



## Department for Education

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP  
Secretary of State for Education

Brendan Joseph Allen  
Area Coroner for the Coroner Area of Dorset

12 October 2025

Dear Brendan,

### Investigation and Inquest into the death of Gemma Weeks

#### Response to Regulation 28 Report

I am sending this letter in response to the Regulation 28 Report to prevent Future Deaths, and accompanying reasons detailed in the report dated 19<sup>th</sup> August 2025. I know that you sent your report to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care too. Ministers in the Home Office will be replying to your concerns about the classification of ketamine under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and Ministers at the Department for Health and Social Care will be addressing harm reduction and prevention.

I want to offer my sincere condolences to Gemma's family and friends on their tragic loss. The death of Gemma has reaffirmed my department's continued commitment to protect young people from the wide-ranging harms associated with drug use. We welcome the views of the Coroner and the opportunity it presents to reflect upon those areas identified as continued concerns, to prevent others from losing their lives under similar circumstances.

The matters of concern identified in the report, which relate to education, were that:

- people, including young people, do not understand the dangers and risks associated with ketamine use as it is a class B drug, considered less harmful than class A drugs.
- The health consequences of ketamine use are not well understood by many teachers and others not working in drug treatment and healthcare.

Schools have an important role in educating pupils about the dangers of harmful substances and relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) has been statutory in schools since September 2020. My department recently published updated RSHE statutory guidance which includes curriculum content on drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping.

Statutory health education sets out the content on drugs that should be taught. Pupils in primary school should know the facts about legal and illegal harmful substances and associated risks, including smoking, vaping, alcohol use and drug-taking.

By the end of secondary school, pupils should know the facts about which drugs are illegal and the risks of taking illegal drugs, including the increased risk of potent synthetic drugs being added to illegal drugs. They should understand the risks of illicit vapes containing drugs, illicit drugs and counterfeit medicines, and the potential health harms, including the link to poor mental health. They also learn about the law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances.

As well as learning about illegal drugs, the curriculum contains content on the dangers of misuse of prescribed and over-the-counter medicines and the risks of illegal activity online, the sale or purchasing of illicit drugs online.

The statutory guidance provides high-level content to guide schools' teaching, but schools have the freedom and flexibility to ensure the curriculum meets the needs of their pupils. This flexibility allows schools to respond to local public health and wider community issues, and tailor the content to meet pupils' needs so they can respond to issues as they arise, including the dangers of taking ketamine.

In addition to the specific content on drug education, the revised RSHE statutory guidance contains new content on personal safety. This includes how to develop key social and emotional skills that will increase pupils' safety. These include skills to support self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making, as well as skills to recognise and manage peer pressure.

The department worked with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) and the PSHE Association to make sure good quality teaching resources are available for teachers delivering drug, alcohol and tobacco education. The lesson plans target primary and secondary students, teaching them how to manage influences and pressure, and keep themselves healthy and safe. And separately, we know many local areas will develop their own resources, including teaching about the dangers of ketamine.

Furthermore, the Oak National Academy, the independent provider of freely available online curriculum and lesson resources, have RSHE resources on their website addressing addiction and are developing new resources to support schools with the delivery of the updated RSHE curriculum. These should be available from autumn 2025.

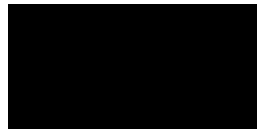
The drug-related content in RSHE supplements drug education as a statutory subject in the national curriculum for science. At Key Stage 2 pupils are taught to recognise the impact of diet, exercise, drugs and lifestyle on the way their bodies function. In the secondary science curriculum, drug education is covered in Key Stage 3 biology. The curriculum states pupils should be taught about the effects of recreational drugs (including substance misuse) on behaviour, health and life processes.

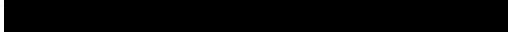
More broadly, the Government continues to work to educate young people on the harms and risks around drug taking via the FRANK website, referenced in the RSHE statutory guidance, which provides drug information and advice to young people, parents and practitioners. This site keeps content up to date with emerging evidence and trends, including on Ketamine. Ketamine | Effects of Ketamine | FRANK .

To help support the sector following the publication of the revised RSHE guidance, we are piloting a teacher training grant, starting early 2026. We want to build a workforce that is equipped and empowered to take on the challenges facing young people today.

Thank you for writing to me. I hope that this response is useful.

Kind regards,



  
**Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women & Equalities**