



Office for Product
Safety & Standards

Office for Product Safety and Standards

Cannon House
18 The Priory Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6BS

General enquiries: [REDACTED]

Jeremy Chipperfield
HM Senior Coroner
County Durham and Darlington Coroners Service
North Terrace, Civic Centre
Crook
DL15 9ES
Sent via email

2 December 2024

Dear Mr Chipperfield,

Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Helen Davey

Thank you for writing to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds MP, and the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS), regarding your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths dated 7 October 2024. This followed your investigation and inquest into the death of Helen Davey, who died on 7 June 2024 as a result of positional asphyxia caused by an ‘Ottoman’ style bed believed to have closed unexpectedly on her. The Secretary of State has asked me, in my role as Chief Executive of OPSS, to respond to your report on behalf of the Department.

May I say how sorry I was to hear of Helen Davey's death. If you have the opportunity, please convey my condolences and those of the Secretary of State and Ministers, to her family and friends.

As you may know, OPSS, within the Department for Business and Trade, is the UK's national product regulator, covering all consumer products except food, vehicles and medicines. OPSS' primary purpose is to protect people and places from product-related harm. We take the safety of consumers seriously and, alongside Local Authority Trading Standards, we have access to powers to take action where manufacturers, importers or distributors do not meet their responsibilities for product safety set out in UK law.

The safety (other than fire safety) of Ottoman-style beds is regulated by the General Product Safety Regulations 2005 (GPSR). These Regulations place obligations on manufacturers and importers to make sure products they supply are safe. Manufacturers and importers must also

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) delivers consumer protection and supports business confidence, productivity, and growth. It is part of the Department for Business and Trade.

[gov.uk/opss](https://www.gov.uk/opss)

consider any risks that may arise from the product in normal or foreseeable use and take action to avoid them or to mitigate against them. There are also requirements for businesses to provide appropriate warnings relating to any risks the product may pose and instructions so that consumers can use the product safely.

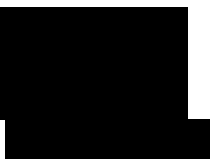
Following media reports of this incident, OPSS contacted Durham Constabulary to request further details including any information that would help to identify the specific product involved. In response, we received photos of the bed and brief details of the scene. However, from the limited information available we have been unable to identify the specific product model or manufacturer to investigate whether the product was non-compliant with GPSR. If you hold any further information about the product, or should more information come to light, we will of course review it with a view to further action.

OPSS has also contacted the British Standards Institution (BSI), the UK's national standards body, about this incident. BSI are responsible for independently producing national and international technical standards, and I know they have already raised awareness of it with their counterparts in the international and European standards bodies. OPSS has written to request that BSI reviews relevant UK furniture standards, including standards for furniture testing methods, to ensure they adequately address the safety of Ottoman-style beds, including how they prevent beds from descending unexpectedly should a lifting mechanism fail. While product standards are voluntary, they can assist businesses in complying with their legal safety obligations.

OPSS is writing to relevant trade bodies, including the National Bed Federation, the British Furniture Manufacturers Association and British Furniture Confederation, to ask that they make their members aware of the incident and the potential risk should a lifting mechanism fail, so that they can ensure that risk has been considered and addressed in any similar products.

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention.

Kind regards,



Chief Executive
OPSS



The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) delivers consumer protection and supports business confidence, productivity, and growth. It is part of the Department for Business and Trade.

[gov.uk/opss](https://www.gov.uk/opss)