

Press release: Specialist financial crime unit to crack down on prison gangs

- unit staffed by members of Police and Prison Service will be able to freeze bank accounts and make arrests
- action will cut supply of drugs to prisoners and prevent money reaching criminal kingpins
- part of wider drive to tackle the supply and demand for drugs in prison

In the latest measure to tackle the criminal kingpins who fuel drug dealing and violence in our jails, specially-trained prison and police officers will use intelligence to monitor bank accounts for signs of illicit transactions.

Bank accounts on the outside world are being used by inmates to pay for drugs. These are usually identified through paper notes found in cells which contain account details, or on phones seized from prisoners with instructions to make transfers.

Such transactions, which amount to money laundering, are to be targeted by the unit, who will be able to freeze bank accounts and initiate criminal proceedings against those involved.

This effort to disrupt the flow of illicit money from prisoners to criminal networks adds to existing measures designed to hinder their activity. As announced in July, a new £1 million digital tool is helping to identify, disrupt and disable gangs, with leaders being moved to different prisons if necessary to stymie their influence.

This formed part of an additional £40 million investment in prisons, announced over the summer, that will improve safety and security in prisons, as well as improving the fabric of the estate. Meanwhile more than 3,500 extra officers have been recruited and will have a central role to play in efforts to tackle gangs and contraband behind bars.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said in his speech to the Conservative party conference earlier today:

My message to kingpins is this: we are already blocking your phones, putting you in isolation and now we will make sure you can't access your money.

Dealing drugs in prison will no longer be profitable because we will find your assets and we will seize them.

Money laundering in prisons is widespread, with much of the activity taking

place through individual, low-value transactions between external bank accounts as offenders settle debts generated illicitly, such as through the supply of drugs.

The unit, which will become fully operational in October, will home in on this activity through the analysis of intelligence and work to quickly act against offenders suspected of involvement in criminal activity.

The unit has drawn on support from the police's Eastern Region Special Operations Unit to develop strategies which will enable it to quickly identify and act against money laundering from the outset.

Data analysis of prison intelligence will be used to identify common or significant bank accounts being used to launder money, allowing the unit to build a profile of the prisoners connected to them.

The unit will then be able to act against those involved, with sanctions ranging from the closure of accounts, to freezing assets or more significant criminal sanctions such as Confiscation Orders and arrest.

Combined with other measures, this will disrupt the movement of illegal goods in prison and reduce the drivers of self-harm and violence. This will allow prisons to focus on becoming places of rehabilitation and reform where prisoners are given a genuine chance to turn their backs on crime for good.

During today's speech, the Justice Secretary also announced the allocation of £5 million to create the first secure school in Medway, Kent. This new provision will place education and healthcare at the heart of youth custody and will be run by not-for-profit academy trusts with expertise in the youth custody sector.

The application and selection process for the provider of the first establishment will be launched later this month, with more purpose-built secure schools to be constructed in the coming years.

Also, over the next 2 years, the MoJ will provide up to £2.6 million for governors in the Youth Custody Service to purchase additional educational and vocational programmes. The highly successful Unlocked graduate scheme will also be expanded into the youth estate, bringing even more talented and motivated staff to our frontline.

The Justice Secretary added:

Together this package of reforms and investment will crack down on the drugs and violence in prisons, further support offenders in turning their backs on crime and, crucially, help young offenders find a path out of criminality into education and responsibility.

Notes to editors

- The unit will be based in Peterborough and will be operational from

October.

- The team will investigate evidence of prisoners using external bank accounts to pay for drugs, something which we believe is common in prisons but has yet to be fully addressed given our focus up to now on more high-level organised crime in prisons.
- In summer we announced a £40 million prisons improvement package targeting crime in prisons. This included a £7 million investment in safety to fund a range of new security measures, including airport-security style scanners, improved searching techniques and phone-blocking technology.
- A £1 million digital tool is also enabling prisons to build a more detailed picture of the kind of risk an offender is likely to present, including the likelihood of involvement in organised crime. This intelligence is allowing police and prison staff to better target their activity to prevent, disrupt and disable criminal networks, including moving prisoners when necessary.
- The Ministry of Justice outlined its [vision for secure schools](#) in June 2018

[Press release: Severn Crossings to go toll-free on 17 December 2018](#)

Tolls on the Severn Crossings will be abolished on Monday 17th December, just in time for the festive getaway, the UK Government has announced today (Tuesday 2nd October).

The move will mean those travelling between South Wales and the South West of England will save on journeys home and cross-border shopping trips throughout the holiday period.

This will generate annual savings for regular motorists of more than £1,000 per year and have an economic boost to the Welsh economy of an estimated £100m each year. Businesses will also benefit from the strengthened links between cities stretching from Swansea to Swindon, no longer burdened by the financial barrier between the communities.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

It has long been my ambition to see the tolls abolished, doing away with a barrier that has hindered Wales' economic prosperity for more than half a century.

Today marks an important leap forward in Wales' economic potential, increasing our appeal to external investors but also ensuring businesses, commuters and tourists on both sides of the border are no longer hampered by a fee restricting them from carrying out

their everyday lives.

Removing the tolls will cement the already strong ties between the economies and communities of South Wales and the South West of England, creating a growth corridor for prosperity to flourish from Cardiff, through Newport to Bristol and beyond.

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling said:

Removing the tolls from the Severn bridges will help transform the economy in South Wales and the South West, putting over £1,000 a year back in the pockets of hard-working families.

Abolishing these tolls will also cut costs for businesses on both sides of the river, giving them a huge boost to help create new opportunities and new potential for growth.

The decision comes after the move in January to reduce tolls on the two bridges that cross the Severn, meaning that commuters, drivers and businesses from both sides of the river started making savings earlier this year.

ENDS

[News story: Insolvency Service celebrates customer services excellence](#)

Organised by the Institute of Customer Service, [National Customer Service Week \(NCSW\)](#) is running between 1 and 5 October 2018, aiming to raise awareness of customer services and the vital role it plays in successful business practice and the growth of the UK economy.

The Insolvency Service is using NCSW as an opportunity to highlight the importance of customer services excellence, how our services have evolved and how we assist different customers – from people considering Debt Relief Orders to workers applying to the Redundancy Payment Service for financial help.

With teams based in Leeds and Edinburgh, customer services handle more than 150,000 calls a year and are assessed annually.

For the past 19 years, we have been [awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard](#), recognising our continued focus on meeting the needs of our

customers and in 2016/17, the Insolvency Service was awarded 5 new compliance plus ratings. In total we now hold 17 compliance plus and 40 compliant ratings.

Comments received from assessors during our last assessment included:

There is full corporate commitment throughout the organisation to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery.

During discussions, staff were very enthusiastic about their participation in what is clearly a very well established customer-focused culture within the organisation.

And it's not just the assessors who think our customer services are of a high standard as Insolvency Service staff have provided first-hand accounts of how they have turned difficult situations into favourable results.

In one case, someone going through bankruptcy called up the Insolvency Service on a Friday concerned that their bank account had been frozen. This meant they could not access their benefits and had bills to pay.

Usually, staff would just confirm if the bank was happy for the personal bank account to be used. But the customer representative was conscious that it could be a whole weekend before the person could access their account again. Thinking quickly, the Insolvency Service called the bank to release the funds, before reassuring the customer that the money would be there, which was gratefully received.

Jackie Stevenson-Coe, Head of Customer Service & Insight, said:

We make every effort to improve our customer services to benefit everyone who deals with the Insolvency Service and being awarded the Customer Service Excellence standard is a tremendous achievement both for our customers and staff who work extremely hard to make it happen.

Providing excellent customer services is absolutely crucial and we will continue to improve our offering in order to assist our customers and achieve our mission in delivering economic confidence.

[Press release: New measures to support workers, businesses, and entrepreneurs](#)

Updated: Updated to reflect additional announcements.

The Business Secretary Greg Clark has announced a series of new measures to back businesses and entrepreneurs, support workers and ensure every part of the country benefits from the Government's modern Industrial Strategy.

The announcements build on the Government's record of delivering right across the Industrial Strategy – from record levels of investment in research and development, the biggest transformation of technical education and retraining in a decade to the fastest growth in infrastructure in the G7.

The new measures include:

Tipping

The government has announced plans to ensure that tips left for workers will go to them in full.

While most employers act in good faith, in some sectors evidence points towards poor tipping practices, including excessive deductions being made from tips left by customers.

New legislation, to be introduced at the earliest opportunity, will set out that tips must go to the workers providing the service.

Unemployment is at its lowest since the 1970s and wages are rising. This legislation will ensure workers get the tips they deserve and give consumers reassurance that the money they leave in good faith to reward good service is going to the staff, as they intended – ensuring that hard work is rewarded.

More protection for small businesses

A commitment to end the unfair treatment of small businesses by companies who abuse their position by paying late for products and services.

The Government will strengthen the Prompt Payment Code with a new tough and transparent compliance regime. A call for evidence will be published later this week. The call for evidence It will consider the best way to ensure company boards put in place responsible payment practices throughout their supply chain, including whether all company boards should give one of their non-executive directors specific responsibilities for the company's prompt payment performance.

The Small Business Commissioner will join the Prompt Payment Code's Compliance Board to support his role in tackling late payment.

Proposals to help parents and carers in the workforce

Working flexibly helps people to balance their work and home lives and is vital in creating an inclusive economy where those with caring responsibilities can continue working. It also gives employers access to a wider pool of talent and enables better matching of applicants and jobs.

While many companies are increasingly embracing flexible working and the benefits it brings, some employees face barriers in raising this issue with their employers.

The Government will consider creating a duty for employers to consider whether a job can be done flexibly, and make that clear when advertising.

Greater transparency on parental pay

The Government will consult on requiring employers with more than 250 staff to publish their parental leave and pay policies, so job applicants can make informed decisions about whether they can combine the role with caring for their family.

Statutory entitlements to leave and pay for new parents are key to this vision for 'good work' and to the participation and progression of parents, especially mothers, in the labour market.

While many employers go further than the legal minimum for parental leave and pay, very few publish their policies openly. Applicants must ask prospective employers what the position is which many are reluctant to do for fear of discrimination.

Progress towards a local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands

The Industrial Strategy sets out a long-term plan to boost the productivity. Supported by our 'policy prospectus', all parts of the country are working towards developing local Industrial Strategies by early 2020.

In consultation with regional partners, the local Industrial Strategy for the West Midlands will harness its distinctive strengths to unlock greater growth and earning power across the region's cities and places. With the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy set for release by March 2019, we are publishing a progress statement showing how local leaders are working with business to maximise the potential of the region and meet national challenges.

The West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy will provide a long-term plan for alignment of local and national decision making to increase productivity and deliver an economy that works for all. This will include how the automotive and wider transport cluster, the life science cluster, and their associated

supply chains and infrastructure, will drive the UK's response to the Future of Mobility Grand Challenge and the AI and Data Grand Challenge.

Transparency data: CoRWM visit to Konrad mine, Germany, June 2018

As part of CoRWM's outreach activities for 2018 to 2019, a group of CoRWM members visited Germany in June 2018 to tour the Konrad mine and discuss approaches to siting a geologic disposal facility (GDF).

The group was hosted by the Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management (BfE), headquartered in Salzgitter, Germany.