



Regulatory Services
London Borough of Camden
Camley Street
London N1C 4PP

24 April 2020

Dear Assistant Coroner R Brittain,

Re: Regulation 28: report to prevent future deaths

Thank you for your Regulation 28: report regarding [REDACTED] and the actions that could be taken to prevent future deaths.

As you correctly point out in your report there is a causal link between cocaine use and stroke. The risk can be heightened further by health and lifestyle factors such as diabetes, hypertension or current smoking¹.

While acute health problems associated with cocaine use are rare in most users, there are many potential medical and psychiatric complications associated with its use. These complications can be life threatening and include:

- cardiac problems, such as heart attacks
- pulmonary problems
- psychiatric illness, including anxiety, depression and psychosis
- neurological problems, including seizures and stroke
- gastrointestinal issues, and many others²

Cocaine use is the second most commonly used illicit drug in England. There are many sources of information about cocaine and other illicit drugs, but it is possible that the risks are misunderstood, minimised or ignored for various reasons by the public.

¹ Cheng, Y. C., et al. (2016). Cocaine Use and Risk of Ischemic Stroke in Young Adults. *Stroke*, 47(4), 918–922.

² Treadwell, S. D., & Robinson, T. G. (2007). Cocaine use and stroke. *Postgraduate medical journal*, 83(980), 389–394.

Information about the risks associated with cocaine use is widely available online from a range of sources. This includes the [NHS Live Well](#) website and the [FRANK](#) website, which is managed by Public Health England (PHE).

The FRANK website provides public advice and information on drugs, the risks and where to get help. In response to your request, PHE will ensure that stroke is included in the health risks of cocaine use on FRANK.

PHE is very aware of the prevalence of drug-related deaths in England. In 2018, there were 2,917 deaths related to drug misuse registered in England and Wales. In most cases, opiates were mentioned on the death certificate.

In the same year, there were 637 deaths related to cocaine, almost double the number three years earlier. However, it is not possible to distinguish between powder cocaine or crack cocaine in these reported deaths³.

Most deaths where cocaine is mentioned on the death certificate are likely to be opioid overdoses among people who used both heroin and crack cocaine.

The government has commissioned PHE to contribute to the second phase of the [independent review of drugs](#) by Professor [REDACTED]. Phase one of [REDACTED] review, which was published in February this year, recognised the increase in cocaine-related deaths.

Phase two will focus on treatment and prevention and will contain clear, evidence-based recommendations to inform policy on drug misuse treatment and prevention. It will also look at the availability and effectiveness of accurate information, education and other prevention activities about drugs, including cocaine.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Deputy Director – Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco and Justice

[REDACTED]

³ Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2018 registrations.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2018registrations>.