



Home Office

**Minister of State for Policing, Fire  
and Crime Prevention**  
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Alison Mutch  
Senior Coroner  
HM Coroner's Office  
Manchester South

By email c/o  
[REDACTED]

DECS Reference: [REDACTED]  
Your Reference: [REDACTED]

23 December 2024

## **INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JAMES PATRICK BOLAND: REGULATION 28 REPORT**

Dear Ms Mutch,

Thank you for your Regulation 28: Prevention of Future Deaths report of 5 November to the Home Secretary about the death of Mr James Patrick Boland, which was linked to chronic ketamine use. You suggest that further action should be taken to prevent future deaths from ketamine. I am replying as the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention.

Firstly, any death related to drugs is a tragedy, and I was very sorry to read about the circumstances of Mr Boland's death.

The inquest found that Mr Boland had switched from using cocaine, which is controlled under Class A of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 ("the 1971 Act"), to ketamine, a Class B under the 1971 Act, because he thought that the classification of ketamine meant that it was less harmful. You are concerned that maintaining ketamine's classification is likely to encourage others to start or continue to use the drug, under the false impression that it is safer than drugs controlled under Class A.

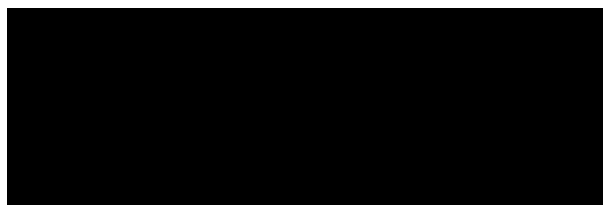
Ketamine is controlled as a Class B drug under the 1971 Act. The maximum penalty for supply and production is up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. The maximum penalty for possession is up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. These controls are intended to discourage the use of drugs and contribute, along with other measures, to restrict misuse.

Ministers are subject to a statutory duty to consider advice provided by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD), an independent scientific advisory body, before making changes to drugs legislation. Ketamine was moved from Class C to Class B under the 1971 Act in 2014, in accordance with advice provided by the ACMD. Their recommendation was based on evidence of ketamine's potential for harm at that time. The ACMD stated that "although there is limited evidence of ketamine misuse causing social harm, evidence of physical harm (mainly chronic bladder toxicity but also an increase in acute toxicity) has increased". This report is available at the following link: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ce1bbed915d7c849adce3/ACMD\\_ketamine\\_report\\_dec13.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ce1bbed915d7c849adce3/ACMD_ketamine_report_dec13.pdf).

I recognise growing concern about the harms of ketamine. I intend to commission the ACMD to conduct an updated harms assessment of ketamine as part of the forthcoming three-year work programme commission cycle.

Thank you again for your letter and bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely,



**Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention**