

# Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice

Ofqual welcomes the Report of the Independent Commission on Examination Malpractice, published today (10 September 2019). The Commission supports our view that there is not an endemic problem of malpractice in the exam system in England, and that the vast majority of people involved act with integrity and professionalism. Nevertheless, it is essential for public confidence that all opportunities are taken to reduce the incentives and potential for malpractice to occur, particularly in the light of growing threats posed by the use of technology. We look forward to working with JCQ and the exam boards to implement the recommendations.

Many of the Report's recommendations are ones that we have also identified, support and have begun to work with other stakeholders to address. In general, there is a need for greater clarity and consistency in the ways in which malpractice is identified, prevented and sanctioned, and also how associated data should be collected and communicated.

In particular, we agree that it is unhelpful to have varying definitions of malpractice, which can create confusion and inconsistency in approaches between individuals and organisations. We therefore support efforts to broaden understanding of what constitutes malpractice and what the anticipated responses might be when issues arise. From our perspective, we are at various stages of consultation (either intended or already initiated) on revisions to our guidance for awarding organisations around issues of personal interest and what constitutes malpractice and maladministration.

We agree with the Commission's view that gathering good quality data and reporting it in engaging ways is important, and we are pleased that our work in this area has been recognised. Nevertheless, we will reflect on the Commission's view that there is more that can be done and we will work with counterpart organisations as appropriate.

With regard to access arrangements, the Commission's report supports our strong view that there is a need for more meaningful candidate level data to be collected, alongside greater clarity of different arrangement definitions. It is only with this data that questions of fairness can be answered satisfactorily. There is, of course, a balance to be struck between gathering meaningful data and being mindful of any extra burden this could place on schools and colleges. We are discussing this trade-off with stakeholders and will work to develop a way to ensure the necessary data is collected in the most efficient way possible.

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# Over £500m new investment in green technologies for a cleaner and healthier future

- £400 million fund to help develop rapid charging infrastructure points for electric vehicles
- First £70 million investment will create 3,000 new rapid charge points, more than doubling the number of rapid charge points across the UK by 2024
- Further £142.9m announced for R&D to combat air and water pollution, and increase sustainability to support Government's ambitious commitment to tackling climate change

Plans for a cleaner and healthier Britain stepped up a gear today, as Ministers announced more than half a billion pounds of investment in green technologies.

The Treasury has launched a £400 million fund to bolster Britain's electric vehicle charging infrastructure, with the first £70 million allocated for 3000 charge points – more than doubling the number across the UK to 5000.

Rapid charge points can recharge a family car in as little as 20 minutes, compared to existing technology which can take 40 minutes- making the reality of driving electric vehicles easier and more accessible for people across the country. The UK already has one of the largest electric vehicle charging networks in Europe, and this investment will help make that the fastest by installing state-of-the-art technology.

A review is currently underway to explore the provision of charge points across major road networks, meaning drivers could charge their car whilst stopping for a coffee at a service station. Today's investment complements £1.5 billion support to boost the uptake of electric vehicles and make cleaner vehicles more accessible to everyone. This is part of the Government's ambition to end the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2040.

Also being announced today is £31.5 million for research into pioneering technologies to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, and £22 million to research new kinds of air pollutants and minimise their effects on public health.

Exchequer Secretary Simon Clarke said:

We are driving ahead with plans to make travel greener while backing British innovation and technology.

I am delighted to announce this funding today that will more than double the number of rapid charge points for electric vehicles on our roads. Britain already boasts one of the biggest networks of

charging infrastructure in Europe and soon we will have the fastest thanks to this investment.

This is the latest in our proud record on climate change –having slashed emissions by over 40% since 1990, whilst simultaneously growing our economy, and setting an ambitious target for net zero emissions by 2050.

Business, Energy and Clean Growth Minister Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The UK has been going further and faster in tackling climate change by becoming the first major economy to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050 and helping us seize the opportunities of a greener future. With air pollution thought to kill as many as seven million people a year globally, it's clear more needs to be done.

That's why we're backing these initiatives, aimed at making improvements from battling air pollutants to protecting our invaluable sea life. These pioneering projects will help us maintain our world-leading position in this field, and to make further strides towards a more sustainable future for our planet.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

It's fantastic there is already a rapid chargepoint at almost every motorway service station, and now more charging stations than petrol stations. But I want to see thousands more chargepoints installed across the UK.

This fund will help drum up further investment in charging infrastructure from the private sector, so charging an electric car becomes as easy as plugging in a smart phone.

## **Further investment into green technology being announced today**

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has today taken another vital step in cleaning up the planet by unveiling £142.9 million investment in green projects, including driving forward approaches to removing greenhouse gases from the air. Part of the second wave of the Government's Strategic Priority Fund, the investment boost is evidence of the Government's steadfast commitment to ensure a healthy, happy planet and population.

Five projects are benefiting from the significant cash injection, including:

- Greenhouse Gas Removal Technologies (£31.52m) – this will support the UK in its net zero ambitions, by driving forward approaches to remove

greenhouse gases from the sky on a large scale

- Clean Air: Addressing the Challenge of Indoor & Outdoor Pollution (£22m) – the next decade will see declining transport pollution but increases in other areas like household products and adhesives. This project will look at tackling emerging air pollutants indoors and outdoors, such as air fresheners and cleaning products, to minimise their effects on public health
- Cleaner food systems for healthy people and a healthy planet (£47 million) — this will transform UK diets to be healthier and more sustainable through changes in production, manufacturing, retail and consumption. It will deliver coherent evidence to enable concerted action from policy, business and civil society to help the UK meet its targets on obesity and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Reusing and recycling materials in innovative ways (£30 million) – this programme will drive forward new research to support opportunities to re-use and recycle materials across sectors such as food, water, textiles and electronics – as well accelerating new, greener manufacturing technologies
- Sustainable Management of Marine Resources (£12.43m) – This programme will ensure that the UK realises sustainable societal and economic benefits through better management of the UK's marine resources, including working more closely with government, industry and the public.

Today's announcements show the Government's firm commitment to tackling climate change and to meeting its environmental responsibilities. As a world leader in clean growth, and the first major economy in the world to legislate to end its contribution to global warming by 2050, today's announcements echo the UK's commitment to being in the driving seat of the green revolution.

#### **Further Information**

- The Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund will be managed and invested on a commercial basis by private sector partners, and government will invest up to £200m to be matched by private investors.
- The fund is leveraging private investment to support the rollout of charge points for electric vehicles across the UK. The initial £70m investment has been provided by government and Masdar.

#### **About the Strategic Priorities Fund:**

- The Strategic Priorities Fund supports high quality research and

development priorities. This is the second wave of funding. The SPF Wave 2 total programme funding figure is £496.8 million. The fund is being delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

More details about the funded projects can be found below:

#### 1.Clean Air: Future Challenges (NERC)

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Met Office with Innovate UK, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Medical Research Council (MRC), Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), National Physical Laboratory (NPL), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Department for Transport (DfT), Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), Scottish Government and Welsh Government.

Funding requested: £22 million over 6 years

#### 2.Greenhouse Gas Removal Demonstrators (NERC)

NERC with Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council (BBSRC), ESRC, EPSRC, Innovate UK, Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Defra and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

Funding requested: £31.52 million over 5 years

#### 3.Sustainable Management of UK Marine Resources (NERC)

NERC with ESRC, Defra and Scottish Government.

Funding requested: £12.43 million over 4 years

#### 4.A food systems approach for healthy people and a healthy planet (BBSRC)

BBSRC with Medical Research Council, NERC, Defra, DHSC and Food Standards Agency

Funding requested: £47 million over 6 years. Defra will contribute an additional £500k over 6 years

#### 5.National interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research Programme (EPSRC)

EPSRC, with NERC, AHRC, Defra and BEIS

Funding requested: £30 million over 5 years

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# Publishers with false emergency services links wound-up in court

Print Publishing Ltd was wound up on Thursday 5 September 2019 by District Judge Richmond at the High Court in Manchester following an investigation by the Insolvency Service. The Official Receiver has been appointed as liquidator.

In considering the petition to wind up the company, the court heard that Print Publishing was incorporated in October 2017 and produced magazines that supported the emergency services.

To secure revenue, sales people would cold-call local businesses, local authorities, schools, as well as sports and social clubs, offering advertising space in two magazines: Crime Reaction and Attention Fire.

Print Publishing claimed to produce three editions of each title per year, with distribution numbers of circa 25,000. Sales people also stressed that they worked for the emergency services or associated charities, while proceeds went towards the emergency services.

Following complaints, however, the Insolvency Service conducted confidential investigations into the Print Publishing's activities before uncovering that claims made by the company were misleading and often false.

The company began securing funds from sponsors for future editions of the magazines as early as October 2017 but did not produce the first magazine until a year and a half later in January 2019.

There was no evidence that the magazines were ever distributed to anyone other than the advertisers themselves or that financial contributions had found their way to the emergency services and associated charities.

Although denied by the company, the Insolvency Service's enquiries concluded that Print Publishing traded with a lack of commercial probity when it claimed to be affiliated with the emergency services and other good causes

Enquiries also found that Print Publishing used oppressive and objectionable sales techniques to pressurise customers into making payments.

Overall, Print Publishing's records showed that they had 120 clients, spanning 169 sales transactions between October 2017 and December 2018, generating bank receipts totalling £62,418.80.

Scott Crighton, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Not only did Print Publishing use dubious sales practices to elicit funds and did not have any links to charities or the emergency services, the magazines were produced late and were not distributed

anywhere beyond the company's own staff.

Following the winding-up of the company the Official Receiver will now look closely into the company's affairs, including the conduct of the former director.

If you or your business has been affected by the actions of Print Publishing, contact the Official Receiver at [piu.north@insolvency.gov.uk](mailto:piu.north@insolvency.gov.uk), quoting CIB57545.

Print Publishing Ltd (10995898). The company's registered officers were located at 64 Derby Lane Old Swan, Liverpool, United Kingdom, L13 3DN.

The petitions were presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986. The Official Receiver was appointed as provisional liquidator of the companies on 5 September 2019 by District Judge Richmond.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Further information about live company investigations is available here.](#)

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is available here.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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## [Bell from American ship destroyed in Second World War going home](#)

USS Osprey was lost on 5 June 1944 when she hit a mine around 5pm and sank with the loss of six men, south of the Isle of Wight.

Now more than 70 years on, the ship's bell which has been handed over to Heloise Warner, the acting Receiver of Wreck based at the Maritime & Coastguard Agency in Southampton, is going home.

Heloise said: 'We need to remember that whilst this bell is an important artefact and historically significant in terms of Operation Overlord, it also represents the tragedy of loss. It will be a symbolic moment when the bell is returned to US soil.'

Families and friends would have grieved the loss of the six service men

believed to have perished: Lieutenant Van Hamilton, seaman 2nd class John Medvic, fireman 1st class Walter O'Bryan, quartermaster 2nd class Emery Parichy, motor machinist's mate 2nd class Joseph Vanasky, Jr and motor machinist's mate 3rd class Cleo Whitschell.

USS Osprey was a raven-class minesweeper of the United States Navy. Commissioned on 16 December, 1940, she later saw service in North Africa as part of Operation Torch, the Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa (November 1942).

On 3 April 1944, she travelled to England to be part of Operation Overlord, successfully taking part in sweeping operations off the south west coast. She is thought to have been the first casualty of D-Day operations when she hit a mine which blew a large hole in the engine room. A fire broke out and just 45 minutes later, the ship had to be abandoned.

There are thousands of wrecked vessels and aircraft around the UK coast and many are protected sites. Any recovered wreck material must be reported to the receiver of wreck.

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## [Dependence on prescription medicines linked to deprivation](#)

The review assesses the scale and distribution of prescribed medicines – and makes recommendations for better monitoring, treatment and support for patients. It uses available prescriptions data, a literature review and reports of patients' experiences.

A total of 5 classes of medicines were included in the review:

- benzodiazepines (mainly prescribed for anxiety and insomnia)
- Z-drugs (insomnia)
- gabapentinoids (neuropathic pain)
- opioid pain medications (for chronic non-cancer pain such as low back pain and injury-related and degenerative joint disease)
- antidepressants (depression)

The main findings include:

- 1 in 4 adults had been prescribed at least one of these classes of medicines in the year ending March 2018
- in March 2018 half of those receiving a prescription (of these classes of medicine) had been continuously prescribed for at least the previous 12 months. Between 22% and 32% (depending on the medicine class) had received a prescription for at least the previous 3 years
- long-term prescribing of opioid pain medicines and benzodiazepines is



falling but still occurs frequently – which is not in line with the guidelines or evidence on effectiveness

Trends in prescribing include:

- the number of prescriptions for antidepressants and gabapentinoids are rising
- following years of increase prior to 2016, prescriptions for opioid pain medicines and z-drugs are now falling
- prescriptions for benzodiazepines continue to fall, as they were prior to 2016
- women and older adults (particularly over-75s) are prescribed to at the highest rates

Links to deprivation include:

- prescribing rates and duration of prescription are higher in some of the most deprived areas of England
- a similar pattern is also seen for the number of medicines co-prescribed (for example, at least 2 of the drugs)
- for opioids and gabapentinoids, the prescribing rate in the most deprived quintile was 1.6 times the rate in the least deprived quintile
- the co-prescribing rate in the most deprived quintile was 1.4 times higher than in the least deprived quintile (30% compared to 21%)

Opioids for chronic non-cancer pain are known to be ineffective for most people when used long-term (over 3 months), while benzodiazepines are not recommended to be used for longer than 28 days. The review identified that when first used these medicines are prescribed for short term use. However, some patients do still end up being prescribed these medicines for longer periods.

Long-term prescribing is likely to result in dependence or withdrawal problems, but it is not possible to put an exact figure on the prevalence of dependence and withdrawal from current data.

People who have been on these drugs for longer time periods should not stop taking their medication suddenly. If they are concerned, they should seek the support of their GP.

People who had experienced problems from prescription medicines also reported that they felt uninformed before they started them, and unsupported when they experienced problems.

The drugs in this review are vitally important (when prescribed properly) for the health and wellbeing of many patients. It is important that doctors follow the clinical guidelines and do not put inappropriate limits on prescribing that could cause patients' harm or drive them to seek drugs from illicit sources.

The review makes a number of recommendations focusing on education and treatment, including:

- giving NHS commissioners and doctors better access to data, improving insight of prescribing behaviour in their local area and enabling GPs to follow best practice
- updating clinical guidance for medicines which can cause problems with dependence and withdrawal, and improving training for clinicians to ensure their prescribing adheres to best practice
- to develop new clinical guidance on the safe management of dependence and withdrawal problems
- giving better information to patients about the benefits and risks with these medicines
- doctors should have clear discussions with patients – and where appropriate offer alternatives, such as social prescribing
- commissioners ensure appropriate support is available locally for patients experiencing problems
- a national helpline for patients to be set up
- ensuring high-quality research around dependence and withdrawal is undertaken

PHE has also published a detailed geographical breakdown by clinical commissioning groups of prescribing rates for 2017 to 2018 and the proportion of people that had been receiving a prescription for at least 12 months prior to March 2018.

Rosanna O'Connor, Director of Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco and Justice at PHE said:

We know that GPs in some of the more deprived areas are under great pressure but, as this review highlights, more needs to be done to educate and support patients, as well as looking closely at prescribing practice, and what alternative treatments are available locally.

While the scale and nature of opioid prescribing does not reflect the so-called crisis in North America, the NHS needs to take action now to protect patients.

Our recommendations have been developed with expert medical royal colleges, the NHS and patients that have experienced long-term problems. The practical package of measures will make a difference to help prevent problems arising and support those that are struggling on these medications.

Professor Paul Cosford, Emeritus Medical Director at PHE said:

These medicines have many vital clinical uses and can make a big difference to people's quality of life and for some their long-term use is clinically necessary, particularly antidepressants, which can take longer to have their full effect.

This report shows that while the vast majority of new prescriptions

for these medicines are for short term use, within clinical guidelines, it also highlights significant numbers have been taking these medicines for a long time. It is vital that clinical guidelines for prescribing are followed and regular reviews with patients take place to address this.

We also know how difficult it is for some people to come off these medicines and more research is needed for us to understand better how we help people to stop using them when they are no longer clinically helpful.

Keith Ridge, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer at NHS England, said:

As PHE rightly say, these medicines have many vital clinical uses and can make a big difference to people's quality of life and for some their long-term use is clinically necessary, particularly antidepressants, which can take longer to have their full effect.

But for many patients they may not be the best option – with talking therapies and social prescribing often more appropriate.

Arabella Tresilian, a patient who has experienced problems associated with withdrawal, said:

I was on and off anti-depressants for over twenty years, juggling work and family life at the same time. I really struggled to come off them and in 2015 I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and chronic fatigue. Day to day activities became overwhelming and I quickly began to feel isolated.

I was very lucky that my doctor's surgery offered social prescribing which made all the difference. They referred me to a local choir which helped me with my recovery and gave me back my confidence.

I know first-hand that dependence and withdrawal from prescription medicines can be extremely difficult to cope with. It is reassuring that this review recognises that more needs to be done and I am hopeful that social prescribing will now be offered more widely.

## **Background**

The review analysed available NHS prescriptions data from community pharmacies from April 2015 to March 2018 on 5 classes of prescribed medicines:

- antidepressants
- opioids

- gabapentinoids (gabapentin and pregabalin)
- benzodiazepines
- z-drugs

It also included a rapid evidence assessment of literature on the harms caused by dependence or withdrawal, risk factors, treatment and prevention interventions and the support patients receive.

An expert reference group, made up of a broad range of specialists and experts by experience, was recruited to provide advice and support for the project.

The Prescribed Medicines Review (PMR) brought together the best available evidence, following PRISMA guidelines, on:

- prevalence and prescribing patterns in adults
  - the nature and risk factors of dependence and withdrawal symptoms associated with prescribed medicines among some adults who take these medicines
  - effective prevention and treatment of dependence and withdrawal for each drug category
- Supportive statements

Dr Norma O'Flynn, Chief Operating Officer of the National Guideline Centre at the Royal College of Physicians said:

We're pleased to be able to support the work of PHE on their prescriptions medicines review by conducting systematic reviews of the research evidence.

The reviews and report recommendations are important steps in promoting a focus on managing prescription and withdrawal and highlighting areas where more research is required to inform practice.

Professor John Read from University of East London, speaking on behalf of the British Psychological Society's representative on the PHE review's Expert Reference Group said:

We thank Public Health England for all its work on this hugely important report.

We especially welcome the thorough research review documenting the alarming numbers of people experiencing withdrawal effects from prescribed medicines, and the recommendations for urgently needed services and a phone line to support people struggling to come off these drugs, including antidepressants.

We also value the emphasis placed on increasing accessibility to talking therapies for the problems that the drugs are currently prescribed for.