

Protecting the Public and Supporting Businesses – Trading Standards improving compliance and tackling crime



The Impacts and Outcomes of Local Trading Standards Services 2024/25 in England and Wales



FOREWORD

The Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) represents heads of Trading Standards across England & Wales and currently 97% of local authorities are members. ACTSO created the Impacts and Outcomes Framework in 2018/19 to provide national data for England and Wales on work done by local authority Trading Standards Services. This is its fifth report.

Since 2022/2023, Trading Standards have tackled almost £2.6 billion in consumer detriment, representing £7.72 for every £1 spent.

The year **2024/25** was yet another busy one for Trading Standards Services with further increases in activity around illicit tobacco and vapes. Cheap, unsafe and counterfeit goods appearing to be a “good deal” continued to pose risks to consumers. The focus was on preventative measures to address consumer detriment which revealed consistent failures in relation to age restricted products together with an increase in non-compliances around food labelling. This shows the continued importance of providing good quality advice to support legitimate businesses and promote fair competition.

The report focuses on the three themes of Tackling Detriment and Preventing Harm, Supporting the Local Economy, and Promoting Health and Wellbeing,

While Local Trading Standards Services remain stretched in terms of demand and pressures, they continue to have a big impact in protecting consumers and helping businesses. The headlines from this year’s report are:

- **Over £651 million detriment was prevented by Trading Standards’ actions.**
- **Revenue budgets were £120 million.**
- **Overall staff numbers were 2,128.**
- **Referrals from Citizens Advice remained virtually static at 477,000.**
- **This year 1,006 people or businesses were convicted of offences.**
- **Trading Standards obtained over £14.5 million in non-scams related redress for consumers.**
- **The amount of money saved for scam victims was almost £49 million.**
- **Trading Standards provided over 16,300 hours of advice to businesses through primary authority partnerships.**

- **Over 71,600 compliance checks were carried out to ensure that businesses meet their legal responsibilities and to provide them with advice on site.**
- **Over 7 million unsafe or non-compliant products were seized or removed from the marketplace, representing a saving to society of almost £252 million.**
- **Over 10,250 food premises were found to be in breach of food standards legislation and over 8,250 businesses were found to be non-compliant with animal health and welfare requirements.**
- **Over 7,500 premises were checked to ensure they were not selling age-restricted goods, such as alcohol, tobacco and vapes to children.**
- **Over 23.5 million illicit cigarettes, almost 7.2 tonnes of illicit hand-rolling tobacco and over 2.5 million illicit vapes were seized.**

Ongoing investment into the Trading Standards Profession in both the short and the long term, helps to support the Government’s aims of innovation and economic growth.

Trading Standards services provide a vital consumer protection role, tackling unscrupulous businesses who undermine consumer and market confidence. Officers work collaboratively and in partnership with other agencies and regulators to play their part in responding to serious organised crime and other priorities, related to safeguarding, the cost-of-living crisis, unsafe products and food safety. By sharing information and intelligence, they work dynamically to meet new and emerging issues.

In summary, Trading Standards provides a crucial link, on consumer and fair trading issues, between local communities across England and Wales. It has a unique regulatory infrastructure that can operate at local, regional, and national levels, which is key to its success. This means that regional investigations are effectively co-ordinated and delivered via and alongside the work of National Trading Standards. This includes a joined up approach to scams, eCrime, estate agents and letting agents.

The impact of the work that Trading Standards does and the results and outcomes that are achieved are highlighted throughout this report. It demonstrates the huge value in protecting consumers, legitimate businesses and supporting public health.



We want this report to inform Government's policy development, including funding for services, and to raise the profile of Trading Standards' work within local authorities.

Special thanks go to the 105 services covering 121 local authorities that submitted their data return. This covers 70% of all local authorities in England & Wales.

Valerie Simpson
Chair of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Local authorities in England and Wales were asked to submit data for the financial year **2024/25**.

A total of 105 services contributed, covering 121 out of 173 of local authorities (70%) across 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. These figures estimate impact and activity levels for the whole of England and Wales.

DEMAND AND RESOURCING

The approximate revenue budget allocated to Trading Standards was close to £120 million, a 10% increase from last year, accounted for by ongoing local authority pay awards supplemented by an increase in commitments to training apprentices.

Trading Standards Services received over £22.5 million in income from a variety of sources including metrology, National Trading Standards' grants, and Primary Authority income and metrology work, a 1.2% increase from last year.

Approximately 2,128 full time employees were employed on Trading Standards' work, of which over 86% were "operational" staff. This is a 4.5% increase, likely to be down to an increase in training new apprentices within local authorities.

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service referrals and notifications to Trading Standards remained largely static at just over 477,000. This shows how many members of the public are seeking advice and support from Trading Standards on consumer related problems and issues. Whilst the demands on Citizens Advice remain relatively high, it will be some time before the additional investment in resources for Trading Standards results in additional frontline capacity. The resources remain the same to address new and emerging challenges until capacity in apprentices comes on stream. In addition, Trading Standards also received over 105,000 referrals from other partners.

SECTION ONE: TACKLING DETRIMENT AND PREVENTING HARM

Trading Standards' work can include providing information to the public on how to avoid being ripped off, as well as disrupting and taking enforcement action against criminal behaviour, to prevent harm and financial detriment to both consumers and legitimate businesses.

The Competition and Markets Authority's 2024 Consumer Detriment Survey, commissioned from the National Centre for Social Research estimated overall detriment to consumers across Great Britain at £71.2 billion.

1.1 Stopping Fraudulent, Illegal and Unfair Trading

Trading Standards Services enforce almost 300 pieces of legislation. Trading Standards legislation carries a variety of penalties including imprisonment, fines, forfeiture of assets and undertakings to stop future non-compliance. Formal enforcement action is usually taken where people deliberately break the law, have caused serious harm, or have repeatedly ignored advice from officers. Serious investigations are complex, lengthy and can take several years to bring to trial.

In **2024/25**:

- Approximately **1,006** defendants were prosecuted.
- Prison sentences totalling almost **570** years were handed down.
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£2.1 million** in fines, a significant 41% reduction on last year. However 2023/24 had exceptionally high levels of fines reflecting a small number of cases that attracted a large level of penalties.

The figure for 2024/25 is still higher than previous years.

- Defendants were ordered to pay almost **£11.9 million** in Proceeds of Crime confiscation orders.
- Almost **260** penalty notices were issued for Trading Standard's offences. This was a 13% increase on last year.

There was a 20% increase in the number of people or businesses convicted of offences, compared to 2023/24. This was mirrored by almost 30% increases in both prison sentences and POCA Confiscation Orders. This is most likely due to an increased throughput in the Courts system.

1.2 Detriment and Redress

Trading Standards can ask for the Court to issue a compensation order for victims as part of a prosecution process or get redress for victims through a variety of other means. In **2024/25**, it is estimated that the actions of Trading Standards Services resulted in:

- Over **£3.4 million** compensation being awarded to victims by the courts.
- Over **£6.6 million** prevented from being handed over to criminals.
- Almost **£4.5 million** gained for victims through advice and intervention.

Compensation increased by 28% compared to last year. The major change related to preventative measures where there was a 47% increase in preventing money being handed to criminals and an 89% increase in obtaining compensation for victims by routes other than formal legal action. This reflects an increase in publicity and reporting, plus better co-ordination with partners involved with fraud prevention activities.

Overall Trading Standards actions prevented over £651 million of detriment to consumers and businesses.

This shows that Trading Standards continues to offer a cost effective and important service to local communities and individuals and demonstrates the seriousness of the offending being tackled by local services.



1.3 Supporting Scam Victims

Fraud is the most common crime in the country, accounting for 31% of crime in England and Wales and affecting millions of people at risk of substantial financial losses. Trading Standards Services play a key role in tackling fraud and protecting people from scams.

Trading Standards support victims to get the help they need to stop them from being scammed again. This includes the installation of call blocking devices and doorstep cameras alongside working with safeguarding agencies. Trading Standards shares intelligence with the National Trading Standards Scams and eCrime Teams who undertake disruption work such as removing telephone or payment systems and taking down websites. Most scams emanate from overseas where formal legal action by Trading Standards is not possible.

In **2024/25**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Local authority Trading Standards Services provided support to over **16,500** scam victims.
- Work to disrupt mass marketing fraud mailings and stop outgoing payments and mail saved consumers almost **£49 million**.

The number of scam victims supported has increased by 30%, however the total savings achieved has dropped by 16%. This has reversed from last year where the number of victims was less but they suffered higher average losses. Typical scam cases might include clairvoyant mailings and investment fraud.

Adult Safeguarding London Borough of Croydon

Croydon Trading Standards works closely with local police and with the Immigration Service, sharing intelligence on issues of interest and supporting victims. Scams and Doorstep Crime prevention leaflets were created and translated into Portuguese, Urdu and Polish. Out of 20 referrals to Adult Social Care, ten people had additional support measures put in place and there were a number of interventions with banks including ones where customers led the application for refunds.

Derbyshire: Safe Places

- Safe Places is a national project that Derbyshire is signed up to, providing vulnerable people with a safe place which is a registered venue that has agreed to offer help and support if someone is anxious, scared or believes they may be at risk.
- Every time a venue applies to be a Safe Place, Trading Standards carry out background checks on the business to ensure no concerns have been raised which would make them consider it unsafe to send vulnerable people there looking for help.

Trading Standards undertook over 200 checks over the last 15 months.

- There are 316 registered venues across Derbyshire and this work is led by Public Health.

Buckinghamshire & Surrey

Buckinghamshire & Surrey have a strong cohort of eager, enthusiastic and passionate volunteers who continue to be active within their communities, contributing over 8,000 hours of their time helping spread anti-scam messages through talks, writing articles for community and special interest publications and sharing their knowledge through local radio. They are integral to making their local communities more confident and resilient to frauds. To coincide with Safeguarding Adults Week, Trading Standards joined Adult Social Care in Buckinghamshire to deliver advice, whilst in Surrey they partnered with the Co-Op and Crimestoppers to deliver support at specially selected Co-Op stores across the County. Trading Standards also joined colleagues from Surrey Police, the Fire Service and District and Borough Councils to undertake Operation Mendacious. This involved visiting residents of a park home for the over 50s. No Cold Calling Stickers were put up, call blockers and door cameras installed, and fireproof bedding and carbon monoxide detectors issued.



Public Protection Partnership (West Berkshire, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest)

In 2021, the Public Protection Partnership's Fraud Victim Support Officer worked with a resident in their 80s who had been targeted by cryptocurrency scams. She lost over £87,000 and was forced to sell her home and car to obtain funds to live and pay the scammers. Challenges to her banks resulted in this money being refunded to her in 2002 and a call blocker and door camera were installed within the property. Nevertheless, more money was taken from her by the scammers and after more bank challenges, a further £46,706 was returned. Having no family to provide support, the case was referred to Adult Social Care who identified a friend who was willing to help. However, this arrangement broke down and in February 2024, the resident lost a further £26,792 in 12 days. PPP was contacted by the National Crime Agency who revealed that the resident was the victim of a Kosovan organised crime group. A further referral to Adult Social Care was made and, with the support of the police and Trading Standards, an Order was made by the Court of Protection enabling the local authority to take control of the resident's finances. In October 2024 the final losses of £28,201 were recovered. Three years of work to unpick the social engineering and grooming of the resident by the OCG has now ended the financial abuse and hopefully will protect her from future abuse.

Metrology/Cost of Living Hackney

Hackney Trading Standards carried out checks on market traders, butchers and fish mongers who work in areas popular with lower income residents who may be suffering financial inequalities. Officers

checked scales and weights of prepackaged goods. This work identified issues with the use of incorrect scales, displays being covered from consumers and failure to weigh items before sale, all of which could lead to significant detriment to higher risk consumers. Officers advised the businesses on the correct use of scales and requirements for clear pricing etc. Compliance increased significantly, with a very small number of further issues being tackled.

The Jewellery Trade Lincolnshire

In 2024, Lincolnshire Trading Standards received a complaint concerning a local business that was found to be selling inaccurately described gold jewellery and counterfeit items and was operating as a pawnbroker but was not authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority. This complaint coincided with contact with the Natural Diamond Council and concerns regarding the potential mis-descriptions applied to laboratory grown diamonds where consumers may be confused between natural and laboratory grown diamonds with the value of the latter being significantly less. There is also potential for businesses to trade at an unintentional profit or loss if weighing instruments used to weigh precious metals and stones are not in calibration.

To tackle this, Trading Standards carried out a pilot project, with the assistance of a Gemmologist, which highlighted non-compliance in three of the 11 premises visited. This resulted in a wider project to visit a further 50 businesses including jewellers, pawn brokers, second-hand shops and antiques centres in 2025. The Birmingham Assay Office and Natural Diamond Council have also delivered training to officers across the East Midlands.



Scam Victim Regulatory Services Partnership - London Boroughs of Merton, Richmond upon Thames and Wandsworth

Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth Trading Standards carry out patrols with local neighbourhood policing teams, talking to builders and homeowners who are having work carried out to check that there is a contract in place and the consumer is happy. This has led to an increase in joint reassurance visits, providing advice and giving the opportunity to install call blockers in vulnerable residents' homes. On one such occasion, officers visited a 92 year old whose family lived abroad. Before the scam, she was very independent and able, being an active member of several community groups. After the scam, she became withdrawn and scared as she blamed herself. As such her family felt hopeless and were looking at moving her into a care home where she would be 'safe'. After talking with the resident and reassuring her that she was not 'silly' and that these people are professionals she confessed she did not want to move. Following discussions with the family, a call blocker was installed for a trial period. This worked well and the family and resident agreed that the call blocker would stay and the lady felt safe to remain in her house and maintain her independence.

Rogue Builder Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire Trading Standards undertook a rogue trading investigation. They evidenced £183,850 as criminal property, derived from fraudulent roofing works. This money had been paid to a money launderer who was eventually convicted and received an 11-month custodial sentence. Although money was restrained using POCA, the recoverable amount was only £29,000. The five victims had paid a total of over £350,000 to several bank accounts, all for fraudulent roofing work. The Trading Standards team continued to assist the victims to get their money back. They did this using POCA Orders and reimbursement applications to financial institutions for authorised push payment fraud. Victims were supported throughout the entire process in their applications, some of which were initially rejected and later reviewed by the Ombudsman. In total, the team secured refunds totalling £325,734, which equated to 93% of the victims' total losses.



Bath & North East Somerset

Bath and North East Somerset Trading Standards became aware of rogue companies targeting victims who had previously had spray foam installed to try and persuade them to have it removed. Officers dealt with one victim who paid £3,500 for spray foam in her small property at the end of last year. In early 2025 she was cold called from a man who told her he was calling on behalf of the Government and was going to check her spray foam had been installed correctly. The caller then claimed the insulation had been installed incorrectly and would cause problems with insurance, environmental issues with damp, and affect future house sales. The removal company had a similar address to the company who had installed it. Trading Standards provided advice and assistance, prevented money being paid over to the trader, and assisted the victim in finding an expert to provide an opinion on the insulation and if it needed to be removed.

Multi Agency Against Fraud (MAAF) Partnerships Derby City

Derby City Trading Standards are active members of the Derbyshire MAAF, working with Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Police with further stakeholders to be added next year. There are close working relationship with Derby City Local Area Coordinators and this work has resulted in:

- £120,440 of total savings resulting from a banking protocol.
- 2 referrals to the Financial Ombudsman resulting in £30,800 refunded.
- 11 scam talks to 377 of Derby's most vulnerable residents.
- 7 multi-agency events.
- Dissemination of Friends Against Scams student resources.
- 35 scam filter units installed.
- 6,422 scam calls being blocked.
- An assessment that the project has saved people £298,823.



Anti-Social Behaviour Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council

The Trading Standards team took part in a number of Multi Agency Days with colleagues from the anti-social behaviour team, Community Safety Accreditation Scheme officers, licensing and local policing teams to target priority areas such as Bournemouth Town Centre. Officers undertook joint visits to local retailers to raise awareness and provide business advice and support. Visits took place on busy occasions and during events such as the Christmas and “Summer Live” markets. The feedback was positive and helped raise the profile of the wider work of Trading Standards, as well as helping to identify any issues as they arose which were then dealt with afterwards. These “days of action” are continuing into 2025. Clear Hold Build is a police-led initiative to target resources in communities affected by anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder. Trading Standards, together with the police, undertook enforcement visits to premises linked to wider criminality as part of the “Clear” part of the initiative with premises closures and seizures taking place, the aim is to clear the criminality issues and allow the community to then hold the area and then build by attracting legitimate retailers.

Doorstep Crime Caerphilly County Borough Council

Caerphilly Trading Standards have seen a trend, since Covid, of traditional perpetrators of doorstep crime being joined by builders and similar traders who had run compliant local businesses but were tempted by the opportunity to earn big money and take on large scale projects that they were incapable of doing. Often these large-scale jobs involved consumers paying out huge amounts only to be left with work that was incomplete, misdescribed, dangerous and of very little value and faced with not only the financial hardship but also the shame and mental anguish. The victims were not the typical vulnerable victims associated with this type of crime. Many of them were much younger residents who had entered into the contracts without doing some thorough research. Some of the victims had young families and the damage to properties also had adverse effects on the children. Caerphilly took prosecutions that related to four incidents where consumers had spent over £100,000 for little in return.

Proceeds of Crime confiscation is proceeding, but the stress and suffering on the victims is unquantifiable.

SECTION TWO: SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Economic growth is a key priority of the Government and local authorities. To maximise economic growth, businesses need access to good advice about regulatory requirements, fair competition and to be confident that others will not be able to undercut them by breaking the law.

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

The importance of achieving economic growth means that Trading Standards' role in providing advice and support to businesses remains important.

As of 31st March 2025, **1,626** organisations were benefiting from a direct primary authority partnership and 165 organisations representing 110,804 members were benefiting from a co-ordinated partnership. Due to changes in Office for Product Safety and Standards data recording, it is not possible to compare this to previous years. These partnerships enable assured advice is given to a business with multiple shops or sites via a single local authority.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **16,300** hours were spent by Trading Standards advising Primary Authority businesses. This was a reduction of 26% from last year.
- Trading Standards responded to over **12,100** requests for advice from businesses that were not part of the Primary Authority scheme. This is a reduction of 10% from 2023/24 but it is now at half the level it was in the years prior to 2022/23. This may be because there is more information available online through sites such as Business Companion.

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

Unfair competition from those who fail to meet legal standards puts consumers at risk, can cause legitimate businesses to close and damages the prospects for growth.

Trading Standards Services follow a risk based and intelligence-led model. They will take action proportionate to the risk. This may include providing advice, seizing unsafe or illegal products, issuing fines and taking formal enforcement action.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **71,600** visits were carried out to businesses to ensure that they comply with the law and to provide advice to help them fix any non-compliance. This is the same level as for 2023/24.

- Almost **25,200** businesses were subject to an intervention, such as advice, investigation, or referral. This was a 7% reduction from 2023/24 which indicates a welcome increase in compliance overall.
- Over **530,500** counterfeit products with a market value of almost **£17.5 million**, which breach the intellectual property of legitimate businesses, were seized.

There was a 113% increase in the removal of counterfeit goods from 2023/24. However, we know this figure fluctuates due to local demand and has been higher in previous years.

The illegal trade in counterfeit goods funds organised crime and damages legitimate businesses who manufacture, distribute, and buy licences to sell legitimate products.





Business Advice: Corrosives and Environmental Legislation Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames & London Borough of Sutton

Kingston and Sutton Trading Standards mapped all independent sellers of age restricted goods to offer advice on storage or restricted or dangerous items, especially corrosive materials. At the same time businesses were warned about the upcoming changes in the law in respect of the single use vape legislation and were offered guidance. They were also advised about their responsibilities in law concerning take backs and responsible disposal under Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). The project has fed into the Councils' wider aims and objectives in respect of sustainability and public health and the statistics were also used by the Metropolitan Police as part of their refresh of the Responsible Retailer Scheme to take knives off our streets. The outcome has been positive in terms of the lack of single disposable vapes seen in premises post their ban from 1st June 2025.

Primary Authority Business Feedback Central Bedfordshire Council

The value of Trading Standards' advice to local businesses is shown in the feedback provided by a local company where Central Bedfordshire acts as Primary Authority.

The business owner said:

"Since making all of the changes that were brought in last year with your guidance, we have seen:

- A reduction in quality issues.*
- A reduction in picking errors.*
- A reduction in complaints.*
- A reduction in staff turnover.*
- An improvement in stock accuracy.*
- An improvement in eBay feedback.*
- Increased interest from eBay – who approached us as a "focus seller" within the refurbished programme.*
- Marketing support, technical support and investment from eBay.*

Unboxing experience aids, funded by eBay: "don't judge me on my box" eBay & direct vacuums branded packaging stickers.

Introductions to brand representatives and potential new clients.

Support and backing to launch, manage and run an eBay store on behalf of one of the UK's largest supermarket chains – selling refurbished returns.

Introduction to another UK supermarket chain, with possibilities of doing the same thing.

Further to our call today, I'd just like to thank you for the support and guidance over the last year. As you said yourself, it was probably a much-needed kick up the backside, but the way you have gone about it all is what made it attainable – "firm but fair" I think is the best caption. The support really has been appreciated though, as it could have been a very different journey had you not been so personable throughout the process. It made it feel more of a partnership rather than just a telling-off, or instructions."

Primary Authority Business Feedback Central Bedfordshire Council

Derbyshire Trading Standard's approved trader scheme, "Trusted Trader" provides a source of local tradespeople for consumers in Derbyshire. Member traders are vetted and assessed by Trading Standards Officers for their commitment to meeting the principles of trading fairly. The scheme has around 850 member traders, over half of which are Derbyshire based sole traders. Feedback from members indicates that over 80% are satisfied that the scheme helps their business and represents good value for money. Consumer feedback shows that around 98% of consumers are satisfied or very satisfied with the Trusted Trader they used. Engagement with the scheme means that both traders and consumers have access to Trading Standard's advice and mediation if needed. When needed, outcomes of mediation range from rectification of work and, in one case, a refund to a consumer of £36K in relation to a new vehicle. The scheme is also promoted as part of the Service work in tackling scams whether that be in assisting individual victims of scams or as part of discussion with groups.



Work with Association of Convenience Stores Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards

Digital proof of age has been evolving over recent years and is viewed as a more effective and modern option for ensuring age restricted goods are sold to the right people. The precise timing of the solution coming to market is yet to be fully confirmed. To ensure readiness, Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards have been working closely with The Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) to add to an existing suite of 14 guides to develop assured advice for their members clarifying the acceptance of appropriate digital proof of age. Essentially this will enable retail members to check the validity of digital proof of age using a common approach. Retailers will be able to train colleagues and ACS can issue guidance on how to conduct those checks and complete a transaction using digital proof of age. ACS are aiming to produce the industry-standard guidance that may also be used by other retailers/acceptors of proof of age and are working together with PASS on this. Issuing guidance in this way means local regulators do not need to individually review it in each shop as it has been done centrally. They just need to ensure it is being implemented correctly, thus reducing the burden on both businesses and enforcers.

James Lowman from ACS said:

"We enjoy working with trading standards and our members really value the high quality and reliable information we can give through this partnership. We also benefit from a different perspective on regulation, and we find that their input is extremely helpful when we are developing new ideas".

Work with National Farmers' Union Watercress Association Dorset Council

Dorset Trading Standards has developed its relationship with the National Farmers' Union Watercress Association, formalising it into a Primary Authority arrangement in 2024/25. Significant support has been given to the Association's 20 members on achieving 'Traditional Speciality Guaranteed' status as part of specialised audits developed with trading standards. These audits assess businesses across the UK against the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs protected food names specification document for 'watercress', plus it ensures compliance with the FSA watercress industry guide. These standards check that watercress is grown using traditional methods which promote good food hygiene, preventing contamination when it is grown and therefore minimising the risk to consumers of harmful bacteria such as listeria.

Dorset Trading Standards provided input into the industry guidance through its lead officer. The NFU commented that because of the partnership, the watercress industry was experiencing increased scrutiny through the auditing process. This resulted in rising intelligence reports of non-compliance in the marketplace, driving up further audit requests so that companies who were meeting the standard could achieve "Traditional Speciality Guarantee" status to differentiate themselves and their products from their competitors. Due to the greater awareness of, and confidence in the audits, the NFU Watercress Association reported that some members have experienced a rise in sales as the demand for their quality produce has increased, supporting the economic growth of good businesses in Dorset and beyond.



Local Business Support – Product Safety Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf has noticed an increase in (normally compliant) local traders purchasing items from online marketplaces, to meet demands in trends. Trading Standards are working with traders to educate them in what is and is not legal to supply. At the end of last year, over 100 counterfeit and unsafe (Disney plush) toys were voluntarily surrendered when found on inspection. The goods had been bought by the business from a major online retailer. The business owner was visibly upset, thinking that the items they had on sale could have brought harm to their customers and thought that because they had been bought online from a known retailer that they must be safe. More recently, over a two week period, nearly 500 unsafe and counterfeit Labubus were voluntarily surrendered from local shops. A cursory inspection resulted in eyes simply popping out when the face was squeezed, hands and feet coming away, and all posed choking hazards. Labelling was either not present, or non-compliant, and warnings (where they appeared) were contradictory, or appeared on boxes which did not fit the toys. Guidance was provided to traders, with media messaging and video published to reach a wider business audience.

Helping Business with Weighbridges Lincolnshire County Council

Lincolnshire Trading Standards inspected 17 weighbridges being used for quarries, aggregates, waste disposal and agriculture. Four were found to be inaccurate. Failures could be attributed to a lack of maintenance processes, especially on dirty sites where accumulation of dirt and rubble can cause the equipment to bind and catch.

In one instance, the discrepancy was approximately 350 kg per load, which, when multiplied across numerous loads throughout a single day, amounted to several tons of unaccounted product being distributed without corresponding revenue. Over the course of a year, such inaccuracies could lead to substantial financial losses, posing a serious risk to the economic stability of businesses, particularly during periods of economic uncertainty.

The project also supported a local business into compliance by assisting with the re-verification of their equipment, allowing them to continue trading. The business was using an old mechanical weighbridge from the 1970s. Installation of a new weighbridge was quoted at approximately £40,000 which was unaffordable.

SECTION THREE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Trading Standards have a vital part to play by ensuring consumer products are safe, food is correctly labelled and animal health and welfare standards are maintained. This supports the health and well-being of communities which is a key priority in most local authorities.

Trading Standards also enforce a wide range of age restricted sales legislation to help to keep young people safe from vapes, cigarettes, alcohol, and knives.

3.1 Ensuring the Safety of Consumer Products

Product safety laws ensure that products do not cause fires, injuries or deaths. This is particularly important for goods such as electrical items, toys and cosmetics. Trading Standards will advise businesses and check goods at manufacture, import, wholesale and retail level.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- **Over 7 million unsafe or non-compliant products were seized or removed from the marketplace.** This was a 140% increase on last year.
- **The savings to society, in terms of product value and injuries and fires prevented, is over £252 million.**

3.2 Protecting the food chain

Food prices remain high which can increase the temptation for unscrupulous businesses to adulterate or falsely label food to enhance profits or gain a competitive advantage. Consumers need to be able to trust food labels and get good value for money. They also need to have clear, reliable information about food allergens which can cause serious injury or even death.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- **Over 10,250 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.** This was an 8% increase on last year and has almost doubled since 2021/22. This is likely to relate to new allergen requirements for smaller businesses with an increased focus by local authorities on these issues.

Ensuring proper animal health and welfare standards, and protecting animals from suffering, helps the rural economy and protects the food chain.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- **Over 8,200 businesses were found to be in breach of animal health and welfare legislation.**

Having been relatively constant in the four years up to 2023/24, this represents a 30% increase from last year. The reasons for this are unclear. It may be due to adverse winter weather conditions and ongoing cost pressures on the farming industry. We will monitor this in the future.

Animal disease outbreaks create risks to the UK economy and the farming industry, with Trading Standards remaining at the forefront of responding to these issues.

In 2024/25, there were **25 confirmed avian influenza cases**. This was a 39% increase from 2023/24 but still fewer than in the years before that. However cases of Bluetongue disease continued to rise significantly. Transmission is midge borne and thus impacted by climate change. In 2024/25, local authorities dealt with **196 confirmed cases of Bluetongue**, a 157% increase on 2023/24. In addition, there was one suspect Rabies case and one suspect Foot and Mouth Disease case, both of which were subsequently confirmed as negative.





3.3 Reducing the risk of children accessing age restricted products

Trading Standards Services play an important role in ensuring that children cannot buy products that have age restrictions, such as knives, alcohol, vapes, tobacco and fireworks. They also provide businesses with advice on how to comply.

In 2024/25, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- **Over 1,500 premises were tested for alcohol sales.**
- **The average failure rate for alcohol test purchases was 20%.**
- **Over 920 premises were tested for tobacco sales.**
- **The average failure rate for tobacco test purchases was 21%.**

- **Over 3,100 premises were tested for vape sales.**
- **The average failure rate for vapes was 23%.**
- **Over 2,010 premises were tested for other products.**
- **The average failure rate for other products was 21%.**

Overall the number of test purchases has increased by 15% from 2023/24, across all categories. This reflects the focus in local authorities on tackling the supply of vapes and tobacco to children. It may also reflect the work done in relation to the underage sales of knives from shop premises in some areas. Failure rates remain largely the same.

3.4 Reducing the availability of illicit products

Smoking remains a significant driver in health inequalities. Price has been shown to be a critical factor in determining whether people quit smoking. The presence of cheap illicit tobacco undermines attempts to get people to cut down and quit smoking which maintains pressures on local health systems. Packs of illicit cigarettes are often between a third and a half the price of legitimate products.

Illicit tobacco, vapes and alcohol can contain undeclared contaminants. Illicit vapes can also contain higher than permitted levels of nicotine including those that claim to be nicotine free. Tests on vapes identified other illegal substances, such as the drug, Spice.

The amount of tobacco and vape products seized has continued to increase significantly in recent years. This reflects the prevalence of vaping problems and the priority this work is being given within local authorities reflected in the new Department of Health and Social Care funding to local authorities from 2025/26.

In 2024/25, across England and Wales:

- **Over 23.5 million illicit cigarettes were seized,**

worth an estimated **£12.6 million**. This is an increase of 23% from 2023/24 and a huge 65% increase from 2022/23.

- **Almost 7.2 tonnes of illicit hand-rolling tobacco were seized, worth over £3.8 million.** Again, this is a very large increase of 41% compared to last year and a huge 123% increase from 2022/23.
- **Almost 2.5 million illicit vapes were seized by local authorities at ports and inland.** This was, again, a significant increase of 71% from 2023/24 which, in itself, was a 59% increase on 2022/23.

The Licensing Act 2003 has four objectives (preventing crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm). The Act allows for a review, and potential removal of a licence, by a local authority where there are failures to comply with the objectives. Activities by Trading Standards have resulted in **334 Licence Reviews** being carried out, an increase of 83% from last year which recognises the benefits of the regime as an effective enforcement tool.



Knives, Tobacco and Vapes Stoke on Trent City Council

Stoke on Trent Trading Standards has worked with Staffordshire Police “Ditch the Blade” Campaign by carrying out underage test purchasing exercises for knives and supporting the development and promotion of the Responsible Retailers Guide to the Sale of Knives at businesses in the City. Eleven premises were tested for the sale of knives to underage volunteers and five premises sold. The Service prosecuted a limited company for the sale of an axe to a 14 year old with the company being fined £6,000, with £2,000 victim surcharge; and another company for the sale of a knife to a 15 year old, with the company being fined £3,000.

Premises closure orders have been used to tackle prolific illegal tobacco and vapes retailers in the City, many of which are also selling to underage children. The impact statements from neighbouring schools, Director of Public Health, and legitimate traders show the detrimental impact that these premises are having on schools and young people, and the local economy, and the health harms that the community is being exposed to. Applications for closure orders have been well received in the Magistrates Courts with 13 premises being closed for three months by court order and two premises closed prior to formal applications being made by working with landlords to evict tenants. One premises had their closure order extended by a further three months due to the previous history of proposed new tenants. It is estimated, based on recent intelligence that each premises sells £10,000 of illegal product each week and the estimated financial impact on Organised Crime in the City, and the total detriment to the economy prevented in the year is £1.8m.

Illegal Vapes and Tobacco Kent Trading Standards

Kent Trading Standards’ vape work highlights a strong partnership with Public Health. Building on earlier tobacco initiatives, including roadshows and school theatre visits, Public Health approached Trading Standards to help address youth vaping. This led to a two-year project, funded by Public Health, creating three dedicated posts. The project supports messaging that vapes can help adults quit smoking, while tackling underage use. Reports of primary school children using vapes prompted urgent action. The team engaged communities through park events, pop-up shops, and school meetings to raise awareness and promote compliance.

Retailers unfamiliar with age-restricted sales laws were a key concern. Vapes were found in non-traditional outlets like florists and juice bars. Since October 2023, the team has conducted 599 visits across Kent, seizing 23,354 illegal vapes and reducing the risk of underage sales. The work also uncovered links to illegal tobacco, strengthening ties with police and community safety units. Increased visibility led to media coverage and frequent Freedom of Information Requests, which the team has been well-positioned to handle.

The team launched a dedicated email (vapes@kent.gov.uk) and a KCC webpage to support the upcoming single-use vape ban. Outreach included a four-part email campaign to guide businesses through the transition.

The Local Vape Action initiative, inspired by Community Alcohol Partnerships, launched its first pilot in Tunbridge Wells in September 2024. It brings together local authorities and the vape industry to promote responsible retailing through education, engagement, enforcement, and evaluation.

The vape team’s work has enabled alternative enforcement tactics like Community Protection Notices and closure orders, helping disrupt illegal activity and support intelligence gathering for serious organised crime panels.



Food Safety **Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay**

With the Food Standards Agency, Heart of the South West Trading Standards prosecuted a farmer for failing to test chickens and eggs for salmonella before they went into the food chain and for presenting birds for slaughter with either falsified documents or with documentation that did not relate to those particular birds. The farmer pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay over £50,000.

Food Allergens and Illegal Additives **Powys**

Powys Trading Standards inspected a number of premises to check that allergen systems are sufficiently rigorous to prevent a health risk. The findings were concerning, with 16% of food labels found to be incorrect and 13% of allergen systems checked were found to be inadequate. In addition, 6.4% of allergen notice requirements and 16% of menu descriptions were found to be absent or incorrect. Officers helped the businesses become compliant which reduced the risk to Powys's residents and also the many visitors to the area.

Worcestershire

Worcestershire Trading Standards Service is issuing advice, especially to parents, around unauthorised ingredients contained in imported American sweets and fizzy drinks with known links to hyperactivity and cancer in children. Samples purchased from two shops in Worcester and tested by the public analyst were found to contain unauthorised additives. One of the outlets in Worcester has subsequently ceased trading but the other outlet has been notified of the

issues. Officers continue to trace the products back to importers. As examples, Erythrosine (E127, shown on US products as Red 3) is not authorised for use in sweets, and Calcium disodium (E385, EDTA) is allowed in food but not in drinks. In animal studies the latter has been linked to adverse reproductive and developmental effects, and in mice has been shown to contribute to cancer of the colon. American Candy has grown in popularity over the last few years due to its promotion on social media channels.

South Gloucestershire

South Gloucestershire Trading Standards held a free Food Safety and Allergen workshop for food businesses providing Indian cuisine in South Gloucestershire. Restaurant owners and staff involved in handling food were encouraged to attend and a qualified trainer who is respected within the community was invited to promote and attend the event. Officers were able to provide explanations for queries raised in the Q&A section on matters discussed during inspections which may not always be possible in so much detail during an inspection when the business is operating and busy. The informal environment encouraged conversations on a wide range of food safety issues and allowed officers to convey how vital it is for the information on allergens contained in the foods served to be correct.

The team hope that those who attended will have a better understanding of what the requirements are under food law for both hygiene and allergens and will be clear on what their responsibilities are for serving safe food to their customers. The team hopes it will be viewed as a source for guidance and advice in the future.



Safety at Ports Leicestershire

Leicestershire Trading Standards use grants to check for safety of imported consumer items at East Midlands Airport. Items are mainly destined to be sold via online selling platforms, where there are many unsafe items being supplied illegally. Items targeted include cosmetics, jewellery (both of which have risen in unsafe items being identified), toys, vapes and small electrical items. Over 200,000 items were removed from the market in the year, the value of which was over £8.7m.

Anglesey

Anglesey Trading Standards, working with UKBF at the Port in Holyhead, resulted in Caernarfon Magistrates Court granting a forfeiture order for the destruction of 54,560 electronic vaping devices. The 54,560 devices, with a retail value of over £750,000, were undeclared, undocumented and non-compliant with UK legislation, significantly exceeding the maximum permitted tank size and not having the required warnings.

Children's Safety Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Trading Standards, with the support of Office for Product Safety and Standards and the British Toy and Hobby Association, produced a short video and carried out 20 talks to groups of parents with children under 5, focussing on the importance of toy safety and what to look out for when they buy toys through a number of different routes.

Bath & North East Somerset

Bath and North East Somerset Trading Standards dealt with two incidents of non-compliant baby sleeping bags. One was a trader who imported a consignment which failed to meet the required standard. This prompted a business meeting and assistance on their recall procedures. The other was a well-meaning individual, who knitted baby sleeping bags for sale on social media. As the knitting was based on a purchased pattern, this raised further questions about addressing situations where inherently safe products (i.e. a printed pattern) instructs consumers to produce an unsafe product. This was escalated to Office for Product Safety and Standards for a response. The two incidents have seen withdrawal from the market of products that would otherwise have been used on vulnerable infants.

Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

Heart of the South West Trading Standards issued a press release recommending that children's plastic beach shoes are tested nationally after they found some products contained banned levels of chemicals and had to be removed from sale. They tested 15 pairs of beach shoes for the presence of phthalates. Six contained phthalates over permitted levels. The team shared the findings with the Office for Product Safety and Standards. Recalls have taken place across the UK.



Animal Welfare Worcestershire

Officers from Worcestershire's Trading Standards Service visited land with vets from the Animal Plant Health Authority and an RSPCA Inspector. They found several sheep with "flystrike," and maggot infestations so bad that the skin was effectively decaying, rendering them unable to get up. Further inspection of the land around the flock revealed several carcasses in various states of decay, as well as a bonfire where there had been attempts to illegally dispose of some sheep carcasses in the same field.

A man was prosecuted and pleaded guilty to four offences at Worcester Magistrates Court including causing unnecessary suffering to three sheep under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and a number under the Animal By-Product Regulations 2013 in relation to proper disposal of carcasses. He was given a 12-month community order with 270 hours of unpaid work and ordered to pay £6,449 in costs. He also received a banning order preventing him from any involvement with livestock for five years.