

PE1919/U: Ban the sale of high caffeine products to children for performance enhancement

Petitioner written submission, 12 March 2025

I would like to thank the Committee for taking this matter seriously, and for all of their hard work and commitment in trying to get answers from the relevant bodies. The publicity given to the Committee's deliberations on the dangers of caffeine gum and the risk of injury or harm from their use will be valuable and may result in caffeine gum being considered as contributory or causative factor in cases of sudden cardiac deaths of those engaged in athletics or sport.

It's disappointing that the Scottish Schools Athletics Association and the Youth Development League have not responded to the Committee.

The use of stimulants in schools athletics should alarm parents and teachers and, in my opinion, brings athletics into disrepute and goes against the ethos of fair and clean sport. It also raises questions around the legality of a person in a position of trust encouraging a child to take dangerous or harmful stimulants for performance enhancement.

I would challenge UK Athletics and Scottish Athletics on their principal of Strict Liability which holds "the athlete solely responsible for substances they ingest". It is the legal responsibility of the governing bodies and those in a position of trust to ensure that athletics is a safe and healthy environment for children, and to ensure that no-one harms a child by giving them stimulants. I understand there were changes to the law in 2022 closing the loophole to prevent sport leaders abusing their position of trust. Is it an abuse of a position of trust giving stimulants to children?

Finally, it's surprising Team Scotland claim they "are not aware of such products being promoted at sporting events where young people are present or competing". At the time caffeine gum was handed out in goody bags at UK licensed events, concerns were raised at the highest level, and an executive on the Board of Team Scotland was notified of these concerns.