

[Shoppers feeling Brexit squeeze as supermarket prices rise 2.3%](#)

The average UK household has lost £21.31 in the past three months as supermarket prices rise due to Brexit inflation, research by Kantar Worldpanel has found.

[Use of chemical weapons by anyone cannot be tolerated – Thornberry](#)

Emily

Thornberry MP, Labour's Shadow Foreign Minister, commenting on the suspected chemical attack in Syria, said:

"This was a shocking and barbaric attack, and our thoughts are with all the victims and their loved ones.

"The use of chemical weapons by anyone cannot be tolerated, as the Syrian government itself accepted when it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, and there must be no impunity for those found responsible."

Ends

[Tory Government is failing the victims of trafficking as statistics show rise – Abbott](#)

Diane Abbott, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, responding to National Referral Mechanism statistics showing that child trafficking is rising, said,

"This Tory Government is failing the victims of trafficking.

“Recorded child trafficking has reached a record high, but these figures are still well below the Government’s own estimate. Meanwhile, decisions to provide support for victims have fallen to a record low.

“The Tories promised in their manifesto to tackle trafficking and child exploitation. Instead they have imposed even further cuts on the Border Force and police, the frontline in the fight against these horrific crimes.”

Ends

Notes to editor

1. Annual statistics on reports to the National Referral Mechanism show that in total there were 3,805 potential victims of trafficking in 2016; a 17% increase on 2015. However, child exploitation referrals rose by 30% to 1,278.
2. The figures also show that positive conclusive decisions – which enable victims to access support – decreased to 635, compared with 1,028 the previous year.
3. Full report – National Crime Agency, NRM End of Year Summary 2016, 29 March 2017,

<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics/2016-nrm-statistics/788-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-end-of-year-summary-2016/file>

News story: Evidence gathering to take place on UK plan to resolve RBS’ State aid commitment

The European Commission has [formally confirmed](#) that it will begin to gather evidence on the UK Government’s plan to resolve RBS’s State aid commitment.

The plan, [first announced on 17 February](#), would see RBS fund and deliver a series of initiatives, worth around £750 million, to boost competition in today’s UK business banking market by helping small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) access and benefit from greater choice in the banking

services available to them.

In parallel, HM Treasury has confirmed that it will carry out a market testing exercise, running for 4 weeks from 17 April. The market testing exercise will ensure that the new package is designed so that it increases competition in the business banking market significantly and works well operationally. As part of the exercise, the Treasury will seek views from parties impacted by the new package, including challenger banks, SME business representatives, and venture capital and fintech firms. Full details of the European Commission's evidence gathering process, including timings of the consultation and further details of the proposed package, will be announced by the European Commission in the coming weeks.

Following the consultation and market testing exercises, the final proposal will be subject to the approval of the College of Commissioners.

[News story: South West Water fined for Devon sewage spill](#)

South West Water has been ordered to pay £86,000 in fines and costs for discharging sewage into Dawlish Water over a bank holiday weekend. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 28 August 2015 an automatic alarm was triggered in Brook Street after a blockage in a pipe caused sewage to leak into nearby Dawlish Water, a stream that runs through the centre of the town.

The alarm sounded at 8.15am, but the water company didn't dispatch an emergency crew to deal with the problem until 11.40am. Instead of going to Brook Street, it went to Brook House in another part of Dawlish and reported nothing was wrong. It wasn't until a second team arrived, some 6 hours after the alarm sounded, that the discharge was discovered and steps were finally taken to stop the pollution.

The problem was caused by a brick which had somehow entered and blocked the sewer causing it to overflow.

This combined sewage overflow pipe was blocked and discharged into Dawlish Water

Dawlish beach was busy with holidaymakers at the time of the incident. Bathers were advised by an official from Teignbridge District Council to stay out of the sea and wash their hands. The Environment Agency declared an 'abnormal situation' and the bathing water was closed for more than 24 hours.

Levels of E.coli bacteria in Dawlish Water increased significantly as a

result of the discharge, from 990 per 100ml upstream of the sewer pipe to 4,800,000 at the point of discharge. Further downstream in the walled section by the viaduct the level had reduced to 70,000, however children had been seen playing in the water in this area. Dilution in the sea meant there were safe levels of E.coli in the town's bathing water.

South West Water said it had tried to get a team to Dawlish as soon as possible, but their response time was increased because a crew was unavailable having attended sewer flooding of a property elsewhere overnight. A second crew was unable to attend due to technical problems with their vehicle.

Nigel Thomas-Childs, for the Environment Agency, said:

Water companies must respond promptly to emergencies to minimise any pollution or harm to the environment. This discharge occurred over an August bank holiday when Dawlish was particularly busy. South West Water lost valuable time and took too long to find the blockage and deal with the overflow to the brook.

Appearing before Exeter Crown Court, South West Water Ltd was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £6,202 costs after pleading guilty to discharging polluting material into Dawlish Brook, an offence under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.