

Press release

23 July 2007

Airport technology assists with the detection of illegal drugs in Hackney properties

Technology more commonly used to detect explosives at airports has helped the Hackney CrackDown Project successfully gain its 50th closure order to shutdown a crackhouse in the borough.

At the Thames Magistrates Court on Tuesday 18th July, the judge ordered the residents be removed and the flat locked up after hearing witness statements and evidence gathered using the Ion Track Itemiser 3 which can immediately detect whether drugs are present on the premises.

This technology is normally used at airports and other public venues to detect trafficking of illegal drugs and explosives. This is the first time in Hackney that evidence collected with this has been used to grant a closure order.

Hackney Homes, Head of Estate Safety Wayne Hylton said: "We are committed to use any technology we can to close down crackhouses in Hackney. This should send a message to dealers that we are one step ahead of them and we will not tolerate this in our communities". Commenting on the 50th closure order, he adds: "We want to thank our residents for remaining vigilant and alerting the team to any suspicious activities in their local area. It is this swift help that allows us to gather evidence and bring about a fast action against this anti-social behaviour".

Police Sergeant Jason Duck from the Hackney CrackDown Project said: "The 50th closure order is a significant milestone for Operation Crackdown and could not have been achieved without the hard work of all our partners including Hackney Homes, Hackney Council and the dedicated team which enforces these closure orders. By working in partnership we have been able to ensure that crack houses in Hackney are closed swiftly and problems such as homelessness and drug use are tackled more effectively."

Call Crackdown Project Team in confidence to report a suspected crackhouse on 020 8356 3333, text 07976 911 165 or email crackdown@hackney.gov.uk

Ends

Press queries to:

Olaide Oyekanmi on 0208 356 3522, 0777 2565514 or email

Olaide.Oyekanmi@hackneyhomes.org.uk

or

Colette Douglass on 020 7275 3249, 07881 460 568 or email

colette.douglass@met.police.uk

Our mission is to deliver excellent, responsive housing services with decent homes and estates. To help residents lead healthy lives in safe and sustainable communities.

Notes to Editors

- The Hackney CrackDown Project is significantly reducing the number of crack venues where Class A drugs are being used, and the associated incidents of anti social behaviour and crime in the area.
- In operation for three years, the project has obtained 50 Closure Orders at Thames Magistrates Court. It has assisted in the closure and securing of over 300 crackhouses and has helped over 50 people to take control of their lives and get out of the cycle of drugs and prostitution.
- The Ion Track Itemiser 3 is a desktop drug and explosives trace detection device. It is capable of analysing traces of all commonly known/used illicit drugs present on persons or surfaces and then rapidly identify them i.e. cocaine, heroin, cannabis etc.
- Hackney Drug Action Team, Community Safety and the Hackney Metropolitan Police Service piloted Ion Track Itemiser 3 and as part of this, the machine was deployed as part of a crack house closure. The Ion Track Itemiser recorded high levels of cocaine / crack cocaine as a result of swabbing various locations within the premises. These levels were significantly high which indicated direct presence of cocaine / crack cocaine.