategic Forum, chaired by the local authority's Director of Public Health and attended by the Head of Trading Standards/Licensing, is looking at closer working with retailers on this matter and will consider the issue at its next meeting.

We have recently refined the information we collect on VSA as part of the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System in line with recommendations from Re-Solv, the national charity dedicated to the prevention of VSA, in part to add propane to the data collected routinely on people presenting with butane abuse.



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We are also looking to improve the national collection of drug-related (including VSA) mortality data from coroners so that action can be taken at a national and local level.

I hope this is helpful but please do contact me should you wish to discuss the matter further.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Duncan Selbie  
Chief Executive

cc , National Director of Health Protection and Medical Director  
 Director of Drugs and Alcohol