



THE GOVERNMENT REPLY TO THE SEVENTH
REPORT FROM THE HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SESSION 2009-10 HC 74

The Cocaine Trade

**Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of Her Majesty**

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THE COCAINE TRADE

INTRODUCTION

1. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (HAC) published the report of its inquiry into The Cocaine Trade on 3rd March 2010. This Command Paper sets out the Government response to the conclusions and recommendations in the Committee's report.
2. The Government welcomes the contribution of the HAC to this important work and has considered the 20 wide ranging findings set out in the report. These include findings relating to both supply and demand side interventions. The Government broadly agrees with over half of the recommendations made by the Committee and our responses are set out below.
3. The British Crime Survey (BCS) and other data have indicated a significant increase in powder cocaine use over time despite a reduction in overall drug use. Since 1996 levels of powder cocaine use among the general population (aged 16-59) have increased from 0.6% to 3.0% (representing around 1 million adults, 2008/09 BCS). Most recently, increases in powder cocaine use were apparent between 2007/08 (2.4%) and 2008/09 (3.0%). The increase was particularly apparent amongst 16 – 24 year olds: 1.3% in 1996 and 5.1% in 2007/08 compared with 6.6% in 2008/09 (almost half a million young adults).
4. The new Coalition Programme for Government provides an opportunity to review current drug policy and the Department is working with other Government Departments to consider the Government's future approach to drugs, including cocaine, building on the measures in the Coalition Agreement.
5. The Government's current approach to powder cocaine is to:
 - Undertake a stocktake of the evidence on the nature of the increase in powder cocaine use (including patterns of young people's use), the relationship between cocaine, alcohol use and other synthetic drug use (including the relationship to the night time economy), and the health risks of cocaine use and the four most commonly used cutting agents;
 - Continue enforcement approaches including;
 - Establishing the most effective options available to tackle the importation of cocaine and its adulterants working closely with producer and transit countries in Latin America, the Caribbean and West Africa and recognising our shared responsibility to tackle both supply and demand issues;
 - Exploring the role of the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) in reducing the harms caused by powder cocaine; and
 - Promoting the use of current tools and powers to prevent drug taking in bars and clubs;

- Continue education approaches and prevention campaigns to change attitudes and behaviour towards cocaine use;
 - Continue to assess treatment capacity to ensure that the treatment needs of powder cocaine users are met. Those in treatment for powder cocaine use now amount to 6% of the total treatment population;
 - Explore Drugs in the Workplace through work with our partners in the business sector to address cocaine use within the business community; and
 - Establish and strengthen the links between the alcohol strategy and the drug strategy.
6. The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) has also announced plans to undertake a review of the harms caused by cocaine in the latter part of 2010 with a view to publication in 2011.

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee reached a number of conclusions and highlighted recommendations for action by the Government. In this response the key findings and recommendations are identified according to the paragraphs in which they appear in the conclusion of the report.

- 1. We therefore support calls for a full and independent value-for-money assessment of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and related legislation and policy. This assessment must also address the concerns about inadequate data collection raised in the 2007 review. (Paragraph 24)**

Government response

The Government partially accepts this recommendation. Evaluation has formed an important and significant part of the implementation of both the previous and current national drug strategies. The drug strategy was not designed to be measured by a single evaluation. This is because the strands of the policy, which include not only drug treatment of offenders but also resettlement and interdiction of supply, are too disparate to be treated as a single piece.

A number of individual evaluations of key elements of the strategy have been undertaken. For example, the Drug Treatment Outcomes Research Study¹ (DTORS) was commissioned by the Home Office in 2005 to refresh the evidence on the effectiveness of drug treatment. The key findings show a number of positive outcomes including use of all drugs fell, reported committing acquisitive crime fell, social circumstances improved, including employment and accommodation. Drug treatment was cost-beneficial in 80% of cases and for every £1 spent on drug treatment, an estimated £2.50 of benefits were obtained.

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, as amended, responds to the three UN Drug Conventions². It controls the drugs which the UK is required to control as a signatory to the Conventions. International agreement would be required for any change to the Convention controls and the UK will not alter its stance on them and has no intention of breaking our obligations in respect of them by acting unilaterally.

Nor do we intend to undertake an assessment comparing the costs and benefits of different legislative options for domestic drug policy. However, we will work with other Government Departments to explore putting in place an evaluative framework which encompasses the broad range of individual strands with a view to establishing a more coherent evaluative overview of the strategy in its entirety. This should also provide more integrated information with which to make a more robust assessment of VFM.

¹ (Source: Jones et al. 2009; Barnard et al. 2009; Davies et al. 2009)

² These are the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 and the Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988.

- 2. We recommend that the Government stop using the term 'recreational' in relation to cocaine. (Paragraph 31)**

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation and agrees that the term 'recreational' in relation to drug use is inappropriate. The term is not used routinely in the British Crime Survey publications and we will endeavour to ensure that the term is not used in relation to cocaine in future Government documentation

- 3. We recommend that the Government appoint an Independent Drugs Advisor, using as a model the role carried out by Keith Hellawell between 1998 and 2002. The structure of the drugs strategy which Mr Hellawell initiated remains in place. However we consider that the proliferation of different departments involved in drugs policy from supply-side enforcement through to treatment, necessitates an independent co-ordinator to ensure that policy is fully implemented, and in an integrated manner. (Paragraph 100)**

Government response

The Government does not agree with this recommendation and does not see any benefit in reinstating the post of a national drug policy co-ordinator, or 'drugs czar'. As a cross-departmental strategy with no one department having overall responsibility, oversight of delivery of interventions to reduce drug use was held by the drug policy co-ordinator, who was based in the Cabinet Office. When responsibility for delivery of the drug strategy moved to the Home Office, the Home Secretary assumed overall responsibility for the strategy, and retains this responsibility today. As such, there is no requirement for an additional co-ordinator.

The establishment of clear and effective means of co-ordinating the development and delivery of policy across Government at ministerial and official level will be a priority as the Government's approach to drugs is defined arising out of commitments made in the Coalition Agreement.

- 4. The persistence of a high overall area under cultivation in Colombia, at 81,000 ha in 2008, shows that the battle has only just been joined. It seems to us that the key to further success lies as much in alternative development programmes as in crop and laboratory eradication schemes. Given the unenviable position of the UK as one of the largest consumers of cocaine worldwide, the UK has a compelling duty to support Colombia in tackling cocaine production. In this context the £1million a year spent by the UK on anti-cocaine operations in Colombia does not seem very substantial, particularly when compared to the amounts invested by the EU and US. We therefore urge the UK Government to re-examine its development budgets to see whether more could be contributed to Colombian alternative developments schemes. (Paragraph 112)**

Government response

The Government does not agree with this recommendation. The United Kingdom has been working, as part of a wider international effort, for over 20 years in Colombia to tackle the illegal drugs trade. This international engagement with Colombia is proving successful. The UN reports that coca cultivation in Colombia has declined significantly. The wholesale price of cocaine across the EU is rising, prices in the UK in 2009 increased by 25%. Street sales now rarely contain more than 20% cocaine and often as little as 5%. We need however to continue working with our Colombian partners, in order to build on the progress made so far.

The UK's work in Colombia to tackle the illegal drugs trade involves intelligence-sharing, raising policing and law-enforcement standards, and promoting best practice amongst Colombian law-enforcement partners. This helps to destroy the criminal networks which target the UK. Much of this work is extremely sensitive and revealing details would put British and Colombian lives at risk. Therefore, in common with other intelligence-led work that we undertake, we do not publish the precise cost of our counter-narcotics work. The UK Government also has supported projects totalling £1.1m through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Bogotá, several of which have a regional remit.

Regular interaction with our counterparts in the USA ensures that our efforts in the region are coordinated and avoids risk of duplication. We also contribute to and seek to influence EU funding for counter-narcotics work in Colombia and other key producer countries. This includes contributing through the EU to alternative development projects, for example in Bolivia. Complications with land ownership rights, forced displacements and the presence of armed groups in Colombia in particular, make it difficult to work directly on alternative development.

Under the Latin America Partnership Programme Arrangement (LAPPA), the Department for International Development (DfID) is providing £17 million over 3 years (2008-2011) to 12 UK NGOs for Latin American programmes. This includes several interventions by LAPPA partners working in Colombia, including CAFOD, Christian Aid and Oxfam. One of the key development objectives of the partnership is increased access to market and economic opportunities for poor people. With DfID's support, these NGOs are helping subsistence farmers and small-scale producers in Colombia to develop viable alternative livelihood strategies (for example, by growing a greater diversity and more nutritious crops, and by realising fair market prices for their products).

The destruction of laboratory facilities is a high priority. During 2008/09, SOCA's work with the Colombians led to the seizure of tonnes of cocaine and the destruction of dozens of laboratories. This, combined with action against laboratories elsewhere in South America, has contributed to reduced availability and purity of cocaine across the world wide market, but markedly in the UK.

Whilst the UK is perceived to be one of the largest consumers of cocaine, the actual cocaine consumed at street level is often only 5% purity. It is important to differentiate between what is consumed and what is imported. The actual amount of South American cocaine that is estimated to be imported into the UK on an annual basis is 25-30 tonnes. This is less than 5% of global cocaine production.

- 5. We regret to note that progress in coca crop eradication and cocaine seizures made in Colombia do not appear to have been replicated in Peru and Bolivia, reflecting SOCA's assessment that relations with those countries were "more difficult". The UK should use all diplomatic routes at its disposal to engage with the Bolivian Government on cocaine production, and seek to increase development of alternative crop programmes in Peru and Bolivia. (Paragraph 114)**

Government response

The Government partially accepts this recommendation. In his oral evidence to the Committee, SOCA's Director General made the point that, while work with the Peruvian and Bolivian authorities may not be so well developed as in other South American countries such as Colombia, SOCA nonetheless enjoys good working relationships with colleagues in both countries and would like to build on them, resources allowing. As the nature of the threat changes however, including as a result of displacement activity, we (UK Government) will keep the deployment of our resources under review. As noted above we are, and will continue to, work closely with international partners such as the EU to encourage further counter-narcotics work in the region.

As mentioned above, the UK currently enjoys a valuable and productive relationship with both Peru and Bolivia on counter narcotics. HM Ambassadors in both countries engage fully with their host governments on how we can meet the challenges presented by this threat. It is important to continue working with both countries to help them enforce their own national law to combat drug trafficking.

In Peru the Government has supported a number of cross regional projects designed to foster co-operation and encourage best practice in conjunction with the UNODC. Alongside EU partners the Government aims to utilise our combined resources to best effect. The EU Commission has a programme of project work in Peru largely aimed at alternative development. This approach has been highly successful particularly in the San Martin region, where coca growers now produce coffee, cocoa and other products. The UK has also supported Peru's introduction of its 'FRANCO' helpline and website for young people, which is based on the UK's 'Talk to FRANK' campaign.

In Bolivia, the Government continues to work with the Bolivian government, EU Member States and other international partners to tackle the threat of increased production and transit of cocaine from that country. The UNODC has recently proposed an ambitious five year plan of anti-drugs work. The Government has supported capacity building projects eg to improve forensics expertise, as well as supporting projects with UNODC eg the annual coca survey. This is an essential tool in understanding and mapping the growth in coca cultivation in Bolivia.

- 6. The Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre - Narcotics (MAOC-N) also plays a unique and important role in targeting uncanalised routes. We support this. However, we were concerned to hear that UKBA is already reducing operational resources at uncanalised points of entry to the UK. MAOC-N's**

efforts on uncanalised routes must not be used by UKBA as an excuse for further such reductions. (Paragraph 123)

Government response

The Government welcomes the Committee's praise for the important role that MAOC-N plays in targeting uncanalised routes. It should be recognised that the success of MAOC-N is reliant on the operational resources and assets provided by those national and international law enforcement agencies, including UKBA, that support MAOC-N's activity and interdict those targets identified by MAOC-N.

UKBA recognises the threat posed by uncanalised ports of entry into the UK and continues to provide mobile and flexible deployments based on risk profiles and intelligence at small ports and airports in order to address this risk. In addition to their intelligence, targeting and detection teams UKBA also operates a maritime force of HM Cutters that play a key role in tackling attempts to smuggle through uncanalised routes. As highlighted by the Committee HMRC undertook internal restructuring in 2006 to strengthen the intelligence response of UK Customs by improving intelligence links across both canalised traffic at the major ports and airports and uncanalised points of entry.

- 7. Operations Airbridge and Westbridge have enjoyed conspicuous success in detecting drugs smuggling at key transit points overseas and preventing them from reaching the UK. We urge the Government to build on these effective operations and develop similar projects in other countries, for instance in Nigeria and other west African states. (Paragraph 125)**

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation and welcomes the Committee's interest in West Africa and the Caribbean. Cocaine trafficked through both regions represents a major threat to the regions' security and development, as well as constituting significant routes for cocaine trafficked to the UK.

In West Africa the Government has stepped up its engagement in the region, encouraging greater international, regional and bilateral activity. We are working closely with partners in the European Union, UNODC and the Economic Community of West African States to tackle this threat. In addition the government has supported numerous capacity building projects both bilaterally and multilaterally e.g with UNODC to build on and develop local and regional abilities.

- 8. A risk-based—as opposed to 100% checks—approach is valuable since it keeps traffickers guessing where and in what form they might encounter detection. Therefore we consider the varying of scans and checks based on targeting individuals and flights to be the correct strategic approach. (Paragraph 142)**

Government response

The Government welcomes the Committee's endorsement of this approach.

- 9. We have some concerns, however, about the extent to which detection equipment is available to UKBA officers. Whilst the scanning equipment we saw at Heathrow was comprehensive, we would be surprised if this was replicated at entry points across the country. We also question whether sufficient emphasis is being placed on the detection of internal concealments at UK airports, in addition to cocaine smuggled in baggage. In the Netherlands we saw comprehensive facilities for the holding of 'swallowers' and large hoardes of cocaine pellets which had been swallowed or internally concealed, but did not observe such seizures at Heathrow airport. (Paragraph 143)**

Government response

Comprehensive drugs detection technology is broadly standardised across all UKBA ports and airports of entry but UKBA often use Heathrow to evaluate or pilot ever better technological developments.

The Government regards the detection of internal concealments of cocaine pellets as a high priority for border enforcement and in the financial year 2008/09 UKBA detected 118 swallowers from around the world. The innovative Operation Airbridge established in Jamaica was developed to take early action overseas to stop cocaine before it reaches the UK. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of drug couriers with internal concealments arriving at UK airports from Jamaica, down from 750 in 2002 to only 3 detected in 2008/09.

To deal with this type of smuggling UKBA have extensive facilities to hold these individuals and retrieve the cocaine. Their facility covering Heathrow is based off-airport at Colnbrook and this was not included on the itinerary of the Committee's visit to Heathrow.

- 10. Both the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and the UK Border Agency (UKBA) actively export disruption of the cocaine trade overseas, on the rationale that it is better to prevent the drug reaching UK shores than attempt to intercept it once here. We wholeheartedly support this approach in principle, and it should continue to form the basis of UK strategic law enforcement response. (Paragraph 152)**

Government response

The Government welcomes the Committee's recommendation and recognition of the importance of intercepting high purity South American cocaine either upstream or at UK borders.

Upstream disruption and seizures are key elements of the UK Control Strategy for Organised Crime and in relation to cocaine this has helped lead to an increase in wholesale price. The global nature of organised crime appears in all areas of the threat; as the source country for commodities or the locations to conduct business and launder money. The international aspect to organised crime remains important

to our understanding of the harm caused in the UK. Tackling the drugs trade in the UK will only ever be part of the answer. The opportunities to target drug trafficking and distribution at every step of the international chain impacts on the ability of organised crime to operate and in turn reduces the harm caused to the UK.

- 11. Whilst we consider that the quantity and size of seizures are important measurable targets, we also acknowledge that seizures alone do not give an adequate indication of the overall success of ‘upstream’ disruption of criminal trafficking networks. We therefore recommend that a more nuanced scoring system to measure the impact of SOCA and UKBA anti-cocaine operations overseas should be developed, alongside seizure targets. This scoring system could be along the lines of that used informally by the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre—Narcotics, in which operations are graded from 1 to 10 on the basis of the impact of an operation. (Paragraph 153)**

Government response

The Government does not agree with this recommendation. Drugs seizures occur in a variety of circumstances and contexts. The experience and knowledge of experts in MAOC-N and other agencies such as SOCA and UKBA allows for ad-hoc assessments to be made as to the strategic importance of different seizures. The Government is not aware, however, of a systematic, statistically-based method of ranking such activity.

Quantitative data on interdictions is important management information but, as noted by the Committee, is an inadequate indicator of overall success. SOCA will continue to work closely with law enforcement partners, including the UKBA and the Home Office to explore ways of developing a more nuanced performance regime.

- 12. We recommend that (a) the two criteria currently used by SOCA to determine whether a seizure is included in its figures be changed to a more detailed scale which records the level of SOCA’s involvement, and (b) that the criteria for measuring that scale be published. (Paragraph 156)**

Government response

The Government does not agree with these recommendations. SOCA recognises the desire by the Committee for greater transparency in the presentation of seizure data. It is essential, however, that greater transparency does not compromise operational activity or the safety of SOCA Officers and their partners. SOCA will work with the Home Office to consider ways of meeting in part the desire for greater transparency while protecting its operations and staff.

- 13. We therefore recommend that a joint target and joint counting be developed to measure all cocaine seizures within the UK. This would include seizures contributed to or made by SOCA, UKBA and the police together as 'UK law enforcement' and would guard against double counting. The target must be set at substantially higher than 12-14% of cocaine estimated to enter the UK each year, which was the percentage seized by all three agencies last year. (Paragraph 157)**

Government response

We welcome the Committee's observations and agree that we need a more comprehensive UK-wide approach to counting and reporting the drugs being interdicted within country, at our borders and overseas seizures of drugs destined for the UK. We must report to UNODC and the public has the right to know the success rates of our operations.

However, the Government does not agree with the recommendation for a joint agency wide seizure target. Seizures are important but the issue of targets should be addressed with individual agencies recognising the differing contexts to their work. The Government proposes to consider this question during the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review discussions.

The Government does not accept that seizure targets are unambitious or that there is any complacency about the UK Law Enforcement response. Seizure targets and quantities seized have to be seen in the context of the Government's overall allocation of resources between supply-side disruption and demand reduction in the drug strategy and also in the change of emphasis to tackling organised crime itself, which saw, in the creation of SOCA, the shift in focus of customs intelligence and investigation resources from drugs-only work to a broader organised crime remit. It should be noted that tackling Class A drug use, including cocaine, is a top priority for UKBA, SOCA and ACPO, and will remain a priority as we develop the arrangements around the creation of a Border Police Force.

Great emphasis and effort is put into joint working between the enforcement agencies internationally, at the border and in our communities. The effectiveness of this activity is overseen and managed by the Home Office as part of the UK Control Strategy to ensure that agencies work together and that outcomes are achieved.

SOCA, UKBA and ACPO do not believe that a national agency-wide seizures target would necessarily drive better enforcement working. Seizures are a vital part of the work of enforcement agencies but need to be set in the context of their wider approach to tackling drugs networks, not just seizures by themselves. Agencies' performance needs to be measured against wider and more complex outcomes from the full range of enforcement activities eg price and purity levels, organised gangs moving away from drugs operations or displacement to other countries.

The Home Office will work closely with SOCA, UKBA and ACPO to identify options for an effective process for joint counting of cocaine seizures within the UK, using currently available datasets.

- 14. In keeping with some of the more hard-hitting Frank campaign messages—such as those around bleeding and loss of cartilage in the nose, or sudden heart attacks—and similar graphic images used in anti-smoking campaigns, the most powerful public information messages seem to be around the immediate physical impacts of a drug, rather than long-term health damage. The effects of cocaine on executive brain function could be better exploited, especially as cocaine use is more common amongst the professional classes. More could be made also of the immediate risks— from even single use—of heart attack and sudden death, especially when cocaine is combined with alcohol. Similarly the message that up to 95% of what is sold as cocaine actually comprises harmful adulterants may well influence behaviour. (Paragraph 173)**

Government response

The Government welcomes these recommendations and suggestions as to how any future campaigns could be developed. We note that activity in this area would need to deliver measurable benefits to public health and make the use of the best available evidence on driving behavioural change. Careful testing would be required to avoid unintended consequences (such as viewers dismissing images that are seen as too graphic or exaggerated).

Given the diverse audiences who may view such campaigns (including young people who have never tried drugs, parents and existing cocaine users) it is important that any future communications activity is part of an overall strategy, that targets each of these audiences effectively, using the most appropriate messages that would drive the benefits to public health, prevent young people from starting to use cocaine and encourage cessation amongst existing users.

- 15. The Colombian Government's Shared Responsibility campaign on the environmental costs of the cocaine trade also packs a powerful punch, particularly since it feeds into an increasing public concern about environmental damage. More however could be made of the human effect—for instance child soldiers in Colombia, or the many drug mules locked into a vicious circle of exploitation. More graphic use should also be made of the number and size of internal concealments carried by drug mules who are often exploited, such as the up to 20 pellets swallowed by a single individual, or pellets the size of a pint glass inserted into a body cavity. We found the message that, for every gram of cocaine consumed in the West, 4 square metres of tropical rainforest are destroyed, especially striking. (Paragraph 174)**

Government response

The Government accepts these recommendations. The suggestion about making more of the human effect of the cocaine trade is well taken. In fact, when originally launched in 2006, the Colombian Government's Shared Responsibility campaign did focus on the human effect of cocaine consumption, showing how it fuelled conflict and human rights abuses in Colombia. Graphic images of massacres were shown alongside photos depicting recreational cocaine use. Following the campaign, the Colombian Government carried out an impact assessment, and found that apart from

reinforcing negative stereotypes of their country that they wished to move away from, the messaging had not resonated with target audiences in the way they would have liked. They subsequently decided to change the campaign's focus, and concentrate on the environmental impact. This, according to them, has proved much more successful and any future support from the UK Government will continue to reflect the approach taken by the Colombians.

- 16. We were perturbed by reports that access to residential rehabilitation was not as readily available as to community programmes. Despite the insistence of the National Treatment Agency that community programmes offer appropriate treatment for the majority of cocaine users, doctors, treatment providers and ex-users expressed the view that addicts in a chaotic environment could benefit from periods of stable, residential treatment. The Government has invested an additional £11.8 million investment in treatment in 2009/10, a quarter of which is earmarked for residential treatment. We recommend that the proportion dedicated to residential treatment be increased. (Paragraph 193)**

Government response

The Government partially accepts this recommendation. It is important to provide supportive services that help people get off drugs for good.

However, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommended in 2007 that psychosocial interventions, typically delivered in a community setting, should be the main treatment for people with a powder cocaine problem. It is still important that people who would derive more benefit from residential rehabilitation have access to it.

In the Comprehensive Spending Review we will be taking decisions about the money to be allocated to drug treatment and how it should be directed to front-line services.

- 17. We therefore recommend that the Government revise the basis on which PSA 25, Indicator 1 is measured, to include powder cocaine users. (Paragraph 194)**

Government response

The Government rejects this recommendation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the abolition of Public Service Agreements on 8 June 2010. Decisions in the Comprehensive Spending Review will include how future funding is allocated.

- 18. We strongly believe that, if custodial sentences are handed down to cocaine users, they should be sufficiently long to ensure that the user can complete a treatment programme in prison. (Paragraph 197)**

Government response

The Government does not agree with this recommendation. The National Offender Management Service and criminal justice partners aim to ensure that drug-misusing

offenders can enter appropriate treatment whatever the sentence they are given by the courts.

The Government is conducting a comprehensive assessment of sentencing and rehabilitation policy and will bring forward proposals for general reform in the autumn. Independently, the Sentencing Council is working to develop a guideline on drug offences and that process will include public consultation so that all views can inform the final guideline.

The Government believes that more can be done to cut drug related reoffending by overhauling the system of rehabilitation. We are considering how sentencing and treatment for drug use can help offenders to come off drugs once and for all. This includes the exploration of alternative secure treatment based accommodation. It is important that sentences remain proportionate and that treatment is targeted to best effect.

19. We urge Chief Constables to consider running more high-visibility operations on the basis of the Kent model. (Paragraph 204)

Government response

The Government accepts this recommendation in principle and welcomes the Committee's observations about the success of high-visibility anti-cocaine operations such as those run in Kent and many other force areas. We would encourage the use of similar high-visibility operations, where deemed appropriate by individual Chief Constables to address local needs and priorities. Those police forces whose communities do not identify drugs or night-time economy issues as being a priority are unlikely to undertake high-visibility operations to the extent that others may do where those issues have been identified as a problem.

ACPO has drafted guidance for police forces wishing to adopt drug trace technology and will ensure that forces are aware of the potential use of drug trace machines within the night-time economy.

20. We urge all Chief Constables to ensure that their forces have one or more hand-held drug trace machines, and recommend that the National Policing Improvement Agency promotes the roll-out of these machines to all forces, as part of its Evidential Drug Identification Testing programme. (Paragraph 205)

Government response

The Government does not agree with this recommendation. Drug trace detection devices are routinely used in a number of applications and form a key part of many policing activities. We would welcome the promulgation of trace detection technologies for the applications detailed in the ACPO guidance, such as crack-house closures and uses associated with the night-time economy.

Drug trace detection devices are, however, concerned with the detection of non-visible quantities (traces) of material, whereas Evidential Drug Identification Testing (EDIT) is concerned with the testing of visible quantities of material.

The field testing of visible quantities of heroin, morphine, amphetamine and cocaine by the Police Service is divided into two testing programmes; guilty plea testing and EDIT; the same drug testing kits are used in both guilty-plea and EDIT testing, and are approved for use by the National Policing Improvement Agency. Both guilty-plea and EDIT testing is carried out in possession-only cases, and therefore uses visible quantities of material; the testing of non-visible drug traces is beyond the scope of both guilty plea and EDIT testing. Furthermore, drug trace detection devices are generally not suited to the testing of visible amounts of material. It is highly likely that the introduction of too much sample (a visible quantity of material) would overload a drug trace detection device, and the operator would need to implement rigorous decontamination procedures; the staff burden associated with this may not be insignificant.



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