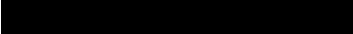




Department
of Health &
Social Care


Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Public Health and Prevention

39 Victoria Street London
SW1H 0EU


HM Coroner Brendan Joseph Allen
Area Coroner for Dorset
BCP Civic Centre
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

6th October 2025

Dear Mr Allen,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 19th August 2025 sent to the Secretary of State for the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) about the death of Gemma May Weeks. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Public Health and Prevention.

Firstly, I wish to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Gemma's death, and I offer my sincere condolences to her family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention.

I know that you sent your report to the Home Secretary and Department for Education (DfE) too. Home Office Ministers will be replying in relation to your concern about the classification of ketamine under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. My response will focus on concerns your report raised over the dangers and harms of ketamine use and that these dangers are little understood by both the firsttime users and younger age groups.

I want to assure you DHSC is taking seriously the risk that ketamine, its increased prevalence, and its associated harms has on our young people. We are working closely with partners across Government to respond to existing and new drug threats, including from ketamine, and to reduce and prevent the health harms they cause. We know that drug treatment is protective and the number of places in treatment for people who use drugs other than opiates is being increased by 30,000. We are committed to ensuring that anyone with a drug problem can access the help and support they need, and we recognise the need for evidence-based, high-quality treatment.

The Department is working to increase awareness of the risks and associated health harms of sustained ketamine use. We are planning a national campaign to raise awareness on new patterns of drug use and their associated risk, with particular focus on sustained ketamine use and the damage it can cause to the bladder. The campaign, planned to launch in coming months, will utilise mass and social media, including a short film and social media influencers discussing the topic. The campaign will also disseminate information for a variety of stakeholders who come into contact with people at risk, such as teachers and local public health teams. This campaign complements the Government's existing drug information and advice service called Talk to FRANK. This service aims to reduce drug misuse and its harms by increasing awareness, particularly for young people and parents. Talk to FRANK offers easy to read information on the risks of using ketamine, including bladder problems, and the risks of mixing it with other substances, as well as basic harm reduction advice.

In addition to this, the Department recently cascaded a briefing to local authorities and treatment systems which included data on ketamine use and guidance on prevention, harm reduction, and treatment interventions. The briefing also included advice on how to develop system-wide healthcare responses, focusing on pathways to and from mental health and urology services to respond to ketamine related bladder damage.

Furthermore, DHSC and Home Office ministers wrote to festival organisers this summer, asking them to work closely with police and health partners on their harm reduction and first aid measures, which included highlighting the dangers of ketamine. The Department also worked with the National Police Chiefs' Council on a joint letter and advice for the police and local authorities about festivals, drugs, and alcohol, to minimise the risk of harm to individuals at these events.

Alongside ensuring increased awareness of the harms of ketamine, local authorities are responsible for providing drug treatment services, including services to support ketamine users, based on the needs of their local populations. In addition to the Public Health Grant, in 2025/26 the Department is providing a total of £310 million in additional targeted grants to improve drug and alcohol services and wider recovery support, including housing and employment. Furthermore, for the first time, local authorities have been set targets to support people using drugs other than heroin and crack cocaine, and they are now helping more people than ever who are struggling with ketamine use.

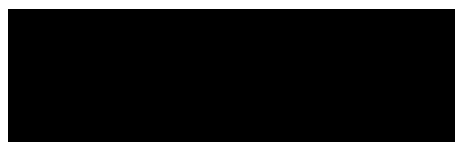
Amongst those children and young people under the age of 18 years old who are seeking drug treatment, the proportion who are citing ketamine use has increased from under 1% in 2015/16 to 9% in November 2024. As a result, and in response to increased prevalence, the treatment system is responding to the harms being caused by ketamine use.

Alongside the work DHSC is conducting, widespread action is already in progress through local and regional initiatives. Local authorities, Combating Drugs Partnerships, and treatment providers lead on prevention, harm reduction, and treatment interventions, which includes awareness raising. Many of the national treatment providers, as well as local areas, have developed bespoke awarenessraising resources and approaches in response to ketamine, and a number have held events for professionals working in the field.

Finally, further guidance on ketamine from drug treatment providers and others is also available. The British Association of Urological Surgeons has provided guidance in the form of consensus statements on the management of ketamine uropathy. This is available at: [British Association of Urological Surgeons Consensus statements on the management of ketamine uropathy](#).

I hope this response is helpful. Thank you for bringing these concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Minister.A black rectangular box redacting the name of the Minister.

**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND
PREVENTION**