



Timothy W Brennand
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4 March 2026

Dear Mr Brennand,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 reports sent to the Home Secretary following the tragic deaths of William James Armstrong, Shaun Michael Bass, Mathew Anthony Price, Kelly Michelle Walsh, Chantelle Williams, Samuel David Dickenson and Matthew Joseph O'Reilly.

I am responding on behalf of the Home Secretary, in my capacity as the Minister of State responsible for the Poisons Act. I would firstly like to apologise for the delay in responding. Due to an administrative error, these reports were only recently received by the department. I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to their families and thank you for sharing the concerns raised in your reports, which I have carefully noted. I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

I acknowledge the issues you have raised, specifically around guidance and training for suppliers and concerns regarding online suicide forums. These important issues were addressed in my response to the PFD report following the inquest into the tragic death of Andrew Brown, sent to you on 22 July 2025. To assist I have enclosed a summary of that letter setting out Government's response on these matters (Annex A). Further to this summary, I wish to set out the action being progressed across Government and clarify the Home Office's role and the steps taken to date.

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) published the cross-Government Suicide Prevention Strategy for England (2023-2028) in September 2023. The Home office supports DHSC in delivering this strategy, including by staking targeted action to address emerging methods of suicide.

DHSC convene a Concerning Methods Working Group (CMWG), which brings together a wide range of expertise from other government departments – including the Home Office – alongside academics, voluntary sector organisations, law enforcement, the NHS and coroner representatives. The Group's purpose is to identify, limit awareness of and reduce access to emerging methods of suicide.

This reflects the government's commitment to a responsive and adaptive approach, ensuring responses are informed by the latest intelligence and trends. Through this forum, stakeholders have been examining the current understanding of the use of sodium nitrite and sodium nitrate in suicides.

Sodium nitrite is subject to several legislative regimes, including REACH and food safety legislation. It is also a *reportable poison* under Part 4 of Schedule 1A of the Poisons Act 1972. This means it may be sold to the public, but retailers must report suspicious transactions to the Home Office where they have grounds to suspect illicit use.

The Poisons Act supports the aims of the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy, CONTEST, by enabling controls on chemicals and poisons that may be used to cause harm, while ensuring legitimate access for lawful uses. The legislation applies only to Great Britain (i.e. England, Scotland, and Wales), and there is no obligation for retailers based outside this jurisdiction to report suspicious transactions.

The Homeland Security Group oversees the Poisons Act for counter-terrorism purposes and works closely with other government departments in recognition that the legislation may also support wider public safety issues, including suicide prevention. My officials are working collaboratively with DHSC to assess whether, and how, the Poisons Act could play a meaningful role in reducing harm in this context. More generally, the Home Office keeps legislation under regular review to ensure it remains proportionate, evidence-based, and aligned with national security and public safety objectives.

While sodium nitrite remains widely used for legitimate purposes (e.g., food curing, industrial applications), retailers in Great Britain are legally obliged to report suspicious transactions under the Poisons Act 1972. Border Force officers have been issued guidance on identifying and intercepting consignments suspected for self-harm use. The Home Office also engages with online platforms to encourage voluntary removal of listings for high purity sodium nitrite.

To answer your questions about further regulation for sodium nitrite, as noted above, DHSC and Home Office are working with stakeholders to consider whether additional regulation would be effective and proportionate, and if so, which body would be best placed to take forward any such work.

Adding sodium nitrite as a *regulated poison* under Part 2 of Schedule 1A of the Poisons Act 1972 would make it a criminal offence for a retailer to supply it to a member of the public without a Home Office licence; and a criminal offence for a member of the public to import, acquire, possess or use it without a licence. However, this could impose burdens on businesses and consumers who currently use it lawfully. Evidence also indicates that most harmful purchases originate from overseas suppliers, which fall outside UK legislative control. Making sodium nitrite a regulated poison under the Poisons Act 1972 would also criminalise the buyer. These points are actively being considered in the conversations between departments.

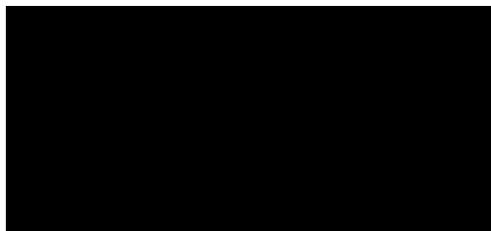
Finally, I understand the troubling concerns you have raised about the pro-suicide forums. DSIT, as the department responsible for the Online Safety Act, is committed to working with Ofcom and bereaved families. This partnership aims to ensure the Act protects all users from illegal suicide and self-harm content and shields children from harmful material that does not meet the criminal threshold.

Whilst the introduction of the Online Safety Act marked an important first step toward securing safer online environments, the Government recognises the need to keep the legislation under review and is committed to identifying where further strengthening may be required. Since being appointed, DSIT's Secretary of State, Liz Kendall, has ensured there are stronger protections for vulnerable users by amending the Act to make encouraging self-harm a priority offence. This triggers the strongest possible legal protections, requiring in-scope services to proactively prevent all users from being exposed to this content, as well as minimising the length of time for which such content is present.

I hope this explanation is helpful in setting out the scope of the Home Office's responsibilities and the collaborative work underway across government. Preventing access to harmful substances is a priority I take extremely seriously, and the Home Office remains absolutely committed to supporting DHSC, coroners and law enforcement partners in reducing the risks associated with sodium nitrite.

Thank you again for sharing these reports. I have asked my officials to continue considering further measures, legislative and nonlegislative, in light of emerging evidence and trends.

Yours sincerely,



Security Minister
Cabinet Office and Home Office