



PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AND SUPPORTING BUSINESS

The impacts and outcomes of local
Trading Standards Services 2019/20
in England and Wales



FOREWORD

For many years, there has been no national data available on the performance of local authority Trading Standards Services. As a result, it has been difficult to demonstrate the impact that Trading Standards makes in protecting consumers and supporting businesses. Therefore the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) created the Impact and Outcomes Framework in 2018/19. This report is the second annual report and contains the highlights of work done in 2019/20 and demonstrates the huge impact that Trading Standards makes.

Covid 19 hit in late March 2020 and we believe has had a limited impact on the 2019/20 data. This will be different next year. We already know that the impact of Covid 19 and the Trading Standards community's response to it demonstrates yet again the importance and value that Trading Standards has in ensuring public and product safety, and helping local businesses in a time of crisis. We know this is having a severe impact on Local Trading Standards services. In many places Trading Standards Officers are focusing on new demands from COVID-19 related work, the courts system is facing an unprecedented backlog, and there is the danger of further cuts due pressures on local authority finances.

Although local government austerity has hit many Trading Standards Services hard, Trading Standards officers across England and Wales continue to make a huge difference to consumers and businesses. Food fraud, animal disease prevention, doorstep crime, dangerous consumer goods and consumer frauds of all types are just some of the important issues tackled daily by local authority Trading Standards Services and covered in this report. By investigating and stopping criminals and rogue traders, Trading Standards not only protects some of the most vulnerable people in society, but also supports legitimate businesses so they can thrive and grow.

This report showcases the great work done by Trading Standards across England and Wales in the year 2019/20. With all of the talk of cuts and how desperate the situation is in local government, it is important to remember that there are small bands of people in different services working hard to continue to make a difference to people's lives in spite of the pressures.

We hope this report can help local managers to advocate for their services at a local level, as well as showing the national impact of Trading Standards to all partners and stakeholders. When we consider the impact of this work, alongside what Trading Standards colleagues deliver collectively as National Trading Standards, it shows what can be achieved using the Trading Standards system.

Special thanks go to the 95 services covering 106 local authorities that submitted their data return. We are pleased that so many authorities were able to provide a return, especially given the pressures of Covid 19 work.

There are many challenges on the horizon for Trading Standards. Consumer behaviour is changing with trading moving away from the high street and onto the internet. More transactions are happening across borders and the UK's exit from the EU may lead to a divergence in regulation and Trading Standards will need to provide increased guidance to businesses on their changing responsibilities under the law. With limited resources, Trading Standards must continue to prioritise efforts where the harm is greatest and adopt changed ways of working that tackle these challenges.

In the meantime, ACTSO will continue to champion the work of these services and those individuals who put their heart and soul into protecting the public and supporting businesses every working day.

Steve Ruddy

Chair of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Trading Standards Impacts and Outcomes Framework was developed by ACTSO in response to concerns that there was limited data available about the positive impact of Trading Standards work at local level. This is its second year of operation and some revisions have been made to the data collected and the methodology which means that in most cases year on year comparisons would not be meaningful.

Local authorities in England and Wales were asked to submit data for the financial year 2019/20. The indicators measure demand and resourcing alongside key outputs and outcomes from Trading Standards' activity.

Ninety-five services contributed, covering 106 out of 171 (62%) of local authorities in England and Wales. The responses cover an area with a population of 42,472,542, or 71.45% of the population of England and Wales.

To illustrate the estimated national impact of Trading Standards, figures have been adjusted to account for both population and the response rate for each question. The resultant figures estimate impact and activity levels for the whole of England and Wales.

Demand and resourcing

It is estimated that the approximate revenue budget allocated to Trading Standards was **£99 million**. The major sources of income other than the Revenue Support Grant were:

- National Trading Standards grants for various activities including safety at ports work, animal feed inspection and sampling, funds to support investigations
- Public Health grants for work on issues like tobacco control
- Primary Authority work income

National Trading Standards was by far the largest single contributor to the income of local Trading Standards Services.

It is estimated that approximately **2000 full time employees** were employed on Trading Standards work.

- Tackling Detriment and Preventing Harm
- Supporting the Local Economy
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing

SECTION ONE: TACKLING DETRIMENT AND PREVENTING HARM

One of the key functions of Trading Standards is to prevent consumer and business detriment (financial and non-financial), tackle criminal behaviour that leads to it and support victims. The National Audit Office estimated in 2015 that the true value of consumer and business detriment was around £14.8 billion per year.

1.1 Stopping Fraudulent, Illegal and Unfair Trading

Where individuals deliberately break the law, repeatedly ignore advice, or cause significant harm, Trading Standards Services will prosecute. Many of the laws enforced by Trading Standards carry criminal sentences for the most serious cases. Other sanctions available to the courts include fines and recovering the proceeds of crime where criminally acquired money is used to fund a lavish lifestyle. Many of these investigations are complex, time-consuming, and can take several years to bring to trial.

In other serious cases, businesses can be required to give an undertaking to halt harmful activities.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- **Over 1,400 defendants** were taken through the prosecution process
- Prison sentences of over **375 years** were handed down. This includes both immediate and suspended sentences
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£2.7 million** in fines and over **£2.2 million** in costs
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£12.8 million** in Proceeds of Crime



Fraudulent Car Service Stamps: Leicester City Council

Leicester City Trading Standards investigated the sale of branded car main dealer service stamps through an online platform. A second-hand vehicle with a full-service history bearing main dealer stamp increases the selling price of the car. Main dealer service stamps are purchased by unscrupulous car traders and individuals and used to falsify vehicle service histories. This caused significant detriment to thousands of unwitting consumers and reputational damage to main dealerships. Analysis showed over 1000 main dealer stamps from 17 different main dealers were sold between September 2015 and August 2017. Evidence showed that the suspect had been previously warned by brand holders regarding trade mark infringement but continued to trade. In May 2019, the defendant pleaded guilty to fraudulent trading Trade Marks offences. He was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment. Service stamps can be used any number of times. By way of estimate in this case, approximately 1,750 stamps were sold; if used on 10 vehicles, and for each time used the value of the vehicle was increased by £100, the detriment would amount to £1,750,000.



Illegal Puppy Sales: Staffordshire County Council

A joint investigation led by Staffordshire Trading Standards and supported by Animal, Plant and Health Agency, Staffordshire Police and the RSPCA was conducted into a woman who sold puppies without a licence. The woman was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and a lifetime Criminal Behaviour Order preventing her from having any involvement with dogs in the future. The woman pleaded guilty to charges involving fraudulent trading of puppies, the breeding of dogs and sales of puppies without licence and consumer protection offences. Officers found 39 puppies and seized a variety of false documents including vaccination certificates and Kennel Club papers. The papers were used to convince purchasers about the condition and value of the puppies.

1.2 Detriment and Redress

Redress and compensation for victims of crime can be secured as part of the prosecution process or through a variety of other means. Rapid responses to reports of doorstep crime and other fraud in action can result in Trading Standards Officers persuading potential victims not to hand over cash or cheques. Prosecuting and disrupting criminal behaviour, and providing advice and support to the public on how to get a fair deal, prevents further harm and financial detriment.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that the actions of Trading Standards Services resulted in:

- **Over £3.5 million** compensation awarded to victims by the courts
- **Over £5.7 million** prevented from being handed over to criminals
- **Over £1.9 million** gained for victims through advice and intervention
- **Over £300,000** obtained through penalty notices
- **Over £400 million** of detriment prevented by Trading Standards' actions .



Gardening Scam: Devon, Somerset and Torbay

A significant doorstep crime case taken by Devon, Somerset and Torbay Trading Standards resulted in a rogue handyman pleading guilty to fraud after over-charging a vulnerable 82-year-old pensioner for gardening and maintenance work over a nine-year period. Officers found invoices totalling over £100,000. An expert witness determined that the cost was not reflective of the standard of work done. At Crown Court, the defendant pleaded guilty and agreed to repay £35,000 to the victim, he also received a two year prison sentence suspended for two years, 250 hours community service and a curfew applied. In addition, he was ordered to pay more than £12,000 in costs. This was a hugely traumatic experience for the victim, who the defendant had charmed into a friendship over a long period. On hearing the judge's summing up, and having support from Trading Standards after the hearing, the victim expressed relief that she had 'done the right thing', after being so worried about putting the offender and his family in difficulty.



Rogue Roofers: London Boroughs of Brent and Harrow

Four defendants who took part in a London-wide roofing scam to defraud pensioners out of £750,000 were found guilty following an investigation by Brent and Harrow Trading Standards. The defendants cold called and bullied their victims to pay huge sums of money for unnecessary roofing work that was either not carried out or done to a poor standard. Two homeowners, aged 84 and 86, were conned into making payments totalling £350,000. Officers subsequently discovered more victims across London. Some were even left with no roof when they refused demands to pay more money. The investigation, supported by the National Trading Standards eCrime Team also discovered an international money laundering operation where the victims' money was transferred out of the UK to Dubai, China and Singapore. The court heard how a further £400,000, which was sent to one of the company accounts in January 2018, was payment for a fictitious scam investment bond. This left a 92-year-old without his life savings that were intended to pay for his wife's care. In October 2019, the four defendants were found guilty of conspiracy to defraud and money laundering. In total they were sentenced 18 years in prison and three were banned from owning a business for eight years.



Dangerous Car: Halton Borough Council

In Halton a lady on disability benefits and a very low income bought a car so she could drive her elderly mother to hospital for cancer treatment. She had passed her driving test a few weeks earlier solely so that she could take her mother to and from hospital. Immediately after purchase the consumer felt the car was not driving properly and she reported it to the trader but he was unwilling to assist her. The consumer put the car through an MOT and it failed on a major dangerous defect. She returned the car to the trader and asked for a refund, which was refused. The trader offered to repair the car if the consumer paid for the parts. Halton Trading Standards managed to obtain a full refund for the consumer and provided advice to the business on future conduct.



Overweight Goods Vehicles: Oxfordshire County Council

A significant priority for many local communities in Oxfordshire is the blight of HGVs inappropriately using roads and bridges where a weight restriction order exists. Weight restriction orders are put in place to protect roads and bridges and to keep pedestrians and other road users safe. Oxfordshire Trading Standards investigated 257 public reports and conducted proactive officer checks. They sent 324 warning letters to drivers and completed 88 prosecutions.

1.3 Supporting Scam Victims

Fraud is now recognised as the most prevalent crime in the UK. Trading standards services play an important role in identifying and supporting the silent victims of this crime. Through investigative and disruptive work, trading standards obtains lists of victims that have been sold to criminals to enable fraud. Officers will reach out to these victims, often visiting them at home, to ensure they get the support they need to stop them responding to scams; and this will help to improve their wellbeing.

As well as persuading victims to stop sending money to criminals, local authorities also install call blockers which prevent scam calls from reaching vulnerable individuals. Officers collect scam mail from victims. This provides vital intelligence to investigate and disrupt fraud and scams. The NTS Scams Team supports local authorities with this work.

In 2019/20 it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Local authority trading standards provided support to over **21,000 victims**
- Work to disrupt mass marketing fraud mailings, stop outgoing payments, mail etc saved consumers over **£22.7 million**

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO FRAUD



Vulnerable Man Targeted by Repeat Scams: Shropshire Council

A scams case was referred to Shropshire Trading Standards by a care agency and the NTS Scams Team. An elderly man in poor health and receiving home care was targeted by scammers. Regular cold calls were made to the victim who bought large amounts of unwanted health tablets and household appliance insurances. There was also evidence of postal scams involving clairvoyants and lotteries. The victim was visited and a call blocker was installed. The scam company's details were recorded and they were requested to remove the victim's details from their address lists. A visit was also made with the victim to his bank which identified over 30 unnecessary direct debits. These were cancelled and the bank returned some funds to him. Scams advice was provided to both the victim and his carers. The carers are now more informed and are able to check that further funds are not being taken through scams.



Victim Safeguarding: Kent County Council

Kent Trading Standards' Victim Safeguarding Officer visited and dealt with 111 victims who had lost a total of £405,620. This intervention prevented the loss of a further £151,450. In one example, an elderly lady with mental health issues was targeted by known doorstep criminals who had been previously prosecuted by Trading Standards. The perpetrators cold called her and offered to pave her driveway and do guttering work. The victim had been given incorrect paperwork, had additional works done that the criminals had identified and had been significantly overcharged. When she asked them to leave, she received abuse and threats of court. The victim also received a letter from a solicitor acting for the criminals, demanding £14,300. Trading Standards advised her not to pay or contact the solicitor or criminals. The Victim Safeguarding Officer contacted the solicitor who apologised and gave assurances that no further contact would be made. The victim was saved £14,300 and was put in touch with a charity to help with her mental health issues.



Call Blockers: Buckinghamshire and Surrey

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards fitted 293 call blockers which have blocked over 167,000 calls to vulnerable residents' telephones. Whilst permitting calls from friends and family they block unwelcome nuisance and scam callers. Feedback from residents about call blockers included:

'It has been very reassuring having a device installed in my home and has enabled me to block out unwanted calls which had been a concern and worry to me'

'Since having the device fitted my mother now feels safe when answering her phone. Many thanks, a great service'



Supporting Victims of Doorstep Crime: Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire Trading Standards has an agreement with local police for joint work relating to doorstep crime. Every victim is contacted to establish what support is needed and if they are vulnerable what protection can be offered. Trading Standards regularly receive referrals from adult social care. One example was a referral from adult social care about an elderly couple who were cold called and paid a large sum of money for cushions for a recliner chair for the wife who has multiple sclerosis. When the husband realised he had been scammed, he was distraught and felt he had let his wife down. After receiving advice and support, the couple were relieved and felt they were safer and not alone. The service has a stock of dummy cameras to hand out where most needed to ensure victims feel safe and to deter the fraudsters. Many victims are assisted in preventing future harm and made to feel safer in their homes through advice about how they can protect themselves from financial abuse and fraud. Referrals to partner agencies and services are also made. In 2019/20 ten call blocking devices were fitted and these blocked almost 12,500 nuisance and scams calls. Leicestershire also gives Friends against Scams talks and recruited 243 friends in 2019/20. Its Facebook page links to police alerts, warns consumers of scams and provides advice on how consumers can protect themselves.

SECTION TWO: SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

In an increasingly complex global marketplace, businesses need advice and support from Trading Standards to help them navigate the range of laws that ensure they trade fairly and their products are safe. Legitimate businesses also want others to comply with the law to ensure establish a level playing field where they can compete fairly. Trading Standards police the marketplace to ensure everyone trades by the same rules.

2.1 Businesses Get the Help and Support they need to Thrive and Grow

With economic growth a key priority for all local authorities, providing advice and support to businesses is more important than ever. Trading Standards Services across England and Wales provide advice to businesses on the legislation they cover, including fair trading and pricing, labelling and product safety. Many authorities offer some free advice to new businesses, but most authorities charge a small amount for advice to cover costs.

Primary Authority Partnerships are a growing area; a business with multiple shops or sites can choose a single local authority to provide them with advice across all their outlets. The Primary Authority scheme is designed to provide consistency for businesses that operate in more than one local authority area.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Trading Standards responded to over **22,000 requests** for advice from businesses
- **1919 Primary Authority Partnerships** are in operation, covering over **100,000 businesses**
- Over **33,000 hours** were spent by Trading Standards advising Primary Authority businesses
- Over **71,000 visits** were carried out to businesses to ensure they comply with the law and provide advice to help them fix any non-compliances

Hampshire County Council and Certikin International Ltd

'The relationship we have built with Hampshire County Council is positive and progressive. Our advisor is always prompt to provide answers and search out the details we need to be aware of, and does so in a way which is appropriate for our industry, our business and the types of products we manage - all with a view that there is genuine interest in what we put onto the market.'

- Neil Stephenson, Product Development Manager at Certikin International Ltd

Wakefield Council/West Yorkshire Trading Standards and Acorn Mobility Services

'Customer satisfaction, being fair and transparent, is central to our business ethos. Working in partnership with West Yorkshire Trading Standards helps us to act out our business ethos. West Yorkshire Trading Standards really understand our business DNA. Acorn always strives to conduct business within regulations and remain compliant and it's nice to know there's always a helping hand to offer impartial advice and guidance.'

- Catherine Beecroft, UK Customer Service Manager, Acorn Mobility Services

2.2 Creating and Maintaining a Level Playing Field for Safe and Fair Competition

Gathering information, including complaints from the public, information from businesses and local authority partners and reports on internet review sites allows Trading Standards Services to follow an intelligence-led model where action is taken against the highest risk businesses. This can include visits to provide advice and information, seizure of counterfeit or unsafe products, or starting an investigation in the most serious cases.

Trading Standards also support legitimate businesses through good trader schemes that help promote their businesses.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **26,000 businesses** were subject to an intervention, such as advice, investigation or referral
- **61%** of Trading Standards services operate an **assured trader scheme**
- Over **20,000 businesses** were members of an assured trader scheme run or supported by Trading Standards
- Over **2.7 million** counterfeit products with a market value of **£65 million**, which breach the intellectual property of legitimate businesses, were seized

Supplying counterfeit goods is often seen by the public as a potentially victimless crime but the reality is that counterfeiting is run by international organised criminal gangs. Profits from sales fund other criminal activity while hurting the legitimate local economy and costing jobs. The criminals behind these products will copy anything from designer jeans to safety critical products like air bags and car brake components. They have no regard for the consequences as long as it brings them a profit. Local authorities have a legal duty to tackle these criminals and Trading Standards officers are at the forefront of this battle.



Unsafe Cosmetics and Modern Slavery: London Borough of Southwark

Southwark Trading Standards took part in multi-agency enforcement operations targeting unlicensed nail salons. They inspected cosmetics products and over 5,000 non-compliant and unsafe cosmetics were seized. Potential seizures often resulted in the owner of the business identifying themselves which they had not done before.

It became apparent that the unlicensed salons were part of people smuggling networks run by organised crime groups. Most operatives were vulnerable illegal migrant workers from Vietnam with some being forced to work and sleep in the premises. The Police Sexual Exploitation, Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking unit and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority made multiple arrests. Twenty-four vulnerable adults and children were assisted with support. This work is ongoing and has also exposed widespread non-compliance by some major wholesalers and importers of nail cosmetic products. Aside from the terrible exploitation, these practices also undermine legitimate operators.



Unsafe Children's Make Up: Newport City Council

A business in Newport started a shop on an online platform selling lip balms and cosmetics that appealed to children. They initially purchased products from a UK importer which were correctly labelled and safe. The business noted that very similar products could be purchased directly from the far East at a much cheaper price. The business started importing directly. Newport Trading Standards discovered unsafe products were being sold and interviewed the business. A decision was made to support the enterprise rather than prosecute. The business has carried out a product recall and now trades lawfully.



Fair Competition Between Letting Agents: London Borough of Islington

Islington Trading Standards worked with the environmental health residential housing team to ensure that assured shorthold tenancies are fair and that traders comply with legislation relating to lettings. To encourage all Islington letting agents to comply with relevant legislation relating to redress and client money protection, Trading Standards held a free event for them to explain the new rules. They advised each letting agent in the borough about the legislation by letter and personal visit. They identified non-high street traders by researching online directories and searches, and inspected every agent using an Islington address for compliance and issued notices where appropriate. All Islington letting agents have now been inspected and will be re-inspected later in 2020 or early 2021.

SECTION THREE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

People rightly expect that the products they buy will be safe to use and clearly labelled to help them to make healthy choices for themselves and their families. Trading Standards remove unsafe products from supply chains and the marketplace and ensure food is properly described to help keep everyone healthy and safe.

Age restricted products, including tobacco, alcohol, and knives, are also a significant area of focus for many authorities, helping to keep young people safe.

3.1 Ensuring the Safety of Consumer Products

Legislation enforced by Trading Standards is designed to ensure that products are safe. There has been significant attention in recent years on the safety of consumer white goods such as tumble dryers and fridge freezers and cheap imported goods which have been found to be unsafe, including phone chargers that explode. Officers use intelligence to direct sampling exercises and projects to detect and seize unsafe products at both ports of entry and on sale within England and Wales.

National Trading Standards supported a significant amount of this work at ports in 2019/20.

Typical products that are seized include small electrical items such as lamps, chargers for mobile devices, LED lights, travel adaptors, sunglasses, cosmetics including skin lightening creams, jewellery containing heavy metals and children's toys.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **5.4 million** unsafe or non-compliant products were seized or removed from the market place following Trading Standards' interventions.
- The cost to society, in terms of product value and injuries and fires prevented, is almost **£180 million**



Dangerous Electric Blankets: Darlington Borough Council

Darlington Trading Standards led a successful electric blanket safety testing campaign in September 2019 in association with Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington. The campaign saw a 37% failure rate resulting in the destruction of 30 unsafe blankets. The event was well received and gained maximum publicity.



Dangerous Fireworks: Nottinghamshire County Council

Nottinghamshire Trading Standards managed an urgent incident response in respect of unsafe sparklers that were causing burns. The incident came to light on the morning of Tuesday 5th November through social media posts found with photographs showing injuries caused by the sparklers. The service immediately contacted the Nottinghamshire based wholesaler to assist with a product recall and used all platforms available to raise awareness, including social media. This gained the biggest response to any Nottinghamshire County Council posts in 2019. The manufacturer in the Czech Republic was also identified and both The Office for Product Safety and Standards and RAPEX were alerted. Injured consumers were visited, statements taken and the sparklers tested. No further complaints or reports of injury were found following the campaign, indicating that the work successfully raised awareness and prevented further harm.

3.2 Protecting the food chain

Food fraud, where cheaper ingredients are substituted for the genuine article in order to make a profit, and food that is misdescribed, can also be dangerous, containing undeclared allergens, toxic or illegal components. There have been high-profile cases where members of the public have died from anaphylactic shock due to the presence of an undeclared allergen in food. There are also multiple reports of near misses where people have been sold food containing allergens that they told the business they needed to avoid.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **7,400 businesses** were identified as supplying food that was misdescribed, did not correctly declare allergens, contained toxic or illegal components or was involved in food fraud.

Animal health and welfare legislation enforced by Trading Standards Services also has a fundamental role in protecting the integrity and quality of the food chain. Crises such as the BSE crisis in the 1990s were caused by failures in integrity of the animal feed chain. Also much work in this area also supports the safeguarding and supporting vulnerable members of the farming community. In 2019/20 it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **6,700 businesses** were found to be in breach of animal health and welfare legislation.



Undeclared Allergens: Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire Trading Standards investigated when a woman was rushed to hospital after suffering an allergic reaction to a meal she started eating at a pub. This was despite several checks she had made in advance and on the day. The food business operator had insufficient due diligence in place to prevent food containing milk allergen from being served. The defendant was fined £23,000 after pleading guilty.



"Cancer Curing" Novel Foods: Derbyshire County Council

Derbyshire ensured removal from the supply chain and destruction of over 20kg of an unauthorised novel food with a retail value of over £41,000. The product was marketed as a cure for cancer. The same material is supplied as a commercial chemical compound and the safety data showed it as a hazardous chemical causing skin, eye and possibly respiratory irritation. Other research linked the material with causing serious nerve and brain damage. The material was also suspected of causing cancer.



Illegal slaughter, Unlicensed Dog Breeding and Animal Welfare: Pembrokeshire County Council

In February 2020 a Pembrokeshire smallholder, and his associates were found guilty of several offences relating to illegal slaughter, food safety and failure to dispose of animal by-products appropriately. The prosecution followed an investigation undertaken by officers from Pembrokeshire County Council's Public Protection Division, supported by Dyfed Powys Police's Rural Crime Team. Officers discovered an illegal slaughter operation underway in an agricultural outbuilding; the floor awash with blood and animal by-products. Other carcasses of smoked sheep were found bagged in the boot of one of the defendant's car, ready for onward supply. Due to concerns regarding the welfare of the livestock on site, a number of sheep were euthanised for humane reasons and restrictions were placed on the herd of pigs to address potential disease risks. The trial followed a previous case against one of the defendants for operating an unlicensed dog breeding establishment and related animal welfare charges. In light of the welfare concerns affecting a range of livestock on site, plus dogs and horses, the County Council's Animal Health and Welfare Team supported by various other agencies carried out a follow-up operation taking possession of over 200 animals from the site.

3.3 Reducing the risk of children accessing age restricted products

Rules that prevent children from buying age-restricted products are designed to protect them from both immediate and long-term harm. Trading Standards Services enforce these rules by providing training and advice to businesses and conducting test purchases, using volunteers under 18, targeted at the highest risk premises. Alcohol and tobacco are key areas of focus, but test purchasing is also conducted for the sale of knives, fireworks and solvents. This year included the second year of an NTS' funded project on underage knife sales, in partnership with the Home Office, which makes up a significant proportion of the test purchases for other products.

In 2019/20 it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **2,800 premises** were tested for alcohol sales
- The average failure rate for alcohol test purchases was **19%**
- Almost **1,800 premises** were tested for tobacco sales
- The average failure rate for tobacco test purchases was **22%**
- Over **2,500 premises** were tested for other products, including knives
- The average failure rate for other products was **20%**



Stopping Sales of Knives to Children: Manchester City Council

In 2018/19 and 2019/20 Manchester Trading Standards was funded by NTS to carry out work to reduce the availability of knives to young people. The shops that had failed a test purchase were invited to attend free training sessions. Visits were carried out in person to the shops with officers from both Greater Manchester Police and Trading Standards to increase the numbers attending. Thirty staff members subsequently attended the training sessions representing 25 independent stores. The training covered how to put a due diligence system into place. Many people that attended reported on the changes they had already put into place following the advice visits they had received, which was encouraging. The overwhelming feedback from the sessions was positive.



Training Business to Stop Underage Sales: Lancashire County Council

Lancashire developed an online training resource for businesses to use in their staff training to prevent the sale of age restricted products. To date 261 people have completed the training. Some delegate comments include:

- *'As well as being more vigilant personally, as a manager I will support other staff members too.'*
- *'Keep an eye for potential underage customers approaching colleagues with no identification.'*
- *'Challenge all sales and effectively look at identification to make sure it is right'*
- *'I found the exercise at the beginning of the course interesting. Although I was only a year or two off most of their ages, the last image really did surprise me! I will therefore challenge 25 more frequently'*

3.4 Reducing the availability of illicit products

The price of illicit tobacco and alcohol is often significantly lower than legitimate products as no duty has been paid on the goods. The presence of illicit tobacco in local shops undermines government attempts to help people to cut down and quit all together as price is a critical factor in pushing people to give up. Moreover, sellers often do not observe the law on underage sales, making products more easily available to children and undermining attempts to prevent underage smoking and drinking.

Illicit alcohol may contain large quantities of methanol which can cause blindness and ultimately death.

Often, counterfeit cigarettes are not designed to self-extinguish when left unattended which poses a serious risk of causing fires.

In 2019/20, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Illicit tobacco was seized from over **1,300 premises**
- Over **19.6 million** illicit cigarettes were seized, worth an estimated **£4.2 million**
- Over **4.6 tonnes** of illicit hand-rolling tobacco was seized, worth over **£900,000**
- Almost **139,000** niche tobacco products (including shisha) was seized, worth over **£250,000**



Working with HMRC to Stop Illicit Tobacco: Middlesbrough Council

Middlesbrough Trading Standards has a strong working partnership with the police, HM Revenue and Customs, fire brigade, the Regional Investigations Team, and the North East Trading Standards regional network. Targeted intelligence-led joint operations in relation to tobacco were carried out with HM Revenue and Customs and the police. Trading Standards seized 59,890 illicit tobacco products and HM Revenue and Customs seized a further 44,960 cigarettes, two boxes of raw tobacco and 7,040g of hand rolling tobacco.



Counterfeit Cigarettes: East Sussex County Council

In July 2019 an illicit tobacco trader, caught by East Sussex Trading Standards with illegal cigarettes, was ordered to pay back profits of more than £14,000. The defendant was a repeat offender and was originally convicted in January 2019 after detection dogs sniffed out £73 worth of fake cigarettes at a shop he owned in Hastings. He was initially given a 12 month community order after admitting selling tobacco illegally bearing the trademarks of well-known brands, and not complying with UK law which requires plain packaging on cigarettes.



Alcohol Tobacco and Obesity Strategies: North Yorkshire County Council

North Yorkshire Trading Standards works with public health colleagues on North Yorkshire's Alcohol, Tobacco and Obesity Strategies. This involves education, test purchasing and enforcement. The service operates a fledgling responsible retailer award which educates and promotes best practice. Although the programme was initially introduced to engage sellers of age restricted goods, it is currently being widened to include retailers of healthier food and drink options. In January 2020, 5,000 illicit cigarettes, 2kg of hand rolling tobacco and 1,091 litres of illicit alcohol were seized from a shop in Craven in a joint operation between North Yorkshire Trading Standards and HM Revenue and Customs. Trading Standards Officers were present to enforce the provisions of the Trade Marks Act whilst HM Revenue and Customs were responsible for non-duty paid goods. Without the multi-agency approach the result of the visit would not have been as effective as it was.