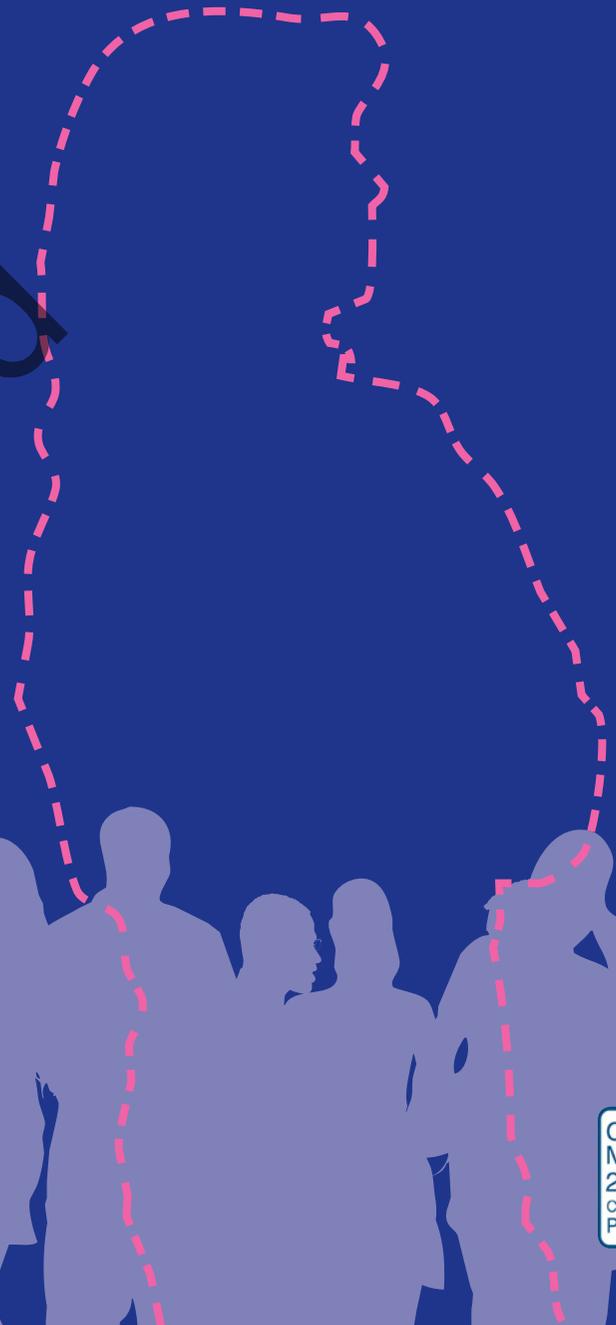


# Have you got what it takes?

Tackling drugs

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## Tackling drugs

### Important facts

In December 2010, the Government published its Drug Strategy, *Reducing demand, restricting supply, building recovery: supporting people to live a drug-free life*.

The strategy is highly ambitious and sets out two main aims – to reduce illegal and other harmful drug use, and to increase the numbers recovering from both drug and alcohol dependence.

Illegal drug use harms UK communities through drug-related violence, anti-social behaviour, acquisitive crime (such as burglary and robbery), knife and firearms crime, and other criminal activities.

Around half of organised crime groups in the UK are involved in drug trafficking and distribution. As a result, tough enforcement is an essential part of the drug strategy, with action to restrict drug supply and reduce drug-related crime a key priority for law enforcement.

### Background

In December 2010, the Government published its drug strategy, *Reducing demand, restricting supply, building recovery: supporting people to live a drug-free life*. It sets out an essentially different approach to preventing drug use in our communities and supporting individuals to recover from drug and alcohol dependence.

It places emphasis on a more wide-ranging approach, by tackling not only treatment for those dependent on drugs or alcohol (or both), but other issues such as offending, employment and housing.

Between a third and half of all acquisitive crime is drug related. The high numbers of drug offences and drug-related acquisitive crimes place a heavy burden on police and the criminal justice system, and contribute significantly to the fear of crime. A quarter of adults think that using or dealing drugs is a problem in their area and almost seven in ten believe that drugs are a major cause of crime in Britain.

There is no simple solution to the drug problem. Decriminalisation would not tackle the complexity of the problem or take into account the harm that drugs cause to the individual. Neither would it deal with the risk factors that lead individuals to misuse drugs or alcohol, nor the misery, cost and lost opportunities that dependence means for individuals, their families and the wider community.

### Legal framework

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 provides the legal framework which underpins the Government's approach to tackling the harm caused by drug misuse. This framework helps inform police priorities and the judiciary's sentencing practices. It classifies drugs in one of three categories – Class A, B or C – according to how harmful they are considered to be either to the individual or to society more generally. The act also meets our international obligations, which arise from the United Nations Conventions on narcotic and psychotropic substances. The conventions support the 'prohibition approach' as the best way to protect the health and welfare of the public.

UK law enforcement plays a vital role in enforcing our drugs laws, by increasing the risks to those involved, which disrupts the availability of drugs in the UK.

### The international context

Law enforcement partners continue to work closely with partners in the EU and more widely to disrupt drug trafficking routes. These efforts form part of the 'golden thread' of law enforcement in the UK, connecting local and neighbourhood policing up with international law enforcement. This allows end-to-end disruption of organised crime groups.

Counter-narcotics work overseas is a key part of the UK Government's drugs and organised crime strategies to restrict the supply of cocaine to the UK. We are committed to reducing the demand for drugs while promoting recovery from addiction, as well as restricting supply and having effective law enforcement to fight drugs at every stage of the chain.

## More information

### How do you know that treatment can reduce the harm caused by dependence while also preventing wider damage to the community?

Drug treatment is an effective way to tackle drug use. It helps people to overcome dependence, reduces drug use, improves health, reduces offending, and can give communities and families some relief from the consequences of dependence.

Two significant research projects have shown the effectiveness of drug treatment in reducing drug use and cutting crime. The most recent of these, the Drug Treatment Outcome Research Study (DTORS), which reported in December 2009, found that every pound spent on treatment delivered £2.50 in benefits to society, mostly by cutting crime but also in reduced health and social costs.

### What are you doing about new psychoactive substances, or so-called 'legal highs'?

We have introduced a new temporary control power to tackle the threat from new psychoactive substances. Temporary orders allow the Government to protect the public while giving time to our independent experts to prepare advice and allowing our enforcement partners to target traffickers.

### Has police activity to tackle drugs fallen as a result of cuts to police funding and numbers?

The effectiveness of a police force depends on how well it uses its resources. We are cutting bureaucracy for the police so they can get out from behind their desks and on to the frontline. By working more efficiently and driving out unnecessary cost we can find savings while protecting frontline services.

It is up to chief constables how they use their resources. Police and crime commissioners will make forces truly accountable to the communities they serve, making sure that resources are properly targeted to where they are needed.

### Why does the strategy say that drugs matter to the whole of society, yet some people use illegal drugs with no consequences to anyone else?

The criminal behaviour of some of those with a drug problem affects society as a whole, as acquisitive crime and the problems associated with drug dealing and drug dependence can damage the quality of life in communities. Drug use also causes indirect harm to health, and economic and social well-being, affecting the individual, their families and wider communities in this country and beyond.

For more information, please see the links below.

Drug Strategy: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs/drug-strategy-2010>.

DTORS: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/horr24c.pdf>

ACPO Organised Crime Group Mapping, cited in Cabinet Office/Home Office Extending our Reach (2009) [www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm76/7665/7665.pdf](http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm76/7665/7665.pdf)