

Press release: MHRA cracking down on organised crime worth £200m

The Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is cracking down on the diversion of Prescription-Only Medicines (POM) onto the criminal market, after first becoming aware of [a significant diversion of benzodiazepines and other hypnotics/anxiolytics in 2016](#).

During 2017 MHRA expanded operations to 19 active investigations and have made more than 40 arrests. Our investigations have revealed an extensive network of criminality involving businesses such as wholesale dealers and a small number of registered pharmacies throughout the UK diverting medicines.

Between 2013 and 2016 an estimated £115-200m of medicines were diverted from the legitimate supply chain onto the criminal market, putting thousands of vulnerable people at risk.

The independent review into dependence and addiction to prescription drugs, recently announced by the Department of Health and Social Care, highlights the scale of the problem. The review will be looking into the results of a recent Home Office survey which found 7.6% of adults had taken a prescription-only painkiller not prescribed to them.

Arrests have been made for offences such as possession with intent to supply a controlled drug, and offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

The focus of our investigation is Prescription-Only Medicines such as benzodiazepines and anxiolytics including Diazepam and Zopiclone as well as the painkiller Tramadol.

These medicines are being sold through websites acting illegally, and people should be careful when buying medicines online. Criminals are known to exploit vulnerable people by selling medicines through unregulated websites and stealing their credit card details.

Self-diagnosis and self-medication can be dangerous. All of the Prescription-Only medicines currently being investigated have the potential to result in addiction. However, when these are appropriately prescribed there are measures in place to reduce this risk including restrictions on the dose or duration of treatment.

There is no indication this criminality has led to medicines shortages or issues with the legitimate supply of medicines to the public and medicines supplied with a prescription, through registered pharmacies, are unaffected.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement, said:

Selling medicines outside of the regulated supply chain is a serious criminal offence and we are working relentlessly with

regulatory and law enforcement colleagues to identify and prosecute all those involved in this activity.

The medicines being sold are potent and should only be taken under medical supervision. Criminals involved are exploiting people when they are at their most vulnerable; their only objective is to make money.

We will continue to concentrate our efforts on identifying the criminals involved and ensure they are prosecuted through the courts.

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

I welcome this investigation by the MHRA, which shows there is no hiding place for criminals who try to sell prescription drugs illegally.

Drug misuse can cause untold harm and devastate lives and this Government will take whatever action is necessary to keep our families and communities safe.

Our Drug Strategy sets out a balanced approach which brings together police, health, community and global partners to tackle the illicit drug trade, protect the most vulnerable and help those with a drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around.

Duncan Rudkin, Chief Executive of General Pharmaceutical Council:

We are working closely with the MHRA on the ongoing investigations into these very serious criminal offences. We have already taken action to suspend five pharmacists under interim orders and are actively reviewing at each stage of the investigations whether we need to take further action to protect the public.

We would also strongly urge people not to take any prescription medicines unless they have a valid prescription, as they could be putting their health at serious risk.

People wishing to report criminal activity relating to the diversion of these medicines should report this to us to our case referrals email address: CaseReferrals@mhra.gov.uk. You may also provide information anonymously through [Crimestoppers](#)

Press release: UK Anti-Doping receives £6 million funding boost

- Investment of £6.1 million will help educate athletes, share intelligence and conduct testing in the fight against drug cheats to keep sport clean
- Sports Minister Tracey Crouch also publishes second annual update on [government's sport strategy](#) that shows progress on governance,

[UK Anti-Doping](#) is to receive an additional £6 million of funding from the government to further strengthen its armoury in the fight against doping, Sports Minister Tracey Crouch announced today.

The move comes after the [first full-scale review](#) of the organisation since it was set up in 2009 that has resulted in a number of recommendations to help make further progress in anti-doping.

These include:

- UKAD to consider submitting a framework to government and sports to allow doping control officers to have unfettered access to conduct random testing at competitions
- UKAD to encourage greater collaboration from law enforcement agencies and to ensure whistleblowers have confidence to come forward
- Sports in receipt of public funding to report annually on their anti-doping education programmes to UKAD and publish this information on their websites
- Health harms associated with the abuses of Image and Performance Enhancing Drugs (IPEDs) should be integrated into drug information and education supported by Public Health England, Public Health Wales, Health Scotland, Public Health (Northern Ireland) and the Home Office Drugs Strategy
- Government should revise the National Anti-Doping Policy by September 2018 in consultation with UKAD and the Home Country Sport Councils
- UKAD to ensure that all publicly funded athletes and support personnel participate in annual anti-doping education programmes
- UKAD to establish an Innovations Committee later this year to signpost new trends in doping
- A new international strategy to be drawn up by UKAD to help drive a global approach to innovation in anti-doping

The move means that over the next two years UKAD's budget will be increased by around 50 per cent to help it implement the recommendations in the

tailored review.

Sports Minister Tracey Crouch said:

We must do all we can to make sure sport is free from doping and that players and fans are confident that there is a level playing field. This £6 million additional funding for UKAD will help us take the fight even harder to those trying to cheat through doping. It will also help educate people at all levels of sport about the dangers of image and performance enhancing drugs and maintain UKAD's standing as one of the leading anti-doping agencies in the world.

UKAD will now work with the DCMS on the specifics of what the additional £6.1 million will be spent on.

UK Anti-Doping Chair Trevor Pearce said:

We are delighted at the news from DCMS today, to significantly increase the funding available to UKAD for the next two years. This clear commitment to clean sport from government will allow us to increase the effectiveness of our current investigation, testing and education programmes, and also importantly to expand our investment into new approaches in the fight against doping. We look forward to working with DCMS on the implementation of recommendations for UKAD and we share their ambition for the UK to lead the world in Anti-Doping.

Today Tracey Crouch has also published the second annual report to Parliament on the government's sport strategy 'Sporting Future.' Progress made on the implementation of the strategy over includes:

- Code for Sports governance being adhered to by national governing bodies to ensure greater transparency, accountability and diversity across the sector
- Continued investment in the sector in line with the change in approach to encouraging participation in sport and physical activity that Sporting Future signalled. Sport England has invested over £530 million of exchequer and lottery money in over 2,500 projects over the past 20 months and is working with a broader range of organisations to get people active.
- Sports Business Council set up, co-chaired by Tracey Crouch and Premier League executive chairman Richard Scudamore

- Review of criminalisation of doping completed with recommendations made to strengthen approach to anti-doping
- Held roundtables on the issue of mental health in physical activity and sport with work ongoing to make progress in this area
- Duty of Care report published by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson to help the sector focus on what more can be done to ensure safeguarding of participants at every level
- Successfully hosted major global sporting events including the 2017 World Athletics Championships
- Won the right to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham

Tracey Crouch added:

We are making good progress on a number of fronts. We are ensuring our governing bodies have world leading standards of governance as well as targeting funding to encourage new participants in sport and physical activity. There is still more work to do. This year I will particularly focus on mental health in sport and encouraging the sector to continue to step up on safeguarding all participants – from the grassroots to the elite.

Notes to Editors: For more information please contact DCMS Press Office – 020 7211 2210

[News story: London VAPC respond to consultation on homelessness code of guidance](#)

The outcome of a closed government [consultation](#) on a proposed homelessness code of guidance for local authorities, is keenly awaited by London Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VAPC).

The VAPC, had previously commissioned an independent review from the [University of Kent](#), on how London's councils implement housing policy affecting veterans, contributed to the consultation.

It welcomed that guidance on dealing with veterans now forms a separate section within the proposed code.

But London VAPC chairman Lynn Verity suggested there were several areas where further clarification was vital:

Chief among these are that the code as currently written does not define either 'veteran' or 'vulnerable'. We have pointed this out and, therefore, hope our concerns are acted upon.

News story: KITE and VAPC NE run an Armed Forces Community Hub workshop

Prof Rob Wilson (r.) explaining the veteran landscape, VAPC/KITE Armed Forces Community Hub Workshop, KITE, Newcastle University, 09/01/2018. Photograph by Michael Potts. All rights reserved.

The Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee Northern England (VAPC NE) and Newcastle University's Centre for [Knowledge, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise](#) (KITE) conducted a workshop with 2 objectives. These were to:

- focus on deepening the appreciation of sharing information within the armed forces community
- explore the need for developing information sharing infrastructure

to empower individual members of the regular and reserve armed forces, their families, and the veteran community

To help better understand the issues from the navy perspective, the VAPC NE lead, Mr. Michael Potts, and Profs [Rob Wilson](#) and [Mike Martin](#), , engaged with a Royal Navy Officer who had experience of both regular and reservists in the north-east England and experience working with veterans groups from a naval perspective.

This workshop was part of the on going process conducted by KITE and the VAPC NE to develop new tools and infrastructure to empower the armed forces community and provide the tools to local and national government, service providers and third sector partners. These tools will place the control back to the individual community member, veterans, their families, and serving members of the community, to provide the tools to improve support delivery, reduce costs, and to help those in most need.

The Hub project has been on going for 5 years. These rounds of workshops are an important way to develop the project to help maximise the toolset,

infrastructure, and talent needed in a complex mixed economy, which veterans and the wider community are facing.

It is an important part to ensuring that veterans are very much in control and are not seen as a passive problem but as part of a solution.

The coming rounds of workshops are continuing and form an integral part of the KITE/VAPC NE Armed Forces Community Hub development process.

Press release: High quality evidence helps government deliver better public services

The government-funded network, which is made up of 10 independent What Works Centres, was created to improve the use and generation of robust evidence in policy areas such as health, education and policing.

The progress report, released today to mark the network's fifth anniversary, highlights how public funds and resources have been allocated more effectively, thanks to evidence provided by independent researchers in the government-backed What Works Centres.

For example, research from the Early Intervention Foundation showed the impact of parent conflict on children's long-term outcomes. This research informed the decision of the Department for Work and Pensions to invest £30 million in interventions designed to resolve parent conflict in families with the most disadvantaged children.

By translating complex evidence into practical and useable tools, the What Works Centres help public sector decision-makers deliver the best possible outcomes for the public.

David Lidington, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Elizabeth Truss, Chief Secretary to the Treasury said:

This government is committed to delivering public services that work for the ordinary citizen. Services delivered by schools, hospitals, GP practices, residential care homes, and police forces have all been enhanced by the findings of the What Works network.

The UK is now seen as a world-leader in the application of evidence in policy and practice and that is largely due to the increasing profile of the What Works Centres.

Dr David Halpern, What Works National Adviser said:

At the request of the Cabinet Secretary and Prime Minister, it has been a great honour to champion this agenda these last five years. Answering the question 'What works?' is hard work, but often a game changer. We've been asking this question in medicine for 50 years, and it's saved countless lives. Now we're asking it in schools, policing and economic growth policies, and its impact is proving equally large.

Megan Dixon, Director of Literacy, Aspire Educational Trust said:

The research that the EEF [Education Endowment Foundation] does helps us make really effective decisions about what to focus on in schools. It is great to have independent, robust research to consider when you are thinking about adopting a new approach.

Sir Jeremy Heywood, Head of the Civil Service said:

What Works' is a quietly radical agenda that is materially increasing the supply of evidence available to decision-makers. I am delighted to see that the public sector is embracing it.