



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Baroness Merron
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for
Women's Health and Mental Health*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

Our ref: PFD – 25-12-09 - LeClaire

Christopher Williams
Assistant Coroner
Southwark Coroners Court
1 Tennis Street
London
SE1 1YD

25 March 2026

Dear Mr Williams,

Thank you for the Regulation 28 report of 9 December 2025 sent to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about the death of Stella Elizabeth LeClaire. I am replying as the Minister with responsibility for Women's Health and Mental Health.

Firstly, I would like to say how saddened I was to read of the circumstances of Stella's death and I offer my sincere condolences to their family and loved ones. The circumstances your report describes are very concerning and I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention. Thank you for the additional time provided to the department to provide a response to the concerns raised in the report.

The report raises concerns over a number of issues which you believe may pose a risk of further deaths if not addressed. You note that coroners in several areas have increasingly needed to request specialist laboratory analysis to detect the presence of a particular substance in blood samples, reflecting wider patterns seen since 2021. You also highlight the continued online availability of this substance, including instances where websites advocate its use in suicides. In addition, you emphasise the importance of obtaining specialist toxicological testing in this case to help establish the cause of death and suggest that the Chief Coroner may wish to consider whether more consistent guidance on when such testing should be sought would be beneficial for future investigations.

The Department recognises the importance of understanding emerging methods of suicide and the need to coordinate activity across government to reduce the risks they pose. As part of this work, we monitor concerning trends through the Concerning Methods Working Group, which brings together representatives from across government, policing, academia, the NHS and the voluntary sector. This group supports the rapid sharing of intelligence, including patterns that may be reflected in requests made by coroners for toxicology analysis, with the aim of enabling swift cross-government action where needed. The Working Group also includes representation from the coroner community, ensuring that learning from Prevention of Future Deaths reports forms an important part of how emerging risks are identified and addressed.

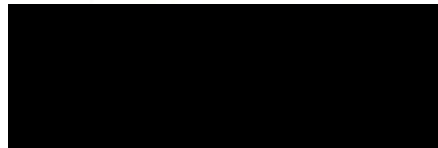
A significant part of the group's work has focused on limiting public access to the substance involved in this and other cases, and more than 30 targeted actions have been taken to reduce opportunities to obtain it for non-legitimate purposes. These include operational work with online suppliers, platforms and manufacturers to raise safeguarding concerns, restrict availability, and prevent its sale in particularly concerning ways, including on online forums. Government departments have also worked with online platforms to reduce opportunities for the substance to be purchased by individuals. We are also exploring opportunities to work with Border Force, using existing legal provisions, to improve detection of packages that may be linked to vulnerable individuals. The group monitors the effectiveness of these measures and continues to consider future opportunities for action as new intelligence emerges.

You also raise the question of whether more consistent guidance on obtaining specialist toxicology might support coroner investigations in these types of cases. As you will know, decisions on issuing guidance rest with the Chief Coroner. Your report has been shared with them, and the Department will continue to work closely with the Chief Coroner's Office, which is represented on the Concerning Methods Working Group, to ensure that learning from PFD reports, intelligence from coroners, and suggestions for further action are fully considered within existing responsibilities.

More broadly, as part of our mission to build an NHS fit for the future, the Government has committed to tackling suicide as one of this country's biggest killers. Ultimately, our aim is to provide help and support as early as possible so that people do not feel the need to turn to these types of substances to take their own life.

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

Yours sincerely,

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BARONESS MERRON