

NEWS

January 5, 2026

Britain Restrains Record £383 Million as Account Freezing Orders Surge



Koos Couvée

(<https://www.moneylaundering.com/about-us/#kcouvee>)

Europe Editor

Thanks to thousands of “defense against money laundering” requests, or DAMLs, from banks and other institutions, U.K. authorities temporarily restrained or permanently seized a record £383 million of potentially illicit funds over the financial year that ended in March 2025.

All told, companies regulated for anti-money laundering purposes filed 867,000 suspicious activity reports to the U.K. financial intelligence unit, or UKFIU, from April 2024 through March 2025, slightly under the 872,000 SARs they filed over the prior 12 months but far below their record-high tally of 901,000 (<https://www.moneylaundering.com/news/cryptocurrency-turmoil-russian-invasion-drive-british-sars-to-new-heights/>) from April 2021 through March 2022.

The most recent tally includes 58,000 DAMLs, which in turn produced a record 2,048 account freezing orders (<https://www.moneylaundering.com/news/uk-investigators-freeze-record-sum-in-corruption-probe/>), restraint orders, forfeiture orders, civil recovery orders and similar measures mandated by the Proceeds of Crime Act, or POCA. AML-regulated companies file DAMLs when seeking consent to handle funds they suspect derive from crime.

One such DAML led to a single “asset denial” of more than £103 million in the past financial year, which amounts to roughly a quarter of the total haul of £383 million in restrained and seized assets during those 12 months. The average value intercepted for each order or other asset-targeting measure meanwhile stood at £187,000.

By comparison, UKFIU received 57,000 DAMLs during the financial year that ended in March 2024, while British authorities secured 1,800 account freezing orders, forfeiture orders and similar measures, and temporarily restrained or permanently seized £240 million (<https://www.moneylaundering.com/news/account-freezing-orders-reach-record-high-in-britain/>).

“The report shows that AFOs [account freezing orders] are a favored tool, which makes sense given that obtaining one is fast, the [evidentiary] threshold is relatively low and they are cost effective,” said Anita Clifford, an attorney with QEB Hollis Whiteman in London.

The larger haul of assets follows HM Treasury’s disclosure in May that an “economic crime levy (<https://www.moneylaundering.com/news/uk-aml-tax-raises-90-billion-for-law-enforcement-in-first-year/>)” imposed on the financial services industry in April 2023 had funded the recruitment of nearly 400 additional financial-crime investigators, intelligence analysts and civil servants for Britain’s cash-strapped law-enforcement agencies.

UKFIU’s own yearslong hiring spree also appears to have borne fruit, as the agency reduced the average turnaround for DAML requests from 3.1 to 2.8 days.

“It’s better for everyone because during that period firms can’t tip the client off, and will often find themselves having to disregard customer instructions and even facing threats of litigation,” said Jonah Anderson, an attorney with White & Case in London.

Law enforcement agencies also doubled their use of court-authorized extensions of DAML-triggered asset freezes to 151 in the past financial year, thereby giving themselves more time to obtain enough evidence to restrain funds indefinitely.

“There’s greater use of the moratorium extension provisions in POCA, which suggests that investigations launched off the back of DAMLs are taking longer and may be more complex,” Clifford told *ACAMS moneylaundering.com*.

Despite driving the combined value of asset freezes and confiscations upwards, the annual volume of DAMLs has dropped continuously in Britain since peaking at 105,000 during the financial year that ended in March 2021.

UKFIU partially attributed the drop in DAMLs to an amendment to POCA three years ago that raised the maximum amount of suspicious funds AML-regulated companies can transfer without the government’s consent from £250 to £1,000.

Officials raised the threshold again in July, this time to £3,000.

UKFIU separately received 1,608 requests for information from foreign counterparts over the past financial year, enough to rank first globally.

Germany most frequently pinged UKFIU for assistance, followed by Malta, the U.S., Lithuania, Italy and France. Almost half of the inbound requests pertained to fraud, while roughly a quarter involved suspected attempts to launder money.

UKFIU most often requested assistance from Spain’s financial intelligence unit during those 12 months, with the United Arab Emirates, Romania, Ireland and the Netherlands rounding out the top five.

Contact Koos Couvée at kcouvee@acams.org

Topics :	Anti-money laundering
Source:	United Kingdom , United Kingdom: National Crime Agency
Document Date:	January 5, 2026