

[Press release: Statement by International Development Secretary on Save the Children](#)

Following the launch of a statutory inquiry by the Charity Commission, Save the Children UK has decided to withdraw from bidding for new UK Government funding until DFID is satisfied that they can meet the high standards we expect of all our partners.

I am committed to driving up standards across the aid sector and I expect every organisation that we work with to have rigorous reporting and complaints mechanisms in place to protect beneficiaries and employees alike.

[News story: Couple sentenced for operating fake online pharmacy](#)

Following a guilty plea, Mr Jakub Woźniak, 36, was sentenced to a total of 18 months immediate custody while Ms Izabela Wojceichowska, 37, received an eight-month sentence suspended for two years, in addition to 180 hours of unpaid work. The pair were also ordered to pay £3,000 in related costs.

During one raid MHRA enforcement officers seized large quantities of unlicensed and prescription-only medicines such as erectile dysfunction pills, steroids and illegal slimming tablets with a total value of more than £25,500. The slimming pills alone were valued at £7,900.

Additional investigations uncovered evidence of financial transactions for the sale of unauthorised medicines totalling more than £87,500 while a follow-up raid on Woźniak's home revealed he had continued offending after the first raid and a further £10,752.4 worth of steroids were seized.

Despite neither being registered doctors nor pharmacists, the guilty pair were operating an illegal online pharmacy which provided a mail-order service with customers across the UK. They had different roles in the operation, with Wojceichowska handling slimming pills and Woźniak dealing with all other medical products.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Selling potent unlicensed or prescription-only medicines is a serious criminal offence. If taken without medical supervision

these medicines can be very dangerous.

We work relentlessly with regulatory and law enforcement colleagues to identify and prosecute all those involved.

Criminals only want your cash and don't have the slightest interest in your health.

MHRA is currently running the #FakeMeds campaign to warn people against buying potentially dangerous or useless unlicensed medicines sold by illegal online suppliers.

Visit www.gov.uk/fakemedes for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

Press release: 'Smart' safety advice for commercial drivers

In a pioneering move, the government company responsible for the country's motorways and major A roads has joined forces with the Freight Transport Association (FTA) to offer bespoke safety training for drivers who travel on smart motorways.

Aimed at commercial and haulage drivers, the course has been designed to provide practical, relevant training.

The eight hour, single day course covers the past, present and future of smart motorways, the different signals on the network, driver behaviour and the role of traffic officers.

A key aspect of the course is that it now integrates into the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC), the standard qualification for which all professional bus, coach and lorry drivers must complete 35 hours of training every five years.

Senior Partnership Manager at Highways England, Wayne Carey said:

Hauliers are among the most frequent users of smart motorways so we want to ensure we are providing as much support as we can to ensure those journeys are as safe as possible.

Smart motorways reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability and add much needed capacity to some of the most congested sections

of motorway and we are delighted with the take up to date of this course.

We urge any haulier who wants to sharpen up their skills to sign up.

Pertemps, one of the leading training providers has agreed to offer the training, and Müller is one of the first organisations to take it on.

Jen Cowie, Logistic Support and Development Manager at Müller said:

It's essential that our drivers are fully equipped to deal with their surroundings. We are delighted to be working with Highways England on this training, from concept to delivery, and we continue to work together closely, which not only benefits the business, but the overall road network.

National Trainer Manager at Pertemps Driver Training, Andy Smart said:

It is clear to us that smart motorways are the future in the UK and their use has undoubtedly reduced congestion and improved safety on some of the busiest roads.

As an employer of over 7000 drivers nationwide we are actively working with and supporting Highways England to promote the benefits of smart motorways within the haulage industry.

Malcolm Bingham, Head of Road Network Management Policy at the Freight Transport Association (FTA) said:

FTA is conscious that hauliers would appreciate more advice about driving on smart motorways. That is why FTA has worked in partnership with Highways England to produce the training module which is now approved for use on the Driver CPC course programme.

This is the right way forward – providing drivers with true guidance on how to use the network and not adding confusion about which parts of the road they can use and when. That has been borne out by driver feedback on the pilot courses we have run.

It also demonstrates the need to respect the Red X signs set up

when there is a problem on the network and provides assurance that these lanes are vital tool in keeping drivers safe in emergency situations.

Any company which wishes to enrol their drivers on the training should email: SPTC_Driver_Education_Course@highwaysengland.co.uk

Highways England's call to hauliers comes alongside a number of other initiatives related to commercial vehicle safety launched at this year's Commercial Vehicle Show.

One of these is the commercial vehicle incident prevention programme, which focuses on safer people and aims to reduce the number of commercial vehicle related incidents.

As part of this comes the use of virtual reality to reduce the risk of commercial vehicle drivers being involved in incidents as they travel up and down the country.

Other examples include:

- a joint initiative with police using HGV cabs to target dangerously driven vehicles (one of the cabs with police representatives will be at the Show);
- the installation of sophisticated tyre/vehicle measurement (tyre pressure, tyre tread depth, vehicle weight, axles heat) technology at key locations;
- initiatives with the Health & Safety Executive and the police to improve load security; and interventions to reduce diesel spillages which damage the carriageway and cause long delays.
- development of truck stop apps in Polish and Romanian (they can also be seen at the Commercial Vehicle Show).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: 69,000 households benefit](#)

[from cut to stamp duty](#)

69,000 first-time buyers have already benefited from the government's abolition to stamp duty land tax on properties under £300,000, according to [official statistics released today \(26 April 2018\)](#). The figures, covering the period up until 31st March this year.

Over the next five years, it is estimated that the policy will help over 1 million people getting onto the housing ladder. And those who have bought properties of up to £500,000 will have benefited from a stamp duty cut.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

I'm proud that the cut to stamp duty for first-time buyers is helping to realise the dream of home ownership for a new generation, alongside building more homes in the right areas, and generous schemes such as the [Lifetime ISA](#) and [Help to Buy](#).

[Separate figures also published](#) today show that over 387,000 people have now used the government's Help to Buy scheme, and over 1.1 million accounts have been opened with the [Help to Buy ISA](#), offering government bonuses of up to £3,000.

The median age of a first-time buyer in the [Help to Buy](#) scheme is 27, compared to a national first-time buyer median age of 30.

Housing Minister, Dominic Raab, said:

It's good to see a record number of people benefiting from our [Help to Buy Equity Loan](#), so they can realise their dream of home ownership.

Through this scheme we have helped almost 159,000 households get a foot on the housing ladder.

These figures build on the government's long-term commitment to make housing more affordable. As part of the [Autumn Budget housing package](#), the Chancellor announced at least £44 billion for housing – which includes at least £15.3 billion of financial support for house building over the next five years – and an aim to build 300,000 new homes a year in the areas that need it, as well as encouraging better use of land in cities and towns.

In addition to government-backed schemes such as the Help to Buy equity loan and Help to Buy ISA, those hoping to make their money go further can open a [Lifetime ISA](#) – to either save for a first home, or for later in life.

[News story: New stress-reducing wristband 'doppel' reaches first backers](#)

Jack Hooper, Chief Product Officer and a company founder, wearing a doppel.

After a 2-year testing and development phase, the team at London-based technology start-up, [doppel](#), have begun sending their new stress-reducing wristband, also called doppel, to customers.

The company has now been able to reward early investors who supported the project through [Kickstarter](#), the online funding platform for creative projects, by sending them the first wristbands to leave the production line.

Proof of market for empathic wearables

Jack Hooper, CP0 and one of the founders of doppel, said:

When we set out on this journey we knew our idea could improve lives but we weren't sure if it stacked up as a commercial proposition. Fortunately, initial funding from Innovate UK gave us the chance to test the market.

The work we did with the grant gave us the evidence and confidence to launch a successful Kickstarter campaign that raised more than £110,000 through 820 backers. This allowed us to develop our proposition and, since then, we've raised further funding and have also secured a manufacturing partner which has saved significant upfront costs.

For us, Kickstarter wasn't a marketing campaign, it was a way to see if doppel had a chance. It's been tough, and we've had our setbacks, but seeing the amazing responses from our first customers makes it all worth it.

A new way to naturally reduce stress

Research in psychology and neuroscience shows that humans respond intuitively and naturally to different rhythms. Slower tempos result in calm and positive emotional states while fast rhythms are more associated with emotional states such as joy, excitement and surprise.

doppel uses a heartbeat – the rhythm we all experience first as embryos – in

a silent and subtle way. Our brains respond to this rhythm and we begin to entrain to it, in a similar way to how we respond to music.

The wristband works by creating a silent vibration on the inside of the wearer's wrist which feels like the 'lub-dub' of a heartbeat. Unlike most wearables, doppel doesn't count steps or send notifications. Instead, it is designed to help people stay calm under pressure and focus on tasks. It enables wearers to become more alert or to relax, without having to turn to caffeine, sugar or alcohol, or time-consuming methods such as meditation.

Creating a crossover market to boost sales

The doppel has been available to pre-order since late 2016 and the company aims to launch the wristband online in the next couple of months.

Its novel approach provides an opportunity to exploit the potential of two massively expanding markets – wearables and mindfulness, worth an estimated \$14 billion and \$27 billion, to create a new crossover segment. The company has identified the US as its biggest market and plans to set up a subsidiary there to boost sales.

Hooper added:

We see doppel as the next step for wearable technology. doppel is active, not passive. It goes beyond monitoring and does something for you. Within a minute or two of use, you feel the change. You don't need to see a graph for it to work and you don't need to download your data for it to change your day.

Our brains haven't evolved to process data, our brains have evolved to process experiences. We think the technology of today gives us data but the technology of tomorrow will give us experiences.