

Sometimes we talk about things in Westminster from a theoretical high level basis which we think might be right but until something happens in your backyard or you meet someone affected the relevance of the chit chat becomes real.

This has happened on two occasions recently with the issue of legal highs. One was informative, the other tragic.

I have spoken in Parliament several times on the dangers of legal highs. Very early on in my time in the Commons I sat on a Committee that banned a particular legal high that had become incredibly popular but had caused some extremely dangerous adverse affects in those who had consumed it. More recently measures were proposed within a Bill to look at how Government deals with the thorny issue of legal highs and in response the Home Office started a review.

However two events have made me recognise that this is not just another debate on the use of drugs, this is about how we can protect our youngsters from taking something that they think is harmless because it is deemed 'legal'.

I met a young girl recently who had taken legal highs. It made her unwell and distracted. But beyond the health consequences what shocked me most was how easy it was for her to purchase them, despite being under age. She has stopped taking them now and is well on the road to recovery.

Then sadly the news broke this week that a young man, suspected of purchasing a legal high in a shop in Chatham, died of a heart attack. There is an ongoing investigation into the precise cause of his death but the ready availability of legal highs, despite their labelling of not fit for human consumption, is a worrying trend.

Government must publish its review into these highs soon and should look to America, which has banned the "analogue chemical formation" of these drugs for the solution. How many more parents must suffer because something deemed legal is actually rather deadly?