

Three new benzodiazepines to become Class C drugs

News story

Crime and Policing Minister Kit Malthouse has today announced that 3 benzodiazepines will be made Class C drugs.



Flualprazolam, flunitrazolam and norfludiazepam will be controlled as Class C drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and placed in Schedule 1 to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, following a recommendation from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD).

Crime and Policing Minister Kit Malthouse said:

Illegal drugs ruin lives and corrode the foundations of our society.

It's clear from the expert advice that we have received that these drugs can cause serious harm, which is why we are taking this action.

Unlawful possession of Class C drugs is an offence which carries a maximum sentence of 2 years' imprisonment or a fine, or both. It is also an offence to unlawfully supply or produce Class C drugs, and these offences carry a maximum sentence of 14 years' imprisonment or a fine, or both.

Benzodiazepines are sedative and anti-anxiety drugs that are used clinically for the treatment of anxiety, insomnia, muscle spasms and epilepsy.

They can be misused in a number of ways, and are often taken with other illicit drugs to increase their effects, combat the effect of opioid withdrawal or to ease the after effects of stimulant use.

Especially when used in conjunction with other illegal substances or alcohol, benzodiazepines can cause serious physical and psychological harm. High doses

may cause loss of consciousness and breathing difficulties, especially if used in combination with alcohol or other sedatives. As of March 2020, there had been 12 flualprazolam-associated deaths in the UK.

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

Published 8 September 2020