

Mr Andrew J Cox
Assistant Coroner for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly,
The New Lodge,
Newquay Road,
Penmount,
Truro,
TR4 9AA.

30th March 2017.

Your reference: AJC/LJB.

Dear Mr Cox,

Report into the death of Miss Anna Larissa Elisabeth Phillips.

I am writing in response to the request made under regulation 28 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 into the death of Miss Anna Phillips, dated the 8th February 2017, and the conclusion that her death was caused by an overdose of 2,4 dinitrophenol (DNP)

The regulation 28 request was originally sent to Ms Amber Rudd, Secretary of State for the Home Office. The Food Standards Agency is responsible for protecting consumer interests in relation to food and for ensuring that food is safe and what it says it is. The FSA's National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) gathers and develops intelligence around the illegal sale of DNP for human consumption to support and co-ordinate enforcement activity by partner agencies.

The NFCU continues to take steps to tackle the marketing and sale of 2,4 dinitrophenol. Owing to the dangers it poses to the public tackling the illegal sale of DNP is one of the unit's highest priorities and will continue to be so. Whilst we have had some success in this area and there are encouraging signs that this is beginning to have a deterrent effect on both suppliers and potential users of the chemical there is still work to be done and we will continue to direct resource at this issue.

Figures on cases of DNP toxicity in the UK are compiled by the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS). The NPIS is the UK Department of Health approved, and Public Health England commissioned, national service that provides expert advice on all aspects of acute and chronic



National Food Crime Unit, Food Standards Agency,
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poisoning. In 2016, fourteen cases of DNP poisoning were reported, resulting in one fatality. This is in comparison to 2015 during which there were thirty-five cases reported with six fatalities. The NPIS data shows a steady decline in TOXBASE¹ access and telephone enquiries to the NPIS since the second quarter of 2015. The decline in reported cases and enquiries of NPIS corresponds with the NFCU targeted operation against the sale of DNP for human consumption which is detailed below. The NFCU is aware of only one UK death from DNP toxicity in 2016. In the last few days I have been informed of a further death in February 2017 and inquiries continue into the circumstances of this fatality.

NFCU Activity

Communications Campaign #dnpkills

This campaign initially ran on Twitter and Facebook between 30th April 2015 and 5th May 2015 and reached over four million people.

Additional support was received from Radio 1 [REDACTED] and the band Primal Scream. The campaign was also supported by B-Eat, an eating disorder charity, which helped the message to reach those most at risk from DNP misuse. A short video was also produced and shared on social media.

The NFCU has continued to promote the #dnpkills message on social media, most recently with the launch of pictorial e-cards warning the public of the dangers of DNP. Press releases have also been issued along with information on the FSA website.

Operation Sycamore

Following a fatality in April 2015, the NFCU launched Operation Sycamore which specifically targeted the illegal sale and consumption of DNP. Having identified numerous overseas-based websites selling DNP for human consumption, the NFCU established an ongoing programme of submitting 'abuse complaints' to domain name registrars under international web usage agreements. As of 24th March 2017, 31 abuse complaints have been submitted by the NFCU with 21 domain names suspended so far as a direct result.

The NFCU proactively engaged with a major online marketplace which hosted multiple sellers of DNP, to highlight the presence of such listings. The website administrators now regularly remove listings which offer DNP for consumption.

A DNP briefing paper was produced by the NFCU to raise awareness of the issue, promote intelligence sharing and provide guidance on the legal framework for addressing issues with its sale for human consumption. This was well received by partners, prompting one local authority to raise awareness through local newspapers.

¹ The database by which health practitioners find information on toxins



The briefing has also been shared with other law enforcement partners. Subsequent liaison with potential stakeholders has opened channels of communication and intelligence sharing with organisations such as UK Anti-Doping, which will enhance the UK's response to any future DNP issues. NFCU Officers have also met with Royal Mail and Post Office Investigations to brief and provide a profile on DNP consignments, countries of origin and routing to assist in detection of imported consignments. This engagement has come to fruition recently in assisting in our inquiries into a DNP supplier who is being prosecuted. In the light of the death of Miss Phillips NFCU officers will contact the Royal Mail and Post Office again to ensure this issue remains current.

Examination of evidence seized during operations targeting DNP suppliers has revealed information on companies supplying DNP to the UK, and likely importation routes. This data was passed to the Border Force and as a direct result an Operational Instruction was issued to all Border Force Officers, briefing them on DNP and requiring details of any seizures to be reported to the NFCU. Border Force now works with the NFCU and police to ensure consignments of DNP suspected of being imported for marketing and sale for human consumption are stopped at the border and referred to the NFCU or police for enforcement action.

Operation Sycamore enabled the NFCU to identify three specific suppliers of DNP within the UK. Investigations are on-going with criminal justice disposal highly likely in the next few months.

Much of the market for DNP is via the internet which brings its own set of challenges, especially as most of the websites are neither hosted nor operated from within the UK. Nonetheless the NFCU is actively seeking out opportunities to make interventions including regular monitoring of the internet to identify those websites selling DNP.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Signed [REDACTED]
electronically

[REDACTED]
Head of Crime Operations.

National Food Crime Unit

Food Standards Agency



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