

[News story: New measures to avoid valproate exposure in pregnancy](#)

Dr June Raine, Director of MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines Division said:

We welcome the [CMDH endorsement](#) of the strengthened regulatory position on valproate medicines which we have been championing through the Europe-wide review.

Valproate (Epilim, Depakote and other generic brands) is associated with a significant risk of birth defects and developmental disorders in children born to women who take valproate during pregnancy. If valproate is taken during pregnancy, up to 4 in 10 babies are at risk of developmental disorders, and approximately 1 in 10 are at risk of birth defects.

Valproate must no longer be used in any woman or girl able to have children unless she has a pregnancy prevention programme in place. This is designed to make sure patients are fully aware of the risks and the need to avoid becoming pregnant.

These new regulatory measures also include a ban on the use of valproate for migraine or bipolar disorder during pregnancy, and a ban on the use of valproate to treat epilepsy during pregnancy unless there is no other effective treatment available.

Patient safety is our highest priority. We are committed to making sure women and girls are aware of the very real risks of taking valproate during pregnancy. However, we also know it is important women don't stop taking valproate without first discussing it with their doctor.

This regulatory position has been developed through close collaboration with professional bodies, health system organisations, and patient and campaign groups.

I would like to particularly thank the families of the Valproate Stakeholder Network who have shared their experiences and expertise with us. Their support will help keep future generations of children safe.

[Press release: Graham Stuart leads](#)

major infrastructure investment drive at Berlin conference

The Infrastructure Investor Global Summit in Berlin will include 1,400 delegates from more than 140 of the world's biggest global institutions and private investment firms, who collectively manage more than £500 billion in capital.

During his speech, Minister Stuart will explain why the UK is the top investment destination in Europe, thanks to its open, liberal economy, flexible labour market, and business-friendly regulation.

Inward FDI stock now stands at a record £1,199 billion, and is estimated to have created or safeguarded 107,000 jobs in 2016/17.

The UK also has an excellent record of infrastructure delivery, with over 4,500 projects completed since 2010 and 98% of 158 priority projects either on track for delivery or completed.

A further 720 infrastructure projects – with a value over £500 billion – are due to start before 2020/21, and Minister Stuart will hold roundtables with leading figures in the German financial community to show how the UK will continue to offer huge investment potential in years to come.

Minister for Investment Graham Stuart said:

Since DIT's foundation in July 2016, the British government now has a department of state solely focused on trade and investment and our network is dedicated to supporting businesses across the globe.

The UK is Europe's top destination for foreign investment, and as an international economic department, we are determined that investment in infrastructure is a major part of the [Industrial Strategy](#).

With more than £500 billion of infrastructure investment opportunities up to 2020/21, and an exemplary record of project completion, I will be telling the world's most influential investors why the UK should be their first choice for investment.

One recent investment – of £1.4 billion as part of a consortium including Meridiam and Allianz Capital Partners – will help NeuConnect build the first direct power link between Germany and the UK.

The project will create new export and import routes for electricity for each market, benefitting UK and German consumers with reduced wholesale and consumer electricity prices.

Chief Executive Officer of NeuConnect Britain, David Inglis, said:

The first direct connection between the UK and German power grids offers great economic benefits for both countries and furthers the integration of renewables by enabling both countries to balance their future energy needs from a new market.

The long-term investors are very committed to jointly work with the national governments and regulators of both countries to successfully deliver this innovative and independent energy infrastructure project to German and British consumers.

[News story: PHE publishes consultation on Nutrient Profiling Model](#)

Public Health England (PHE) has today (23 March 2018) published a [consultation on an updated Nutrient Profiling Model \(NPM\)](#), the model that differentiates which food and drink products can be advertised during programming where children make up more than a quarter of the audience.

The NPM is a tool used by the Office of Communications (Ofcom) and Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) to give food and drink products a score. This score determines whether products can be advertised during children's television programming and non-broadcast media including print, cinema, online, and in social media. The score is based on the balance between 'negative' and 'beneficial' nutrients that make up a product. The more beneficial nutrients, such as fruit and vegetables, protein and fibre, and the fewer negative nutrients, such as sugars, saturated fat and salt, the more likely a product will be given approval to be advertised during children's programming.

As part of the government's childhood obesity plan, PHE was tasked with updating the current model to bring it in line with current UK dietary recommendations, especially around sugar and fibre.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at PHE said:

It is important the Nutrient Profiling Model reflects the most up to date dietary recommendations in order to help support healthier food choices. We welcome comments on the modifications to the model.

Given current UK dietary recommendations advise the population to consume

less sugar and more fibre, we can expect some products which currently pass the model to fail the revised version.

In this consultation, PHE is asking for views on the technical basis of bringing the draft revised version in line with current UK dietary recommendations. It does not cover the application of the NPM or further restrictions to advertising during children's programming.

The consultation opens today and closes on 15 June 2018.

Speech: Amanda Spielman speech to Annual Apprenticeships Conference

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you today.

Introduction

This is a very important conference, at a critical time for the development of apprenticeship provision. It is gratifying to see apprenticeships on the news agenda regularly: whether as mentions in Prime Minister's speeches or the subject of thoughtful newspaper columns from journalists you wouldn't normally expect to care. Apprenticeships are, quite rightly, recognised as a vital component of our education and skills sector. Less gratifying, perhaps, is that too much of this recognition is about the system, not yet, working as it should.

That's why I am so pleased to be here today. I see it as essential that providers, policy makers and employers can have open and frank discussions about what works and what needs to be improved.

It is almost a year now since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy—one of the most significant changes to apprenticeship funding that we have ever seen. Alongside the slow but inexorable move from apprenticeship frameworks to apprenticeship standards, providers and employers are working to secure the training and support that businesses need to develop a well-trained and productive workforce.

And at Ofsted, we carry on supporting the reform programme. Indeed we're putting our money where our mouth is, with our own award-winning band of 29 business administration apprentices.

Challenges

We know that it has been a challenging year for providers. The levy has required a different relationship with employers. There have been challenges

in applying for, and receiving, non-levy allocations. There have also been problems getting on the Register of apprenticeship training providers. And, in too many instances, in finding a replacement standard for a framework—particularly at levels two and three.

I suspect that the fall in apprenticeship starts is due to a combination of these factors. Nevertheless, any barriers that prevent employers taking on an apprentice, or standing in the way of good providers delivering high quality training, must concern us all.

The first quarter of 2017 to 2018 saw almost 50,000 fewer starts than the same quarter in 2016 to 2017. There is no denying, that the low number of starts continues to be a concern, which is why I was heartened to see Anne Milton's recent confidence that numbers will pick up in the new academic year. We all have to hope that this is true.

It is not just about overall volumes though. We are also experiencing some unintended consequences from the emerging trend towards higher-level apprenticeships. Of course, I understand, indeed applaud, more apprenticeships at higher levels, especially when there is clear progression in an occupation, from level 2 through to degree level. However, around 40% of the standards approved or in-development are at higher and degree levels, while only 7% of apprentices work at these levels.

This shift may be good for the economy in the long run, but the reduced number of apprenticeships at levels two and three is another destabilising factor in the system. To put it more brutally, there is a risk that young people, fresh from school, get squeezed out of apprenticeship routes because employers prioritise higher level programmes. This makes it more difficult for young people looking for entry-level employment straight from GCSEs.

In this context, I am pleased to see that the Institute for Apprenticeships is upping the rate at which it develops and approves apprenticeship standards. Up till now, this process really has been too slow. I am also pleased that there is now more flexibility to include qualifications within apprenticeship standards. I see these positive developments as a sign that the institute is listening to the concerns expressed by employers and training providers. However, I would still like to see a greater focus on achieving a set of standards that really reflect the balance of training and development needs of the economy.

Ofsted's role

With all the change, and uncertainty in the system, I am sure you want reassurance about Ofsted's agility and ability to adapt inspection to fit the new reality.

We know the challenges you face. We are working hard with you to make sure that inspection takes account of the changing landscape. But, let me be absolutely clear, we will not be excusing poor performance. Regardless of the changes that we are all dealing with: apprentices deserve high quality training at, and away from, work.

Pilot inspection findings

We have already carried out a number of pilot inspections to make sure that we are looking at the right things in this new environment. And we found a need for inspectors to focus on the bottom line, not the money, but what knowledge, skills and behaviours apprentices actually develop and acquire.

Now I hope many of you will know that one of my big interests as Chief Inspector is looking at the substance of education. By this, I mean the entirety of what is actually learnt, whether at school, college or on an apprenticeship.

As I said at the launch of my first [Annual Report](#), our early research has shown that, all too often, the knowledge that we want young people to acquire is lost in the dash for grades and stickers.

These pilot inspections of apprenticeship providers have revealed that many of the concerns we have uncovered at a school level are also evident in apprenticeships.

We are seeing an over-emphasis on simply ticking the box to show that the next part of the qualification has been achieved. There is not enough focus on the actual skills, knowledge and behaviours learned.

Indeed, most providers in our pilots found it difficult to demonstrate what actual progress their apprentices were really making. As providers, you need to consider how you make sure that apprentices are making progress. This isn't for inspectors, not for Ofsted, but for apprentices' and employers' benefit. It is also to inform the training and development programme that apprentices need to be following to pass end-point assessments.

The findings from our pilot inspections are informing changes to the inspection handbook. We will carry on iterating and adapting these as the systems develop.

Inspections of apprenticeships

More broadly, we are now developing our new education inspection framework for September 2019. How we inspect and report on apprenticeships are important considerations in our thinking and planning for this new framework. What we learn on inspections now, and what we learn from our work with organisations like AELP, the British Chambers of Commerce and the CBI, will inform our development. And of course, we will consult on our proposals.

But the changes in the system aren't just about new frameworks and new ways of inspecting. I know that many of you have concerns about the number of untested providers entering the market and the effect this could have on quality. Well, rest assured, we are not standing idly by and waiting for new providers to fail. We are doing all that we can to make sure that no apprentice's future opportunity is ruined by poor provision. It is essential that poor quality provision is spotted and tackled quickly, so that it doesn't damage an individual's prospects or the overall apprenticeship brand.

We have already begun a series of early monitoring visits to assess the quality of these new providers. Some of you will have heard about our first monitoring visits, which hit the headlines, at least in the trade press, last week. There is no hiding the fact that what we found at Key6 Group was worrying. And I'm very pleased that there has been a prompt reaction by ESFA [Education and Skills Funding Agency].

But, it is important that we don't over-interpret this one result as a judgement on all new providers coming on stream with the levy. We are doing more monitoring visits of this type. And I very much hope that positive results will significantly outnumber the disappointments.

Besides these monitoring visits to new providers, we have increased our inspection focus on subcontractors, many of whom are providing apprenticeship training. We are doing this in two ways. Firstly, as part of our standard inspections, where providers have a significant proportion of subcontracted provision, we are increasing our focus on this part. This will mean that teams can evaluate and report, in more detail, on the quality of education and training in individual subcontractors.

In addition, we are making monitoring visits to a number of directly-funded providers to look specifically at subcontracted provision. This way, we can make sure that apprentices are getting the best possible training. We expect the first of these to be published in the next couple of weeks.

Our message here is simple. As the direct contract holder, you are responsible for your learners. If you subcontract, for whatever reason, you are still responsible for making sure your apprentice gets high quality training. If you are sitting back and collecting the money, without taking proper responsibility for quality, you are failing your apprentices. We are determined to expose this in the system.

And, just in case, any of you were being kind enough to worry about us, and whether Ofsted has the resources to deliver this increased volume of inspection, please don't worry: we are being equally robust in our approach to government for funding. Indeed the DfE has already acknowledged that it needs to fund us properly for this work.

Standards

With the experience of Learndirect still prominent in all of our minds, I have no doubt that you are all acutely aware of the risks when large sums of money flow into a system.

It is sobering, in that respect, to look at recent inspection outcomes. Between September 2017 and February 2018, we made a judgement on the apprenticeship provision at 55 providers. We found three-fifths of them to be good or outstanding, with 16 requiring improvement. Six were inadequate. This means that 4 in 10 providers did not offer high quality training for apprentices. There is no way of dressing this up – it is not good enough.

But looking at it another way, the good and outstanding providers were

generally the larger ones, so 33,000 apprentices were in good or outstanding provision – almost 80% of the overall places. And this is a lot higher than the provision looked at in the previous year. Then, only 60% of apprentices were being trained in providers of the same quality, we have excluded Learndirect from those figures. To be clear, it is not a perfect year-on-year comparison because inspection priorities and scheduling decisions affect which providers are selected for inspection. However, I do believe the figures are cause for optimism about quality in the sector.

So, while we rightly shine a light on concerns in the system, and I do have to talk about where things are going wrong. I also believe it is important to celebrate where things are going well. We see outstanding apprenticeship providers like National Grid and Craven College and Fareham College. There we see leaders and managers who work very closely with local employers to make sure that apprenticeships meet the needs of the local economy. They expect the best of their apprentices who show exemplary skills, getting the qualifications and competencies they need.

And whether it's TTE Training with 160 engineering apprentices on various pathways, Busy Bees Nurseries and its range of early years apprenticeships or CITB supporting 10,000 apprentices in the construction industry—these very different types of outstanding provider are similar in one thing: the determination to give their apprentices top-notch training and to set them on a path to a successful and fulfilling career.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, we cannot escape the fact that this is a testing time for apprenticeships, a period of significant change that has inevitably brought a level of uncertainty alongside great opportunity.

There is still a way to go before we can confidently declare the new approach a success, but it is possible to see it beginning to take shape.

My inspectors are seeing some excellent provision around the country, but not enough of it and we need to see more. The sector is adapting confidently to change, but we need to make sure that the pace doesn't slacken.

Ofsted's overarching goal, as set out in our corporate strategy, is to be a force for improvement in all the sectors we inspect and regulate. This is as relevant for apprenticeship provision as it is for schools or child protection. Through our work, we will provide the evidence of what is working and the early warning of where things are going wrong. For a system in the midst of change, this could not be more vital.

After all, success of this ambitious apprenticeship programme is essential, not only to the needs of our wider economy, but for the young people and adult learners so desperate for the right opportunity to prosper.

I know all of you in this room are working hard to ensure this success. I am delighted to be joining all the winners of the inaugural AAC apprenticeship awards at tonight's ceremony in recognition of that commitment.

Thank you.

Press release: Statement on the sentencing of Ahd Tamimi

The conviction and sentencing of Ahd Tamimi is emblematic of how the unresolved conflict is blighting the lives of a new generation, who should be growing up together in peace, but continue to be divided.

The treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention remains a human rights priority for the UK. We will continue to call upon Israel to improve its practices in line with international law and obligations.

We have offered to help the Israeli authorities through expert-to-expert talks with UK officials. The offer still stands and we hope Israel will take us up on it. While we recognise that Israel has made some improvements, it needs to do much more to safeguard vulnerable people in its care.