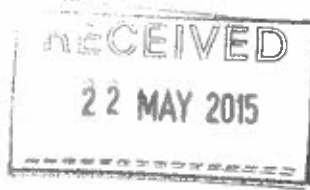


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Home Office



Rt Hon Mike Penning MP
Minister for Policing,
Crime and Criminal Justice

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Alan P Walsh
H.M Area Coroner – Manchester West
H.M. Coroner's Court
Paderborn House
Howell Croft North,
Bolton
BL1 1QY

Dear Alan

INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JASON HOUGHTON – REGULATION 28 REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 30 March to the Home Secretary about the tragic death of Jason Houghton from the combined toxic effects of ketamine, heroin, diazepam and dextromethorphan. I am replying as the Minister for Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice with responsibility for drug policy.

I note your request for action concerning:

- i. the supply and importation of Class A Drugs by use of the internet; and
- ii. the regulation of the internet, if possible, in relation to the supply of drugs and the delivery of the drugs using international shipping and the UK postal system.

This is clearly a very tragic case and I am grateful to you for raising these issues with me.

Law enforcement agencies and I take the issue of unlawful advertising and sales of drugs on the internet very seriously, and we continue to work with internet providers to ensure that they comply with the law. This can include

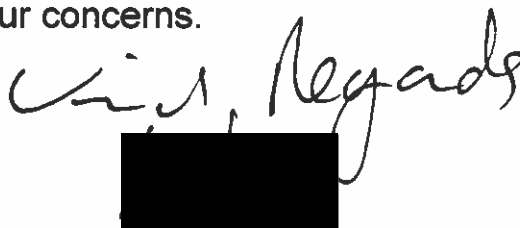
closure of UK-based websites where they are found to be committing offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Online purchasing remains a small overall element of drug supply: the 2013/14 Crime Survey for England and Wales shows that just 1% of adults who used drugs in the last 12 months sourced them from the internet.

The National Crime Agency (NCA), the police and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) routinely monitor controlled drugs and medicines being offered for sale on the internet and take action with industry partners to close websites trading illegally in these substances. Where it has been identified, or where there is reasonable suspicion to suggest, that controlled drugs or medicines containing controlled drugs are being sold on websites, law enforcement agencies have the relevant powers under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 to act against suppliers of controlled drugs, whether on controlled drug charges or on suspicion of wider drug-related offences. I can confirm that, since Mr Houghton's death, the MHRA has examined the website www.medipk.com and found that other prescription-only medicines were being offered without a required prescription and liaised with the internet service provider to close it down.

As in this case, considerable illegal activity takes place on the internet outside of UK jurisdiction. The UK continues to work with international partners to develop an effective response to the supply of controlled drugs and to react swiftly to emerging threats. In order to tackle illegally trading websites identified overseas, we are building strong partnerships with international partners. There is also ongoing work with the EU and other international regulatory agencies to ensure that, wherever possible, offending websites are amended to comply with the law.

In addition, Border Force officers are on constant alert to keep controlled drugs from entering the country. The associated enforcement response includes intelligence-led examination of packages and letters sent by post to intercept the importation of controlled substances. Working together with law enforcement partners, this activity is co-ordinated by the NCA who are continuing to enhance the security of our borders and lead the fight against serious, organised and complex crime.

I hope that this letter addresses your concerns.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Penning", is written over a solid black rectangular redaction box.

Rt Hon Mike Penning MP