

Drugs - Cocaine

Driver – Political

Related Drivers – Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbourhood Policing, Organised Crime, Violent Crime – Gun and Gang Violence, Asset Recovery, Collaborative Working Between Police Forces, Criminal Legislation, Public Perceptions of Crime, Public Perceptions of the Police, Data Mining, Advances in Technology, Information Sharing, Human Trafficking, Stop & Search, Youth Crime

Background

Public Service Agreement (PSA) Target 25, *Reduce the harm caused by Alcohol and Drugs*, laid out in the Comprehensive Spending Review for 2008-2011 sets out cross department action to deliver on this target.¹ The actions toward achieving this PSA are underpinned by the relevant strategies on drugs and alcohol. Details on alcohol strategies and provisions are covered in the Political Driver – Alcohol.

The previous ten-year drug strategy came to an end in April 2008 and was replaced by the *Drugs: Protecting families and communities 2008-2018 Strategy*. Key strategy actions in the protection and enforcement work streams include the following:

- Use multi-agency and intelligence-based approaches to identify the drug-misusing offenders at greatest risk of causing the most harm and improve our responses to divert them out of crime.
- Embed action to tackle drugs within the Neighbourhood Policing approach, responding to community concerns about drugs, acting on intelligence provided by the community and giving feedback on how such intelligence was used.
- Support communities who wish to take action against drug dealing by promoting local campaigns such as 'Rat on a Rat'.
- Police powers to seize cash and assets belonging to suspected drug dealers on arrest rather than on conviction to avoid dispersing goods.
- A greater range of goods will be subject to the asset recovery programme and the 12 year time limit currently affecting asset recovery will cease to exist.
- Extend international agreements to intercept drugs being trafficked to the UK and negotiate asset seizure agreements with other countries so dealers cannot channel proceeds abroad. This will start with the United Arab Emirates in April 2008.
- Anti-social behaviour orders to be imposed on drug dealers after conviction which could ban them from entering certain areas or engaging in behaviour linked with drug dealing.
- Increase drug screening at airports.

- Encouraging the use of the police powers to close crack houses.²

A report published by the independent UK Drug Policy Commission has claimed that the Government's strategy to combat the UK's drug problem has failed. '*An Analysis of UK Drugs Policy*' reports that the range of government actions has had a limited impact on preventing drug use. Some statistics used to back up the report's claim includes:

- The UK has the highest level of problem drug use in Europe and the second highest number of drug related deaths.
- One quarter of 26-30 year olds have tried a Class A drug at least on one occasion.
- The cost of drug related crime is £13 billion³

'*Tackling drug markets and distribution networks*' sets out the main findings from a review of the recent literature on strategies to tackle illicit drug markets and distribution networks in the UK. The report was commissioned by the UK Drug Policy Commission and make suggests that:

- Drug markets have proven to be extremely resilient. They are highly fluid and adapt to law enforcement interventions.
- The available evidence suggests that street-level drug law enforcement should focus on forging productive local partnerships and not rely solely on police crackdowns.⁴

Cocaine

According the SOCA '*UK Threat Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2008/09*' cocaine was one of the key threats.⁵ The report found there is increasing evidence of cocaine being shipped across the Atlantic to West Africa for transportation to Europe. It was suggested that this may be due to successful law enforcement action preventing transatlantic vessels which conceal cocaine travelling directly to Europe. There is also evidence of heavily adulterated cocaine being sold to some customers on the streets whilst selling higher purity cocaine to more affluent buyers thus making a two-tier market.

In May 2007, Interior Ministers from France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK met to evaluate possible developments in the area of organised crime and drug trafficking. They expressed concerns about the increase in cocaine production and the sharp grown in its consumption in Europe.⁶ They agreed the need to promote initiatives aimed at preventing the entry of cocaine into Europe through routes in Central Asia, especially Afghanistan.

The number of adults taking Class A drugs, has risen from 2.7% in 1998 to 3.4% in 2005/06 mainly due to an increase in the use of cocaine powder.⁴

According the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) there were an estimated 860,000 cocaine users in England and Wales and a further 140,000 in Northern Ireland and Scotland combined. This makes the UK – in absolute numbers – Europe's largest cocaine market, with its second highest cocaine use prevalence rate. Britain had the highest number of

"problem" drug users – as opposed to those who use drugs occasionally – in Western Europe.⁷

The *2009 Drug Report* provides a number of recommendations on how to improve drug control:

- Drug use should be treated as an illness. People who take drugs need medical help, not criminal retribution. There should be universal access to drug treatment.
- Governments must enforce international agreements against organized crime. International crime-fighting instruments like the United Nations Conventions against organized crime and corruption are not being used. "Therefore, too many states have crime problems of their own making," said the head of UNODC. In particular, he said "current instruments to tackle money laundering and cyber-crime are inadequate."
- Greater efficiency in law enforcement. Police should focus on the small number of high profile, high volume, and violent criminals instead of the large volumes of petty offenders. In some countries, the ratio of people imprisoned for drug use compared to drug trafficking is 5:1.⁸

Responding to the report, Home Office Minister Alan Campbell said: "The latest data from the British Crime Survey is encouraging and suggests that cocaine use amongst adults in the UK is starting to fall after remaining stable for several years.

"We are however not complacent; we are taking comprehensive action to tackle cocaine use from increased enforcement to reduce the supply, along with effective treatment, education and early intervention for those most at risk. Evidence suggests our approach is working."⁹

The Centre for Policy Studies published its report '*The Phoney War on Drugs*' which finds that the UK has one of the most liberal drugs policies in Europe, combined with one of the worst enforcement and drug use records. The report suggests that a successful UK drug policy would include a tougher, better-funded enforcement programme to reduce the supply of drugs, similar to programmes in the Netherlands and Sweden.¹⁰

The report cites the Netherlands as an example of a country with effective drugs policies. For example, the Netherlands spend three times more on its drugs policies than the UK (as a proportion of GDP); and it also spends a far higher proportion of its drugs budget on enforcement. Special police enforcement units have been set up to fight the production and the trafficking of all major categories of illegal drugs. Police have a considerable degree of discretion and local regions have considerable autonomy. Their enforcement efforts focus on dealing and trafficking as opposed to use (66.3% of all drug offences compared to 13.6% of all drug offences in the UK).

Potential Skills Needs

Analytical skills – to visualize, articulate, and solve complex problems and concepts, and make decisions that make sense based on available information

Community policing skills – working with communities to identify drug dealers and drug related crime

Information sharing skills – to provide effective information to partner agencies

Inter-agency working skills – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

Intelligence analysis skills – make the links between information gathered and intelligence / problem solving

Intelligence gathering skills – to scan multiple data sources and follow leads

Intelligence information sharing skills between police forces, other intelligence and security agencies, communities and local partners

Observation skills – in the local area, channelled into the intelligence picture

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

Relationship building skills – build effective relationships within the community to gather intelligence

Source handling skills – to identify sources of drugs and organised criminal behind them

¹ [HM Treasury \(2007\). *Meeting the Aspirations of the British People: 2007 Pre-budget report and Comprehensive Spending Review*. London: HM Treasury.](#)

² [HM Government \(2008\) *Drugs: Protecting families and communities 2008-2018 Strategy*. London: Home Office.](#)

³ [Reuters, P., & Stevens, A. \(2007\) *An Analysis of UK Drug Policy: A monograph prepared for the UK Drug Policy Commission*. London: UK Drug Policy Commission.](#)

⁴ [McSweeney, T., Turnbull, P.J., & Hough, M. \(2008\) *Tackling Drug Markets and Distribution Networks in the UK: A review of recent literature*. London: UK Drug Policy Commission.](#)

⁵ [SOCA \(2008\) *United Kingdom Threat Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2008/09*. London: SOCA](#)

⁶ NPIA (June 2007) *NPIA Digest*. London: NPIA p 25.

⁷ [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Press Release 'World Drug Report 2009 Highlights Links Between Drugs and Crime'.](#)

⁸ [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(2009\) *2009 World Drug Report*. Geneva: United Nations Publications.](#)

⁹ [BBC News Online, 24 June 2009, 'UN shows scale of UK Cocaine use'.](#)

¹⁰ [Gyngell, K. \(2009\) *The Phoney War on Drugs*. Surrey: Centre for Policy Studies.](#)