

£148 million to cut drugs crime

Today (20 January 2021) the Home Secretary Priti Patel and Health Secretary Matt Hancock announce a £148 million new investment to cut crime and protect people from the scourge of illegal drugs.

The £148 million package takes a system-wide approach to the problem of illegal drugs. It gives extra resources to law enforcement to dismantle organised criminal gangs and tackle the supply of drugs. At the same time, it delivers more money for drug treatment and recovery to help cut drug-related crime and the cycle of misuse and reoffending. It represents the largest increase in drug treatment funding for 15 years.

Building on recent successes in tackling county lines gangs, the government will double the funding available for law enforcement to take down and bring to justice county lines gangs and drug kingpins. The £40 million of new money to tackle county lines and drugs supply brings the total invested to £65 million since November 2019.

The funding has already seen more than 3,400 people arrested, more than 550 lines closed, drugs with a street value of £9 million and £1.5 million cash seized, and more than 770 vulnerable people safeguarded.

A further £28 million will be invested into piloting Project ADDER – a new intensive approach to tackling drug misuse, which combines targeted and tougher policing with enhanced treatment and recovery services. Project ADDER (which stands for Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) will bring together partners including the police, local councils and health services, and run for 3 financial years in 5 areas with some of the highest rates of drug misuse: Blackpool, Hastings, Middlesbrough, Norwich and Swansea Bay.

The funding will allow the police to target local gang leaders driving the drugs trade while better helping people to recover from addictions.

An extra £80 million will also be invested in drug treatment services right across England to give more support to offenders with drink and drug addictions, which can fuel crime. This new money will increase the number of treatment places for prison leavers and offenders diverted into tough and effective community sentences. Together the funding represents a comprehensive drive by the government to build back safer from the pandemic by helping people break free from the scourge of drug use and cutting drug-fuelled crime and violence.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am determined to cut crime and make our streets safer, which is why we are recruiting 20,000 more police officers, toughening sentences and making sure the police and prisons have the powers and tools they need to clamp down on criminals and stop re-

offending.

But it is clear that drugs are a serious driver of the violence which devastates communities and robs young lives. That is why we must take action to cut off supply and cut the head off the snake by tackling the criminal gangs which exploit young people.

We must also help people to get off drugs in the first place and that is why we are launching Project Adder, a new, targeted approach which will ramp up local enforcement, while at the same time diverting more people into recovery, backed up by the largest investment in treatment in 15 years.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I am determined to cut crime and restore confidence in our criminal justice system, so that people can live their lives knowing their family, community and country is safe.

The government's work to tackle county lines drugs gangs has already resulted in thousands more people being arrested and hundreds more vulnerable people being safeguarded, but we must do more to tackle the underlying drivers behind serious violence.

That is why today's announcement will provide the largest investment in drugs treatment and support in 15 years, while also giving more resources to law enforcement so they can continue dismantling organised criminal gangs and tackling the supply of drugs.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Addiction and crime are inextricably linked and to truly break the cycle we must make sure people can access the help they need to get their lives back on track for good.

This is the largest increase to drug treatment funding in 15 years and underlines our absolute commitment to reduce drug-related deaths, offending and use.

As part of this package, £2.5 million will also be invested in providing continuity of care for prisoners on release to avoid this becoming a crisis point. The enhanced RECONNECT service supports offenders with complex needs to engage with and get the right treatment from mental health, substance misuse and other services, for up to a year after release. Offenders will be supported by expert care navigators working with health and probation services.

The money will also support offenders into treatment upon release from prison and fund additional detox beds and the life-saving overdose medicine, naloxone. By saving lives and providing treatment former offenders have the chance and support to break the cycle of crime and addiction.

The increase in drug treatment funding will help us provide lifesaving overdose medicine to every heroin user in the country that needs it and will help end the postcode lottery for inpatient treatment so that people from across the country can come off drugs safely.

This work follows the appointment in February 2019 of Professor Dame Carol Black to undertake an independent review of drugs.

Last year she provided detailed analysis of the challenges posed by drug supply and demand, including the ways in which drugs fuel serious violence.

The second part of her review launched in July 2020, focused on treatment, recovery and prevention, with an overarching aim of ensuring vulnerable people with substance misuse problems get the support they need to recover and turn their lives around in the community and in prison.

It will consider how treatment services can enable people with a drug dependency to achieve and sustain their recovery – spanning the wide range of support they may need, including with across mental health, housing, employment, and criminal justice agencies.

Dame Carol Black said:

Drug treatment has a vital role to play in helping people to come off drugs and thereby reduce crime, from minor acquisitive crime right through to homicide. The evidence for this is abundantly clear – drugs drive crime.

I am therefore delighted to hear that the government is to invest an additional £80 million in drug treatment. This will assist local authorities to improve the services they deliver in this important area, in all their various aspects.

Areas to be funded by Project ADDER are

1. Blackpool – £4.8 million
2. Hastings – £4.35 million
3. Middlesbrough – £4.58 million
4. Norwich – £4.8 million
5. Swansea Bay – £1 million