

# [Press release: MHRA recalls more blood pressure and heart medication from pharmacies as a precaution](#)

Today's recall affects 3 batches of Irbesartan 150mg and 300mg tablets which reached the UK market, supplied by Macleods Pharma UK. Information on which batches are affected can be found [here](#).

The pharmacy-level recall is being undertaken as a precaution as testing revealed possible N nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA) contamination.

There is no evidence at present that the impurity has caused any harm to patients and not all Irbesartan products are affected. People should continue to take their medication and should speak to a doctor or pharmacist if they have any concerns.

[Earlier this month](#), MHRA advised pharmacies to recall all affected batches of Irbesartan containing medicines made by Actavis.

In 2018, the Agency twice recalled batches of Valsartan to pharmacy level in 2018. Valsartan containing medicines from Dexcel and Actavis (now Accord) were recalled in [July](#) and batches of Valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva, were also recalled to pharmacy level [in November](#).

The initial recall occurred after an impurity, N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), was identified as part of the manufacturing process in a Valsartan active substance manufactured at one facility based in China. A second impurity, NDEA, was later discovered.

The MHRA continues to thoroughly investigate the issue alongside the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (EDQM). We will continue to monitor the situation in the UK and consider what actions are necessary to protect public health.

Dr Sam Atkinson, MHRA's Director of the Inspection, Enforcement and Standards Division, said:

Our most important concern is the safety of the medicines you take.

As today shows, we continue to investigate potential contamination of sartan containing medicines such as Irbesartan. We will continue to act and provide updates when appropriate.

Currently, there is no evidence that medicines containing NDMA or NDEA have caused any harm to patients.

Because of the risk associated with suddenly stopping high blood pressure medication, continue to take your medicines as prescribed

by your doctor.

If you have any concerns about your medicine, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

## Notes to editor

1. [In July, MHRA advised pharmacies](#) to recall affected batches of Valsartan containing medicines made by Mylan and Teva as a precautionary measure. 2. [In November, we advised pharmacies](#) to recall batches of valsartan from Dexcel and Actavis as a precautionary measure. 3. Earlier this January, MHRA advised pharmacies to recall all affected batches of Irbesartan containing medicines made by Actavis as a precautionary measure. More information [here](#). 4. Find out more about our [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

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## [Press release: UK Hydrographic Office welcomes Maritime 2050 strategy](#)

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has welcomed the publication of the UK government's 'Maritime 2050' strategy paper, which sets out the vision for the future of the UK maritime sector.

The strategy, which has been developed in consultation with agencies including the UKHO and the wider public and private sectors, sets out a series of detailed recommendations to help the UK maintain its position as a leading global maritime nation. These recommendations span themes including the environment, international trade, security and resilience, infrastructure, people and technology.

A focus on the positive impact that smart shipping and use of autonomous vessels could have on the environment, as well as safety and efficiency across the maritime industry, forms a key part of the paper. In recognition of these benefits, the strategy supports collaboration between the UKHO, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, industry experts and the wider government to develop navigation and safety data requirements that enable the use of these technologies in the future.

The strategy also recognises the value of marine geospatial data in unlocking economic potential for maritime-related industries, with further recommendations to not only fully map the seabed in the UK's Exclusive Economic Zone (spanning 6,805,586 sq. km) to modern standards, but also play a key role in international efforts to chart the world's seabed. This aim will be key to helping government and the wider industry improve our understanding of how we can protect and sustainably benefit from the global marine environment.

Commenting on the Maritime 2050 paper, Cathrine Armour, Director of Customer Division, said:

The UK Hydrographic Office welcomes the publication of Maritime 2050, which sets out a compelling vision for the future of the UK maritime sector. The UK has the world's fifth largest Exclusive Economic Zone and the better we understand our oceans, the better placed we will be to ensure its prosperity whilst capitalising on the opportunities that exist.

As the government's hydrographic and marine geospatial data experts, we are proud of the part we play in mapping the UK's seabed and enabling the future of maritime navigation. At the same time, we can only meet the ambitions of Maritime 2050 through a collaborative approach that brings together the expertise and insights of all our partners across government, industry and academia. We look forward to working closely with these partners to fulfil these goals.

You can read the strategy in full here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maritime-2050-navigating-the-future>

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## **[Press release: More funding to help town centres and high streets thrive](#)**

Communities across the country can bid for up to £50,000 to help make local areas more attractive for business, High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP has today (24 January 2019) confirmed.

The latest round of the £500,000 British Improvement Districts (BIDs) Loan Fund will support business owners and local leaders to set-up a BID, which allow communities to come together to deliver additional local services and upgrade commercial areas for the benefit of business.

From Altrincham to Watford, Business Improvement Districts serve as a tried and tested model of how local business can work together to realise the potential of towns and high streets by engaging strategically with local authorities, developers and communities.

High Streets Minister Jake Berry MP said:

BIDs have a proven track record of upgrading commercial areas to enable business owners and entrepreneurs in our town centres and

high streets to thrive.

Whether through promoting longer opening hours, more security for shops or pedestrianised shopping districts, BIDs are a go-to vehicle through which you can reimagine your high street or town centre.

Those on the ground know what works. Our Loan Fund is designed to provide them with the means to drive regeneration forward and meet local needs.

British BIDs, a BIDs sector body, hold the contract of managing and operating the fund until September 2020.

Professor Christopher Turner, British Bids Chief Executive said:

Business Improvement Districts have been shown to be hugely successful in regenerating town centres.

There are now over 300 BIDs across the UK and the Loan Fund that the government set up has been vital in helping key BIDs to emerge.

Thus far 29 loans of between £10,000 and £50,000 have been allocated through the British BIDs application process, and BIDs have been able to use this loan funding to develop their proposals and support the ballot process.

## **Case study: Altrincham BIDs**

In July 2014, the Altrincham BID was awarded £40,000 from the 3rd round of the BIDs Loan Fund, which supported it to overcome prohibitive start-up costs during development.

The BID was launched in April 2016 and supported Altrincham town leaders to take forward an ambitious plan to transform their historic market hall into a food and culture hub at the centre of the town.

This bold vision paid off, turning around a shop vacancy rate of 30%, one of the highest shop vacancy rates in the UK.

Last year the town scooped the prize for England's best high street at the 2018 Great British High Street Awards. Altrincham was recognised for its "ongoing events throughout the year to drive footfall to the local high street", which the town's Business Improvement District Altrincham Unlimited has done much to lead.

## **Further information**

There is up to £95,000 available for this latest round of funding, which we estimate will be able to provide funding for up to 4 prospective BIDs.

Successful applicants to the fund can receive up to £50,000. The average received by successful applicants has been £33,000.

Expressions of Interest in the Loan Fund are to be received by 8 March 2019, with completed applications by 10 May 2019.

For more information, please visit our [BIDs Loan Fund page](#) and the [British BIDs website](#).

To register your interest and receive an application form, please contact [bidloanfund@britishbids.info](mailto:bidloanfund@britishbids.info).

Key ways the government has backed the high street in 2018:

- the Budget saw business rates relief cut small retailers' bills by a third, building on over £10 billion of business rates support since 2016
- the government appointed an independent expert panel, headed by Sir John Timpson to diagnose and respond to the challenges facing the high street
- in response to recommendations from the expert panel, the government has announced a £675 million [Future High Streets Fund](#) to help improve infrastructure and access to high streets, put historic buildings back to use and make town centres fit for the future
- the [Open Doors scheme](#) will see empty shops being opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities
- the [Great British High Street Awards](#) was a hotly contested competition to find Britain's best high street, and the huge response highlighted retailers and community groups across the country working in innovative ways keep town centres vibrant and strong

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## [Speech: Antimicrobial resistance needs an urgent global response](#)

The purpose of the World Economic Forum is to bring together world leaders and big business to solve the world's most difficult problems.

One of these problems is antimicrobial resistance, where the world has come together over the last 5 years, but so much progress needs to be made, to stop an otherwise terrible future.

As health secretary responsible for one of the most advanced healthcare systems in the world, I could not look my children in the eyes unless I knew I was doing all in my power to solve this great threat. When we have time to act. But the urgency is now.

Each and every one of us benefits from antibiotics, but we all too easily take them for granted, and I shudder at the thought of a world in which their

power is diminished.

Antimicrobial resistance is as big a danger to humanity as climate change or warfare. That's why we need an urgent global response.

The UK has taken a global lead by setting out a 20-year AMR vision explaining the steps we must take nationally and internationally to rise to this challenge. It fits into a pattern of work across the world to keep this driving forward.

The plan incorporates 3 things we all need to do: prevention, innovation, and collaboration.

First: preventing infections is vital. We have today set a target in the UK of cutting resistant infections by 10% within the next 5 years.

We're going to cut antibiotic use by a further 15% within 5 years by only using antibiotics when absolutely necessary. Everybody can play a part in only using antibiotics when they're really ill.

And we're going to work with the livestock industry to build on the amazing 40% reduction in antibiotic usage in just 5 years – 71% in chicken farming, while increasing productivity by 11%.

We're going to do it through immunisation, better infection control and working with doctors, vets, farmers and patients to prevent unnecessary prescription of antibiotics.

Second: innovation. There hasn't been a single, new class of antibiotic since the 1980s.

No new innovation in the most basic bedrock of every health service in the world – shocking. And deeply troubling.

Any health secretary or minister, who doesn't lie awake at night worrying about that last pack of antibiotics, must have a prescription to some seriously strong sleeping pills.

We know the reasons why. Compared to expensive new cancer or heart drugs, putting time and money into developing new antibiotics is commercially unattractive for pharmaceutical companies.

And under the traditional model of revenue linked to volume, there is an added disincentive for pharmaceutical companies with a product that must be conserved.

So we need a new model, one that works with, and incentivises the pharmaceutical industry.

And this is where the NHS, because of its unique position, can take a global lead in pioneering a new payment system, one that reflects the true value of antibiotics to society.

At the heart of it is changing the way we think of antibiotics from a medical product to a medical service.

It's a service that we all rely on: patients, doctors, and pharmaceutical companies.

So within 6 months, the NHS is going to start work on paying for the service, and security, of having access to critical antibiotics when we need them, rather than hoping there's a product we can buy in the future.

We're going to be more of a Spotify subscriber than a vinyl record shopper.

We will pay upfront so pharmaceutical companies know that it's worthwhile for them to invest the estimated £1 billion it costs to develop a new drug.

We will work with the industry to develop the next generation of antibiotics, ones that are available and accessible to all.

But the only way this system can incentivise innovation globally, is if it is expanded globally.

Which brings me to my third and final point: collaboration.

I am proud of the work the UK has done to secure antimicrobial resistance on the global agenda. We're playing our part both at home and on the world stage.

Because we recognise that none of us can stand alone against AMR. It won't be solved by one nation, no single action or intervention.

It is a fight that requires continued collaboration, across borders, now and in the future.

I've been meeting health ministers from across the world here to agree further action, and next week the UN inter-agency co-ordination group are publishing their draft recommendations on the next steps needed to tackle AMR.

Hopefully that will take us one step closer.

It is a challenge, I believe, we can rise to if every step forward, we push ourselves further. Together, I'm convinced that with a proper plan we can achieve that goal.

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**[Press release: James Brokenshire](#)**

# announces overhaul of broken housing complaints system

- Communities Secretary announces plans for new housing complaints service for entire housing market – ensuring both homeowners and tenants know where to go when things go wrong
- For first time ever, private landlords will be legally required to join a housing redress scheme – boosting protection for millions of renters across the country
- Move builds on government reforms to create a housing market that works for everyone – no matter what type of home they live in

Dissatisfied homeowners and tenants will have simple and quick access to help when things go wrong, thanks to new plans announced today (24 January 2019) by Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP.

From broken boilers to cracks in the wall, the new Housing Complaints Resolution Service will potentially help millions by providing a straight-forward way of getting help when faced with unresolved disputes about problems with their home – such as repairs and maintenance.

Unlike other sectors, such as financial services, the housing market has several different complaints bodies, with homeowners and tenants having to navigate their way through a complicated and bureaucratic system just to work out where to register a grievance.

Establishing a single housing complaints service for all residents – no matter whether they rent or own their home – will prevent people from battling with their landlord or builder to resolve issues on their own and make it easier to claim compensation where it's owed.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

Creating a housing market that works for everyone isn't just about building homes – it's about ensuring people can get the help they need when something goes wrong.

But all too often the process can be confusing and overly bureaucratic, leaving many homeowners and tenants feeling like there is nowhere to go in the event of problems with their home.

The proposals I have announced today will help ensure all residents are able to access help when they need it, so disputes can be resolved faster, and people can get compensation where it's owed.

Currently, the housing complaints system is confusing – there are multiple complaint bodies covering the housing market, and membership of redress



schemes is compulsory for some tenures but not others.

For example, in the private rented sector, there is currently no obligation for landlords to register with a complaints system – leaving thousands of renters without any course for redress.

To combat this, the Communities Secretary has today announced that private landlords will be legally required to become members of a redress scheme – with a fine of up to £5,000 if they fail to do so.

And to protect the interests of home-owners who buy new build homes, government has also reiterated its commitment to establishing a New Homes Ombudsman which will champion home buyers, protect their interests and hold developers to account.

Legislation will be brought forward at the earliest possible opportunity to require all new developers to belong to the Ombudsman – giving homebuyers the confidence that when they get the keys to a new home they are getting the quality of build they expect.

Developers will also have to belong to the new body by 2021 if they wish to participate in the government's landmark Help to Buy scheme.

The Housing Complaints Resolution Service will be developed with a new Redress Reform Working Group made up of representatives from across the sector, working with industry and consumers.

This is part of on-going work by the government to make the property market fairer and more transparent for everyone.

These measures form part of the government response to the consultation [Strengthening consumer redress in the housing market](#), which ran from 18 February to 16 April 2018, and received over 1,200 responses.

The consultation looked at a range of issues including:

- how the current complaints and redress landscape works
- whether streamlining redress in housing could help improve delivery of services
- how the 'in-house' complaints process and other practices and processes in redress could be improved
- how any gaps in housing redress could be filled, with a particular focus on purchasers of new build homes and private rented sector tenants

The policy proposals in this document primarily relate to England. Where proposed legislation has scope outside England with regard to devolved matters, we will continue to engage and consult the devolved administrations to seek agreement.

Redress for social housing residents is being considered separately. The response to the [social housing green paper](#) and the [call for evidence for the review of social housing regulation](#) are due to be published in spring 2019.

The government announced the proposal to create a New Homes Ombudsman service in [October 2018](#). This response indicates how that service will sit in the wider redress landscape and the next steps of its implementation.

The Housing Complaints Resolution Service will provide a single point of access to resolve complaints for housing consumers, when 'in-house' complaint processes have been exhausted, through the current schemes providing alternative dispute resolution, while preserving the expertise of existing providers.