



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

From [REDACTED]  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for  
Patient Safety, Women's Health and Mental Health

39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

Our ref: [REDACTED]

Miss Laurinda Bower  
Area Coroner  
HM Coroner's Service  
The Council House  
Old Mkt Square  
Nottingham  
NG1 2DT

By email: [REDACTED]

23 September 2024

Dear Miss Bower,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 30 July 2024 sent to the Department of Health and Social Care about the death of Bethany Paige Langton. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Patient Safety and Mental Health.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Bethany's death and I offer my sincere condolences to her family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

The report raises concerns over the continued ease of availability of the substance to members of the public, lack of awareness amongst businesses that the substance is being obtained for this purpose, and the availability of guidance to use the substance to bring about death.

In preparing this response, my officials have made enquiries with NHS England (NHSE), Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and Home Office (HO) to ensure we adequately address your concerns.

The Government has taken steps to reduce access to and awareness of this substance and therefore reduce the risks of further deaths by suicide. The Department of Health and Social Care leads an emerging methods working group to prevent awareness and access to substances such as this one. The working group involves representatives from the voluntary, community and social enterprises sector, police, academics, and the NHS, as well as government departments including the Home Office and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. The group ensures rapid targeted actions to collectively reduce public access to emerging methods, including this particular substance. This includes reducing the sale and importation of methods where appropriate as well as reducing references to, and limiting awareness of, them.

The group has worked with business, including online suppliers and manufacturers of the substance, to significantly reduce access. We have also worked with major online suppliers to remove it from sale to individuals in its pure form. We continue to work operationally with our broader partners, including Border Force and the police on interventions to reduce access to this specific substance for the purpose of suicide. These actions are kept under operational review.

I would also like to assure you that the Government has also taken action to address the prevalence of harmful suicide and self-harm content online such as the websites you refer to. For example, as you will be aware, the Online Safety Act, when fully in force, will require all services in scope to rapidly remove regulated content that meets the criminal threshold once they become aware of it. This includes illegal suicide and self-harm content. Under the Act, search services also have targeted duties that require them to minimise the risk of users encountering illegal search content, such as those found on this specific website. There is also a requirement for search services to take or use, where proportionate, user support measures. The regulator now responsible for online safety, Ofcom, will recommend measures that search services can put in place to achieve these objectives. These could include removing results for sites that are known to host illegal suicide and self-harm content, as well as signposting users towards sources of support.

The Act provides Ofcom with a robust suite of enforcement powers, including business disruptions measures and significant fines for use in the case of non-compliance. The Government has also worked with internet service providers, tech companies and social media platforms, as well as expert advisors such as the Samaritans, to tackle harmful pro-suicide forums.

In addition, in September 2023 the multi-sector and cross-government suicide prevention strategy for England was published. The five-year strategy set out over 130 actions aimed at reducing the rates of suicide in England and work continues to implement these actions.

As part of our mission to build an NHS fit for the future, the Government has committed to tackling suicide as one of this country's biggest killers and recruiting 8,500 new mental health workers who will be specially trained to support people at risk from suicide.

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
PATIENT SAFETY, WOMEN'S HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH**