

Test Purchases in the Cleveland Area conducted by Police, and Trading Standards Officers from Stockton Borough Council

The exercise was conducted on Monday 19th February 2007 on behalf of the Reduce Supply of Drugs to the streets of Stockton Forum and was designed to ascertain awareness of pharmacists and other traders following an awareness campaign.

Two 15 year olds were asked to purchase decongestants, including Sudafed, from a list of pharmacies and general wholesalers in the Cleveland area (the names of the pharmacies and wholesalers involved have not been disclosed). The children requested 6 boxes of the decongestant for each purchase, or took 6 boxes from the shelves. The children were also instructed to ask for iodine and matches, as it was thought this might raise the seller's level of suspicion.

In each case, the purchases were not challenged. In the pharmacies, the individuals were limited to purchasing 2 boxes of decongestant, although one pharmacy put 2 boxes through the till 3 times, so that the individual left with all 6 boxes. No pharmacy or wholesaler queried why the individual needed so much or why they were carrying so many boxes of decongestant.

In one day, 13 premises were visited and a total of 45 packs of decongestants purchased, 12 containing pseudoephedrine and the remainder containing phenylephrine. No reports of suspicious purchases were received.