



Home Office

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Mr Timothy Brennand  
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By email: [REDACTED]

22 July 2025

Dear Mr Brennand,

#### **TIMOTHY W BRENNAND REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS**

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report, dated 23 May 2025, that was sent to the Home Secretary following the inquest into the death of Andrew Brown, who tragically died on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023. I am responding on behalf of the Home Secretary, in my capacity as the Minister of State for Security.

I would like to offer my heartfelt condolences to Mr Brown's family and loved ones – though almost two years have passed, I understand that the pain of such a profound loss endures. Thank you for sharing the concerns raised in your report, which I have carefully noted. I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

Your report has raised several matters of concern, which are relevant to both the Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care, namely:

- There is no specific guidance or training for sellers of the substances in question, particularly over online marketplaces in circumstances of the purchase on a 'one off' basis for the means of self-harming. Additionally, current guidance does not specifically reference these substances as a concern.
- Potentially suspicious sales of these substances are often evaluated as being for legitimate uses.
- Vendors are often not aware of its potential for misuse, or that their details are being shared on suicide-related internet forums.
- Members of the public are able to access websites hosted overseas that promote information on methods of suicide and information on how to source poisons that can bring about death.

As your report highlights, there have been several tragic cases involving these substances. The substances involved in your report are "reportable" substances listed in Part 4 of Schedule 1A of the Poisons Act. This means they can be purchased by members of the public, but suspicious transactions must be reported by

retailers if there are questionable grounds for suspecting it is intended for any illicit use. The aim of the legislation is to control chemicals and poisons that can be used to cause harm, while still allowing members of the general public and businesses with a legitimate need to access these substances to continue their activities. It falls under my portfolio as Security Minister as the legislation supports delivery of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.

The Poisons Act was amended in October 2023 to strengthen controls and enhance our suspicious activity reporting requirements. This includes new obligations for online marketplaces. As well as the requirement to report suspicious transactions, economic operators supplying any reportable substances must now demonstrate that their personnel are aware of which of their products contain listed substances and are instructed on their obligations.

Concerns about these substances have been raised through coroner's reports and other correspondence. In response, the Home Office has been working with other government departments to limit access to these substances and raise awareness among suppliers about the risks of misuse. In a recent letter to [REDACTED] Assistant Coroner for Surrey, I outlined the Home Office's response following another such incident. Since then, officials from the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), who manage the national Suicide Prevention Strategy, have been collaborating to assess policy options and coordinate a cross-government response. This response builds on the existing measures that are already in place.

Responding to the issues your report raises in turn:

- **Guidance and assessment of suspicion:**

The substances in question are not routinely individually highlighted within government issued guidance in relation to their potential misuse for self-harm or suicide. This is to avoid bringing widespread attention to them. However, my officials have engaged with selected online platforms and retailers individually to encourage them to voluntarily remove the sale of these substances to members of the public in their pure form and be vigilant for the possibility of purchase for self-harm or suicide. For all substances within scope of the Poisons Act, the Homeland Security Group works to improve retailer awareness of their legal obligation to report suspicious activity and to inform retailer sales practices. For example, we encourage suppliers to use declaration of use forms for sales of potentially harmful substances. This work will continue to ensure suppliers are meeting their obligations under the Poisons Act.

Furthermore if, during the processing of suspicious activity reports, a safeguarding concern is identified by Counter Terrorism Policing, consideration will be given to disseminating this intelligence to police forces to consider a welfare check.

To target potentially harmful acquisitions from overseas merchants, Border Force has introduced new guidance for its officers. This guidance operates within existing legal provisions. It sets out the actions officers can take if they receive any form of information suggesting that goods at the border contain items intended to assist with suicide. This relies on Border Force working closely with police forces and other relevant agencies to safeguard vulnerable individuals to the full extent possible. This work is complex, and Border Force will continue to monitor its policies, exploring opportunities to improve its ability to act where possible and to ensure that frontline Border Force staff who may encounter these items know what action to take and are supported on a case-by-case basis when required.

- **Suicide-related online forums:**

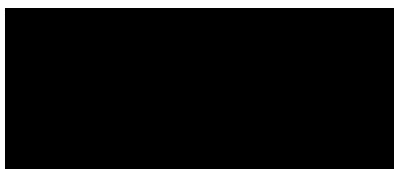
As your report highlights, we are aware of the existence of a number of websites, hosted overseas, which promote information about how to access poisons for the purposes of suicide. As of 17 March 2025, the illegal content duties in the Online Safety Act (OSA) came into effect, which is an important and positive step in addressing a range of online harms. Providers in scope of the OSA are legally required to implement measures to reduce the risks that their services are used for illegal offending and remove illegal content from their platforms where it does appear. This includes illegal content relating to the most serious and prevalent illegal content and activity such as terrorism, child sexual exploitation, inciting violence, and encouraging or assisting suicide. These measures are designed to create a safer online environment by ensuring robust systems and processes are in place to protect users from illegal content.

The Online Safety Act applies to services even if the companies providing them are overseas, should they have links to the UK. This includes if the service has a significant number of UK users, if the UK is a target market, or if it is capable of being accessed by UK users and there is a material risk of significant harm to such users.

Ofcom is the regulator for this regime. It has strong enforcement powers where providers fail to comply with their duties. Ofcom have launched several enforcement programmes to monitor compliance with the regime, including an investigation into a service linked to promoting suicide content<sup>1</sup>. The government is closely monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the OSA and remains committed to strengthening our laws if it does not deliver the necessary protections to ensure a safer online environment.

Thank you for bringing these important concerns to my attention. I hope that this response is helpful. Please be assured that the Home Office is actively working with relevant departments and partners to mitigate the dangers associated with these substances.

Yours sincerely,



Security Minister

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<sup>1</sup> [Ofcom investigates online suicide forum - Ofcom](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/ofcom-investigates-online-suicide-forum): <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/ofcom-investigates-online-suicide-forum>