

Mr Richard T Middleton
Assistant Coroner
Dorset Coroners

By email C/O

DECS Reference:
Your Reference:

25 March 2025

**INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JOSHUA WILLIAM LEATHAM-PROSSER:
REGULATION 28 REPORT**

Dear Mr Middleton,

Thank you for your Regulation 28: Prevention of Future Deaths report of 27 February to the Home Secretary about the death of Mr Joshua William Leatham-Prosser, which you have linked to chronic ketamine use. You suggest that urgent 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 Leatham-Prosser's death.

I have noted that the inquest found that Mr Leatham-Prosser had used cannabis, which is controlled as a Class B drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 ("the 1971 Act"), as a young teenager; then, he began to use ketamine, which is also controlled as a Class B under the 1971 Act, under the impression that it was no more harmful than cannabis. Further, the inquest heard that ketamine cystitis is emerging within younger populations, and that ketamine misuse can result in major reconstructive surgery. Also, I note your concerns about ketamine's current classification as a Class B – given its addictiveness and potential of harm – and how an increasing number of young people are misusing the drug and are subsequently subject to potentially fatal health problems.

I am very aware that ketamine can cause significant harm when misused, and this Government is concerned that the harms – including its degree of addictiveness and the possibility of irreversible bladder damage – may be significantly underestimated by those who use the drug. It is also particularly worrying that the misuse of ketamine amongst young people has grown in recent times. Through the Government's Plan for Change and mission to make our streets safer, we will continue to work closely with health, policing and wider public services to drive down drug use and its associated harms. Also, the Home Office will continue to work with our partners to discourage drug misuse and to alert people, particularly young people, about the dangers of ketamine.

As you may be aware, the Government is required to consider the advice of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs ("ACMD") before making any changes to the classification of a controlled drug. I should also like to inform you that I wrote to the Chair of the ACMD, Professor Owen Bowden-Jones, to formally commission an updated harms assessment of ketamine on 14 January. The ACMD is independent of the Government, but I have full confidence that it will consider the issue with due care and provide valuable advice. The Government will carefully consider the ACMD's recommendations before making any decision on how to proceed.

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

Yours sincerely,



Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention