

Busted! HMRC reveals biggest criminal cases of year 2019

The smashing of international criminal gangs, large money laundering seizures and fake investment schemes all feature in HM Revenue and Customs' top criminal cases of 2019.

HMRC's fraud investigations have led to more than 600 individuals being convicted for their part in tax crimes and commenced new criminal investigations into more than 610 individuals during the last 12 months. The Fraud Investigation Service continues to bring in around £5 billion a year through civil and criminal investigations.

This year's top criminal cases include:

1. [2 wealthy professionals](#) who attempted to steal more than £60 million through a fraudulent tax avoidance scheme which claimed to invest in HIV research and conservation, and were jailed for a total of 14 and a half years
2. A [Berkshire-based gang](#) that stole £34 million in VAT and laundered £87 million, the proceeds from selling illicit alcohol through bank accounts in Britain, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Dubai and other countries – were jailed for more than 46 years
3. a [fugitive](#) £17 million tax fraudster who is finally behind bars after he was tracked down to his Prague hideaway and brought back to the UK to serve his 8-year sentence
4. [five people](#), including the former owners of a Sussex petrol station, who were sentenced for distributing and selling an estimated 4.8 million litres of illicit fuel to unsuspecting motorists, including haulage companies across the South East
5. the jailing of a [former Top Gear mechanic](#) who helped father and son tax cheats escape from the UK via ferry and Eurotunnel prior to sentencing for a £1 million VAT fraud
6. [payback time](#) for 5 wealthy tax fraudsters who were involved in one of the UK's biggest tax frauds
7. an apparently [jobless Londoner](#) who enjoyed a sociable lifestyle of golf and exotic holidays by dodging tax on smuggled tobacco has been jailed

8. a [charity treasurer](#) who tried to steal more than £330,000 in a Gift Aid repayment fraud and spent the money on lavish cruise holidays
9. our [work with Interpol](#) to take apart a pan-European crime gang involved in cigarette trafficking, drug smuggling and money laundering

As well as successful prosecutions, HMRC issued a record £7.8 million [fine](#) to a money service business in West London for breaching the money laundering regulations. There was a [major seizure](#) in Northern Ireland, worth around £2 million in lost duty and taxes, by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (of which HMRC is a part) targeting the criminal activities of paramilitary organised crime groups.

Simon York, Director of the Fraud Investigation Service, said:

The majority of people pay their taxes but there remains a hard core who have zero interest in playing by the rules.

These prosecutions clearly show that we'll relentlessly pursue those criminals who would try and cheat honest taxpayers by stealing money destined for vital public services.

It means we're increasingly taking on ever more complex frauds and well-resourced opponents, including tackling organised criminals who would otherwise undermine our economy and harm our communities.