

Press release: PHE publish investigative report on increasing crack use

Public Health England (PHE) and the Home Office have today, Monday 25 March 2019, published a summary of findings from the [Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry](#), an investigative report on crack cocaine use in 6 areas of England.

This publication follows evidence reported in the [2018 Serious Violence Strategy](#), that drugs have been an important driver of the increase in serious violence in England and Wales since 2014.

Key findings from the 'Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry' include:

- the majority of people using crack were observed to be existing heroin users, often with co-occurring mental health problems and at risk of being homeless
- the rise in crack use is likely to be caused by increased availability (linked to a surge in global production of cocaine), affordability and aggressive 'marketing' by dealers
- changes in attitudes and stigma associated with crack use, and a reduced focus by police on drug dealing
- clear evidence of 'county lines' operations – but this varied across different areas

The latest comprehensive [prevalence estimates by Liverpool University](#) – published today alongside this report – show that while there was a sharp rise in crack use between 2011 to 2012 and 2014 to 2015, it has now levelled, but remains much higher than previously.

However, figures for overall use of crack as well as heroin between 2014 and 2015 and 2016 and 2017 have increased by 4.4%.

Rosanna O'Connor, Director for Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Justice at PHE said:

This report will come as no surprise to those working on the frontline, who will have seen first-hand this surge in crack use in their communities.

Local areas, more than ever, need to continue to invest in effective drug services if we are to stop the creep of this highly addictive drug into the wider community and people's lives being torn apart.

Treatment is cost-effective with every £1 spent yielding a £2.50 saving on the social costs, including reducing crime. Services need to reach out to crack users and offer more attractive and tailored

support to meet their specific needs.

And more needs to be done to improve the links from the criminal justice system into treatment services, for example through greater availability of arrest referral schemes and improved monitoring of drug rehabilitation requirements.

Victoria Atkins, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability said:

The government is committed to tackling the illicit drugs trade, protecting the most vulnerable and helping those with drug dependency to recover.

The Home Secretary also recently appointed Professor Dame Carol Black to carry out a major review of drug misuse, including the workings of the illicit market.

The data and this inquiry indicate that the upward trend began to develop several years ago around 2013.

This investigation has identified several factors which may have influenced the rise in crack use, including:

- a surge in global production of cocaine since 2013
- increased availability and affordability of crack
- aggressive “marketing” of the drug by dealers

Organised crime groups are using sophisticated techniques to aggressively market crack in large cities, as well as towns and seaside locations. They are largely exploiting existing demand by targeting existing heroin users, but some participants suggested that dealers are also opening up new markets, with a different group of first time younger users.

There was clear evidence of ‘out of town’ dealers from criminal groups based in cities such as London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham infiltrating local markets. However, the impact of these county lines operations varied between areas.

Other reported factors contributing to the increase were changes in the stigma about crack, as well a reduced police focus on targeting drug dealing.

The findings support existing evidence, including [information from the National Crime Agency](#), about the expansion of ‘county lines’ activity in recent years. There was a widespread view among all interviewed that county lines groups were much more likely than local groups to engage in serious violence, and to exploit vulnerable young people and drug users.

The participants were largely unanimous that the increases are primarily among existing heroin users, but there have also been suggestions of a new ‘hidden’ group of crack users who are not using heroin and who have not

engaged with treatment services. Research is needed to explore the demographics of this group and what is leading or causing them to use crack.

Background

The 'Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry' is based on interviews conducted with 3 groups of people at the frontline of drug use – specialist drug workers, drug users and local police – and reports on their perceptions of recent developments in crack use.

The report focused on 6 areas which had seen the largest increases in people starting treatment for crack cocaine and as such the findings might not be representative of the broader national picture.

The [United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime](#) reported that global opium production increased by 65% in 2017.

[Press release: Late payment interest released for small design business following payment practices complaint against Jordans & Ryvita](#)

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner launched an official investigation into the payment practices of the Jordans & Ryvita Company.

[News story: DASA Download: Flexibility in innovation funding](#)

Gabriella Cox – Open Call Competition Lead

Gabriella joined the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) in December 2018. She has been looking at how DASA operates and will be implementing positive change to achieve operational effectiveness, meeting the needs of our stakeholders.

Innovating in innovation

I firmly believe that if you work in innovation, you need to deliver innovation.

At DASA, we need to be innovative in our own processes, remaining agile to our stakeholders' needs to ensure that we are harnessing the most innovative ideas. As the 'go-to' organisation in Government for innovation across Defence & Security, we also need to be one step ahead if we are to provide our government customers with the very best defence and security solutions.

In my first few months, I have been keen to get out and meet as many of our stakeholders as possible. I have been listening to the views of our government customers, our own regionally based Innovation Partners, our current suppliers and potential innovators, from micros to primes, and understanding from them what works well currently and what we need to improve.

What works well, I am told, is the pace at which we work, our understanding of the market place and our ability to take our innovators on a journey; establishing a path to development, seeking opportunities and introducing our innovators to wider potential customers. What perhaps is not working quite so well, are the inconsistencies in the funding levels and flexibility within the process to adapt proposals between sectors. I am also told that some ideas are not submitted due to the funding levels being too low and the anticipated funding success rate.

The 'Open' competition call was set up to encourage anyone with a good idea that has potential to solve defence and/or security challenges to apply for funding, so I hope that the following changes will bring clarity, consistency and new opportunities to stimulate further innovation.

Increasing funding limit

With immediate effect, in the Emerging Innovations category, there will be a new guidance band of between £50,000 and £100,000. In the Rapid Impact category, there will be a new guidance band of between £100,000 – £350,000. The crucial word here is 'guidance', we need to work to a limit, but that limit will not stop us from developing a great idea if the cost of funding goes over that number.

Deadlines – de-conflicting with holidays

Finally, we are implementing alternative deadlines for calls – which will no longer be based around the end of the holiday season or school holidays. This will be easier for suppliers to ensure they have the time to get quality proposals in before assessment deadlines and can get hold of our DASA innovation partners should they have any issues. However, it will not necessarily be as easy for our assessors who may similarly not have availability during the holidays. We are keen to make it easier for the innovator, even if it means we have to adapt the way we work internally.

Removing barriers to innovation

The pace of technology change is progressing at an alarming rate so if we don't move quickly, we can't keep up with current innovation, so we need to make it as easy as possible for innovators to apply for funding. We don't want our processes to put potential innovators off from applying through us.

And, I am not alone in my thinking; my colleagues are equally keen to remove barriers to innovation and exploitation as a key DASA objective for 2019.

I believe these changes will remove uncertainty and encourage more, new innovators to approach DASA. To be absolutely clear, if government needs the innovation, we will fund it.

About Gabriella

Gabriella leads on the Open Call Competition for DASA. Gabriella is also a trustee for charity Off The Record, leading their digital strategy. Gabriella was previously the Sector Lead for Digital for Enterprise Europe Network, sitting on the EEN worldwide sector group for ICT, the worldwide sub group for Immersive Technology and the Sector Group for Women Entrepreneurship. Gabriella has worked at an array of organisations; from the small, working as project manager at a bespoke software development company in Liverpool; to the large, working at the Department for International Trade as an adviser in Belgium.

[Press release: Guidance for businesses to register on new UK IT service for chemical regulation](#)

The UK government has today (25 March) published [further guidance](#) to businesses on the future of the UK's chemical regulation.

If the UK leaves the EU without a deal, UK businesses that manufacture or import chemicals will have to register under UK REACH.

The new guidance explains the specific steps a business must take to register a chemical online under UK REACH.

UK REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals) will replace EU REACH in the UK, and will require businesses to demonstrate how a chemical can be safely used with minimal risk to human health or the environment.

The chemicals sector is the UK's second biggest manufacturing industry, employing around 95,000 people in the UK and a further 175,000 in industries that rely on chemicals. A 'no deal' would mean that a range of businesses would be unable to import chemicals directly from the European Economic Area (EEA) opening account on UK REACH IT. Sectors that rely on chemicals include the motor manufacturing, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, construction and cleaning products industries.

Launching on EU Exit day, the new online system will allow:

- Businesses that have existing UK-held REACH registrations to validate their registrations ('grandfathering')
- Businesses that import chemicals from the EEA to submit downstream user import notifications
- Business to register new substance registrations or PPORD notifications (Product and Process Orientated Research and Development)

In order to minimise disruption to in the event of a no-deal Brexit, businesses that currently hold a REACH registration are encouraged to access their ECHA REACH-IT account and ensure that all the information relating to their business is downloaded. Information required to comply with UK REACH includes registration confirmation documents and ECHA decisions.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Delivering a negotiated deal with the EU remains the government's top priority, but it is the job of a responsible Government to ensure we are prepared for all scenarios, including no deal.

It is not just chemicals producers that could be affected by this change so I encourage all businesses that use chemicals to read the guidance on the HSE website and check the actions they need to take.

Under the new requirements, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal:

- UK businesses that manufacture a chemical (those currently registered to EU REACH) will need to validate their existing registration with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) within 120 days of the UK leaving the EU.
- UK businesses that import a chemical substance from the EU will need to notify HSE within 180 days of the UK leaving the EU.
- UK businesses that export chemicals to the EU will need to have an EU REACH registration in place once the UK leaves the EU.

In addition, more technical information will need to be submitted by businesses to HSE within two years of EU Exit. The requirements are part of the government's commitment to maintain environmental standards after we leave the EU.

Businesses that may be affected should read the [latest guidance](#) on

requirements for using chemicals after the UK leaves the EU.

Press release: Guidance for businesses to register on new UK IT service for chemical regulation

Advice for businesses that use chemicals as part of contingency planning