

Home Secretary tightens restrictions on GHB following horrific crimes

News story

GHB and related substances will be moved from Class C to Class B, meaning they will be harder to access and result in tougher penalties for possession.



The Home Secretary is tightening restrictions around the drug GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyric acid) and related substances by moving them from Class C to Class B, following recommendations by the independent Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

The Home Office will also bring forward legislation around two substances that can be converted to GHB on ingestion – gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and 1,4-butanediol (1,4-BD). This will mean that those wishing to possess them for legitimate industrial purposes will require a licence.

The stricter measures come after GHB and related substances were found to have been used in horrific crimes, such as those committed by Reynard Sinaga, who was found guilty of 136 counts of rape in trials lasting until December 2019, and serial killer Stephen Port, both of whom used the substance to incapacitate their victims.

The reclassification will mean tougher penalties for those found in unlawful possession of the drugs and ensure victims are better protected from their use by criminals.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

GHB and related substances have been used to commit some truly sickening crimes including murder, sexual assault and robbery.

I will do everything in my power to protect people from harm, which is why I am tightening restrictions around these dangerous substances.

These changes will make the drugs harder to access and introduce tougher penalties for possession.

The Home Secretary asked the ACMD to expedite a review of controls on these drugs in January 2020 after becoming concerned about their use by criminals.

The government will seek to bring forward the necessary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

The government keeps drug control under constant review and we work in consultation with the ACMD to consider any new evidence of misuse, harm and diversion.

We continue to work with law enforcement agencies in the UK and overseas to tackle drugs supply and bear down on the organised crime gangs profiting from illicit drugs supply into and around the UK.

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