

[Press release: Grading under review for First Priority Housing Association Limited](#)

The Regulator of Social Housing reports that First Priority Housing Association Limited's grading is currently under review.

The regulator notifies that First Priority Housing Association Limited has fewer than 1,000 homes and therefore does not have a current published regulatory judgement in accordance with our established procedures. The outcome of the investigation will be confirmed in a regulatory notice, once completed.

The regulator is currently investigating a matter which may impact on First Priority's compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard.

The [GUR list](#) is available on the website.

1. The [regulatory framework](#) can also be found on the website.
2. The regulation of social housing is the responsibility of the Regulation Committee, a statutory committee of the Homes and Communities Agency. The organisation refers to itself as the Regulator of Social Housing in undertaking the functions of the Regulation Committee. Homes England is the trading name of the HCA's non-regulation functions.
3. The regulator's purpose is to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.

For more information visit the [RSH website](#).

Our [media enquiries page](#) has contact details for journalists.

For general queries to RSH, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Speech: UK closing statement, OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Madam Director

As you bring HDIM 2017 to a close we have much to reflect upon.

I fully subscribe to the statement delivered on behalf of the EU and its member states, and I will not repeat all the thanks already expressed except to applaud the hard work of your team preparing and delivering this conference.

I would like to add a couple of brief thoughts, as much as in my capacity as Chair of the OSCE Human Dimension Committee as in my national capacity.

First I want to highlight the connection between HDIM, which brings together a wide range of civil society and governmental representatives, and the meetings of the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna where diplomats meet roughly monthly for in depth topical discussions related to our OSCE Human Dimension Commitments.

Over the past nine months the Human Dimension Committee in Vienna has discussed specific aspects of issues also considered here at HDIM: tolerance, hate crime; political participation; freedom of peaceful assembly to name just a few.

Secondly I want to highlight the importance of engagement with civil society. In democratic societies civil society organisations play an essential role in helping keep governments accountable. Strong, independent civil society organisations also make a significant direct contribution to the lives of individuals and to the health and stability of society. As we have seen so often this week the key to tackling some of our most difficult challenges lies in trust and co-operation between authorities and genuine civil society. I am grateful to the invited civil society experts who have significantly enriched each of our discussions this year in the Human Dimension Committee.

I pay tribute too to civil society representatives, be they activists, lawyers, journalists or simply private individuals who have travelled to Warsaw this year to fight discrimination and injustice, and to defend people and principles.

Madame Director,

As long as there is injustice, or unfairness in our region, as long as a changing world presents us with new or shifting challenges there will be a need for the conversations between states and civil society that HDIM provides a forum for.

Finally, Madame Director, you and other moderators have reminded us more than once of the need for respectful interventions. It has been deeply troubling

to hear speakers using HDIM as a platform for views and language incompatible with the principles and commitments of this organisation and to attack the legitimate rights of others. Upholding freedom of expression whilst not allowing prejudice and incitement of hatred is a challenge we need to face together.

Madam Director,

The best discussion I heard in the past fortnight involved speakers with very different perspectives discussing sensitive issues with a critical but respectful audience. That for me is what HDIM should be about.

I look forward to working with you over the coming months in support of the valuable work of ODIHR and as you plan ahead for next year's HDIM and other activity in the coming year.

Thank you.

[Press release: Call for evidence to help improve air quality launched](#)

Householders and businesses are being asked for their views on proposals to cut harmful emissions caused by the burning of dirtier fuels.

A [call for evidence](#) on the use of house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuels and wet wood used for heating homes has today been launched to help the government reduce harmful emissions of soot and smoke, as action continues to improve air quality.

The government is considering a range of options to tackle these emissions, these include:

- Encouraging consumers to switch from house coal by only allowing the sale of low sulphur smokeless alternatives
- switching from wet wood to dry wood
- the introduction of sulphur limits for all smokeless solid fuels
- and new powers for local authorities to take action for persistent smoke offences where local amenity is harmed
- The government is not considering banning domestic burning, and is not seeking to prevent the use or installation of wood-burning stoves

The call for evidence will inform our understanding of what impact these measures could have if introduced.

While we are keen to encourage consumers to switch to cleaner wood burning, which will directly benefit them in their homes and improve the local

environment, the government is not considering banning domestic burning. Many households have installed wood-burning stoves, and we are not seeking to prevent their use or installation.

While air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades, with reductions in emissions of all of the key pollutants, domestic burning of house coal (the typical black fuel), smokeless solid fuels (smokeless coal, for example, or manufactured solid fuels which are made from coal and other ingredients) and wood are the single largest contributors of harmful particulate matter (PM) emissions, accounting for around 40% of total UK PM2.5 emissions in 2015. In fact, a wood burning stove can emit more PM than a diesel HGV or passenger car.

The tiny particles in smoke can enter the bloodstream and have been found in internal organs risking long term health issues as well as having more immediate impacts in some people such as breathing problems or asthma attacks.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We all have a role to play in improving the air we breathe. Many of us enjoy a cosy fire in our homes, but burning dirtier fuel has a real impact on the quality of air for our family and friends around us.

We must be mindful that pollution is about more than just transport. Poor air quality affects public health, the economy, and the environment, which is why we are determined to do more. However, if we make the switch to burning cleaner domestic fuel, we can continue to enjoy burning wood and smokeless coal in stoves and fires in our homes.

Many consumers are unaware of the impact on their health or the environment from burning solid fuels, or indeed which are the cleanest fuels to buy. That is why the government is already working with industry to raise consumer awareness of the benefits of cleaner fuels, such as 'Ready to Burn' wood, where a logo clearly identifies wood that is certified as clean and ready to burn.

Consumers can already take action by buying the most efficient stove, using high quality fuel and regularly servicing their appliance.

Last year the government confirmed it would end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars by 2040 as part of a £3.5 billion plan to tackle nitrogen dioxide emissions. The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations produced by Defra and the Department for Transport, outlined how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

The call for evidence will feed into the government's Clean Air Strategy, which will be published for consultation in 2018. This will further address

wider sources of air pollution.

[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