

Regulation 28: REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS

REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT DEATHS

THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:

- 1 M Hancock, MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 39 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0EU
- 2 EBAY UK Ltd, Hotham House, 1 Herron Square, Richmond upon Thames, London TW9 1EJ
- 3 Metalchem Limited, 492 Falmer Road, Brighton, United Kingdom, BN2 6LH

1 CORONER

I am JR Leslie HAMILTON, Assistant Coroner for the area of County Durham and Darlington

2 CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS

I make this report under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

3 INVESTIGATION and INQUEST

On Thirteenth February 2020 I commenced an investigation into the death of Jason THOMPSON aged 49. The investigation concluded at the end of the inquest on Twelfth November 2020. The conclusion of the inquest was Suicide:

I a Hypoxaemia from Methaemoglobinaemia

I b Sodium Nitrite Poisoning

I c

II

4 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH

The deceased was a 49 year old man who collapsed at home, having taken a quantity of sodium nitrite, and died shortly afterwards in Darlington Memorial Hospital on the 8th February 2020. He had been deeply affected by the death of his son and more recently by the death of friends, all by suicide. He had a history of attempts to harm himself often triggered by alcohol. He was getting support from mental health services. Twelve days before he died, he purchased sodium nitrite (a meat preservative) without difficulty on Ebay, having researched its use on a "suicide forum". Post-mortem showed methaemoglobinaemia and toxicology showed an alcohol level of 178mg/100ml and nitrite in the urine.

5 CORONER'S CONCERNS

The MATTERS OF CONCERN are as follows: (brief summary of matters of concern)

During the course of the inquest the evidence revealed matters giving rise to concern. The Toxicologist's comments were particularly striking:

"Sodium nitrite is used to preserve and cure meat, to which it imparts a pink-red colour. The minimum lethal dose is 1 to 2 grams. Sodium nitrite can be readily bought via the internet. For example, it is possible to buy up to several hundred grams for a few pounds on eBay, without

restriction. A chapter from The Peaceful Pill Handbook entitled 'Lethal Inorganic Salts', available on-line, describes the use of sodium nitrite to commit suicide and compares it with sodium cyanide and sodium azide."

In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken. In the circumstances it is my statutory duty to report to you.

(1) Websites may be actively promoting a particular method of death by suicide and hence breaking the criminal law by assisting suicide.

(2) That such a lethal substance (sodium nitrite) should be so freely available on a popular online shopping site, sold by a company (Metalchem) under the guise of being a meat preservative.

6 ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN

In my opinion action should be taken to prevent future deaths and I believe you (and/or your organisation) have the power to take such action.

7 YOUR RESPONSE

You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of the date of this report, namely by 15 January 2021. I, the Coroner, may extend the period.

Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for action. Otherwise you must explain why no action is proposed.

8 COPIES and PUBLICATION

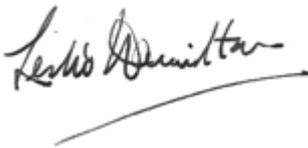
I have sent a copy of my report to the Chief Coroner and to the following Interested Persons who may find it useful or of interest.

Mr [REDACTED]
Ms N Persaud
Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust
DS [REDACTED], Durham Constabulary

I am also under a duty to send the Chief Coroner a copy of your response.

The Chief Coroner may publish either or both in a complete or redacted or summary form. He may send a copy of this report to any person who he believes may find it useful or of interest. You may make representations to me, the coroner, at the time of your response about the release or the publication of your response by the Chief Coroner.

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JR Leslie HAMILTON
Assistant Coroner for
County Durham and Darlington
Dated: 20 November 2020