

[Press release: Brighton woman imprisoned for laundering £1.4m as part of family fake sex drug operation](#)

A woman has been sentenced today following a long running investigation into the sale of counterfeit and unlicensed drugs which convicted 12 individuals in 2015. The defendant received a prison sentence of 2 years and 3 months.

The medicines, which were sold predominantly over the internet, have an estimated value of £11 million with a suggested annual turnover in excess of £3 million.

She facilitated payments for the purchase of unlicensed erectile dysfunction medicines and claims that she received 10% of the 'earnings' laundered through her account but was unaware that the money was for the unlicensed medicine, Kamagra.

Samples of the products were found to contain potent, active medicinal ingredients with potential serious side effects and are classified as prescription only. Supply without medical supervision is dangerous as the contents of unlicensed medicines are unknown and untested.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Selling medicines outside of the regulated supply chain is a serious criminal offence. If you buy medicines online, you are potentially trusting a criminal to look after your health".

Always seek professional help and visit your GP if you are ill. These criminals are motivated by greed and have no concern about your welfare.

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/fakemeds for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

Press release: JD.com commits £2 billion to bring UK products to Chinese consumers

From luxury British couture and tea, to chocolate, beauty products, home appliances and other items, UK products have gained popularity in China in recent years. To meet this growing demand, JD.com, China's largest retailer, has announced plans to sell £2 billion of UK goods to Chinese consumers in the next 2-3 years.

The agreement signed today between JD.com and the British Government's Department of International Trade (DIT), is focused on making it easier for British companies to access the China market via JD.

"Many British brands recognise the huge potential of China's enormous e-commerce market" said Richard Burn, Director-General of DIT China. "JD truly understands what Chinese consumers want and has the resources to help British brands ensure success in the region. We're looking forward to working with JD to bring more British brands to China in the future."

Prime Minister Theresa May, who is on her first official state visit to China since becoming Prime Minister, met with JD Chairman and CEO Richard Liu at the Residence of the British Ambassador to China. Among the topics Liu and May discussed were JD's plans to help more UK brands reach JD's 266 million customers.

The number of UK brands on JD.com has doubled over the last two years, with sales in 2017 growing 100% year-on-year. World famous brands Dyson, Clark's, Johnnie Walker and Lipton are among the brands that have been popular with JD consumers. Over the past three years, Dyson sales on JD have increased by over 60 times.

In order to push even greater sales of British goods, JD will launch special campaigns for seasonal products and undertake other activities to give brands more opportunities to reach Chinese consumers. JD will kick off with a 24-hour "Celebrate Britain" sales promotion for UK products this April to introduce the "Best of Britain" to Chinese customers.

Press release: PM meeting with President Xi: 1 February 2018

Prime Minister Theresa May today met with President Xi during her three-day

official visit to China.

President Xi said that, step by step, China and the UK had elevated our relationship and he looked forward to further building on its success. The President quoted William Shakespeare, stating that: 'What's past is prologue.'

The PM said that, once Britain leaves the EU, we will be free to strike our own trade deals and pointed to the joint trade and investment review which will now take place as the first step towards delivering ambitious future trade arrangements.

President Xi said China's markets would be further opened to the UK, including in sectors such as beef, dairy and other agricultural goods.

The PM and the President said the UK and China would hold further discussions on how best they can cooperate on the Belt and Road initiative, which offers significant opportunities to deliver further prosperity and sustainable development across Asia and the wider world. The PM and President spoke of the importance of international standards and transparency to ensure the initiative's success.

The PM said it had so far been a very successful trip for the business delegation which had accompanied her to China, with deals worth at least £9bn expected to be signed.

The President and the PM discussed their shared commitment to protecting the environment, including their support for the Paris climate change agreement and determination to tackle the ivory and illegal wildlife trades.

The PM said the world had a collective responsibility to tackle plastic pollution on behalf of future generations. She pointed to the work which was being done in China to remove plastic particles from the Yangtze river to stop them from flowing into the ocean.

The two leaders discussed North Korea and their shared determination to bring to an end DPRK's illegal nuclear activity, agreeing denuclearisation was the objective.

They discussed Hong Kong, and reiterated the importance of and their commitment to "One Country, Two Systems".

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, they also discussed the importance of the Rules-Based International System.

The PM and President agreed the importance of having frank conversations in areas where the two countries do not see eye to eye, and looked forward to further deepening their ties in the 'golden era', including in areas such as culture and education.

Press release: On-time Self Assessment returns break the record again

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has once again surpassed its record of completed tax returns with a huge 10.7 million customers submitting theirs before the 31 January 2018 deadline.

Proving increasingly popular with its handy tips and helpful advice, the department's online service was used by 9.9 million customers – meaning more than 92.5% of total returns were completed online.

There were 758,707 people who completed their return on the last day before the deadline and the most popular hour for customers to hit submit was from 4pm to 5pm on 31 January with 60,596 returns received (1,010 per minute, 17 per second).

Thousands of customers avoided any penalties at the last minute as 30,348 customers completed their returns from 11pm to 11:59pm yesterday.

HMRC handled 195,260 calls over the course of the day but waiting times were kept at just 3 minutes and 6 seconds, meaning that hundreds of thousands of customers got the extra support they needed to meet the deadline.

Angela MacDonald, Director General for Customer Services, thanked customers for meeting the deadline and said:

It's really fantastic to see that each year, more and more Self Assessment customers are getting ahead of the game and submitting their tax return before the 31 January deadline. But we're not complacent, we want the number missing the deadline to be zero, and we'll continue to adapt the process to make it easier and simpler for all our customers until every return is in on time and without avoidable errors.

If you're one of the small number that missed the deadline, please submit your return now to avoid further penalties. We really don't want penalties, we just want tax returns.

For anyone who still has not submitted their return, help and advice is available on GOV.UK or from the Self Assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310 (open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 4pm on Saturday).

Self Assessment summary:

- 11,433,349 Self Assessment returns were due
- 10,687,761 returns were received by midnight on 31 January (93.5% of total issued)
- Around 745,588 Self Assessment returns are still outstanding

- 9,916,430 returns were filed online (92.8%)
- 771,331 returns were filed on paper (7.22%)
- more than 4,852,744 returns were received online in January 2018 (44.8% of total received)
- 1,290,948 returns were received on 30 and 31 January (26.6 % of total returns received in January)
- busiest hour: 4pm to 5pm on 31 January – 60,596 returns received (1,010 per minute; 17 per second)
- 389,849 payments transactions were handled on 31 January

Penalties

The penalties for late tax returns are:

- an initial £100 fixed penalty, which applies even if there is no tax to pay, or if the tax due is paid on time
- after 3 months, additional daily penalties of £10 per day, up to a maximum of £900
- after 6 months, a further penalty of 5% of the tax due or £300, whichever is greater
- after 12 months, another 5% or £300 charge, whichever is greater

There are also additional penalties for paying late of 5% of the tax unpaid at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months.

Media contacts

Press enquiries only, please contact:

- Patrick O'Brien: phone 03000 585 024, or email: Patrick.o'brien@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk
- Thomas Channon: phone 03000 585 020, or email: Thomas.channon@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk
- out of hours: phone 07860 359544
- follow HMRC Press Office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](https://twitter.com/HMRCpressoffice)

[Press release: UK Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin visits Zimbabwe](#)

UK Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin arrived in Harare on 1 February. This is the second UK Ministerial visit to Zimbabwe since President Mnangagwa was sworn in in November 2017 and Minister Baldwin's first visit since her appointment.

Minister Baldwin wants to learn more about Zimbabwe and better understand the context and the challenges and opportunities it is facing as it emerges from

37 years of rule by former president Robert Mugabe. The Minister will hold meetings with business representatives, politicians, human rights groups, NGOs and other members of civil society.

She will also see some of the important development work supported by the UK, including visiting a school for children with disabilities. She will see how the UK is increasing its work on reaching the most marginalised children with education, including those with disabilities, in the run up to the UK-hosted Disability Summit.

Minister Baldwin said:

The past few months have seen momentous change in Zimbabwe and it is a privilege to visit at such a pivotal time.

I am looking forward to meeting a wide range of Zimbabweans and hearing from them about the huge potential their country holds and the challenges that must be faced ahead of elections later this year.

The UK has a longstanding relationship with Zimbabwe and we are committed to working with the government of Zimbabwe for a bright, prosperous and hopeful future for all Zimbabweans.

Notes for editors

Minister Harriett Baldwin is the UK's Minister for Africa for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).