



May 2021

Dear Ms Mazepina,

Thank you for your email of 7 April to the Home Office relating to the inquest into the death of Mr Thiago Araujo following the consumption of sodium nitrite. I am replying on behalf of the Security Minister who has taken a temporary leave of absence for curative surgery and I am sorry for the delay in responding to your email.

I have carefully noted the contents of your prevention of future deaths report and I recognise the need for continued awareness raising of the controls around sodium nitrite and the obligations to online marketplaces when selling this substance.

Sodium nitrite has legitimate uses as a food preservative, but because of its toxicity it is a reportable poison under the Poisons Act 1972. This means that it is generally available to members of the public without the need for a license, but sellers, including online sellers, must take appropriate steps to assess if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion before accepting a transaction. They are obliged to make suspicious transaction reports where they have grounds to believe that the sale is for an illicit use.

The Home Office regularly engages with suppliers to help them meet their requirements under the Poisons Act and provide detailed guidance in relation to any additional safeguarding steps they may wish to take. Generally online marketplaces maintain their own policies on prohibited items, many of which will include a prohibition on the sale of poisons. It is the seller's obligation to check that items they are listing are permitted by their own policies and to take any action where it is appropriate.

I strongly believe that we must do as much as possible to safeguard those who may be vulnerable to harmful sales of poisons including sodium nitrite. For that reason, I can confirm that the Home Office is aiming to establish a consultation this summer on possible amendments to the Poisons Act, which will include more obligations on online marketplaces including reporting suspicious transactions within 24 hours.

We will also continue to work with suppliers to ensure they recognise their obligations under the Poisons Act for sodium nitrite.

Baroness Williams of Trafford