Rising to the Challenge of Public Protection

The Impacts and Outcomes of Local Trading Standards Services 2025-26 across England and Wales

ACTSO
Association of
Chief Trading Standards Officers











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 sixth report.

Since 2022/23, Trading Standards have tackled almost **£3.2 billion in consumer detriment representing over £7 for every £1 spent.**

Trading Standards teams across the country continue to rise to the challenge of protecting consumers and businesses from harm. Whether that is harm from rogue traders, illegal or unsafe products or otherwise irresponsible or fraudulent trading; our work makes a significant contribution to reducing consumer and business detriment.

This **2025/26** Impacts and Outcomes Report highlights the important work that Trading Standards Services do to support businesses and to minimise health, safety and financial risks to consumers.

We want this report to:

- inform new and emerging Government policies and identify where Trading Standards can play a key role;
- help shape the regulatory legal landscape, by ensuring that Trading Standards Officers have a wide range of enforcement powers and sanctions available to them; and to
- demonstrate the value of providing funding for Trading Standards Services, at a local, regional, and national level, to enhance public protection.

Ongoing investment into the Trading Standards profession helps to support the Government's aims of prosperity, legitimate business growth and having access to safeguarding protection, advice and support. Supporting lawful trading and tackling unscrupulous businesses and Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) remains a fundamental part of our work.

Partnership working is at the heart of everything that we do and a vital part of securing successful outcomes. Officers work collaboratively with a wide range of partners and key stakeholders such as the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), to respond to local, regional and national priorities.

National Trading Standards (NTS) and regional co-ordination teams remain an integral link between local and regional communities on national issues. The sharing of intelligence and co-ordinating both regional and national operations allows us to maximise the impact of our preventative and reactive work and support large-scale investigations. A prime example of this, is our work on Operation Joseph, a Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) funded initiative, led by NTS, delivered by local Trading Standards teams, to tackle the marketing and sales of non-compliant vaping products.

The investment DHSC made to fund dedicated Trading Standards apprentices has enabled enhanced targeted enforcement action to be carried out to improve how we combat the illegal trade of tobacco and vapes and to help prevent vapes being sold to children.

I am pleased that this report provides an opportunity to show the range and breadth of our work through our case studies. They provide details of our output and outcome measures in relation to several areas such as product safety, animal heath and welfare, food and animal feed businesses, fraud cases, responsible trader schemes, and our work to ensure that consumers get what they have paid for. Similarly to last year, the report focuses on the three themes of Tackling Detriment and Preventing Harm, Supporting the Local Economy, and Promoting Health and Wellbeing.

Whilst local Trading Standards Services continue to face an increase in service demand and pressures, they continue to have a big impact in safeguarding consumers and assisting businesses. The report data, contextual information and case studies demonstrate the importance, benefit and impact of our work.

A special thanks to the **99** services covering **110** local authorities that submitted their data return for this period. This covers 65% of all local authorities in England & Wales. The headlines from this year's report are:

- Overall revenue budgets were approximately **£119 million.**
- There were approximately **2,130** Full Time Equivalent staff.
- Almost **£594 million** detriment was prevented by Trading Standards' actions.
- There were almost **537,000** referrals from Citizens Advice and other partners.
- This year **920 people or businesses were convicted of offences.**

- Defendants were sentenced to almost **400 years** in prison, fined over **£3.3 million** and had over **£18.8 million** confiscated by the courts.
- Trading Standards obtained over **£15.9 million** in non-scams related redress for consumers.
- The amount of **money saved for scam victims was almost £57.5 million.**
- Trading Standards provided over **18,000 hours of advice to businesses** through Primary Authority Partnerships and answered over **11,900** other business advice requests.
- Almost **67,500** compliance checks were carried out with 40% requiring an intervention.
- Almost **5.9 million** unsafe or non-compliant products were seized or removed from the marketplace.
- Almost **11,100** food premises were found to be in breach of food standards legislation and almost **5,400** businesses were found to be non-compliant with animal health and welfare requirements.
- Over **6,100** premises were checked to ensure they were not selling age-restricted goods, such as alcohol, tobacco and vapes to children.
- Over **33.6 million** illegal cigarettes, almost **10 tonnes** of illegal hand-rolling tobacco and almost **2.96 million** illegal vapes were seized.

In short, the report showcases how Trading Standards continues to demonstrate its huge value in offering consumer protection and legal sanctions against unlawful trading. Our work makes a significant contribution to revitalising our high streets and protecting the public.



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 **2025/26**. Data was provided by **110** out of 173 of local authorities (65%).

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 **£119 million**. This was the same as in 2024/25, which is a real term reduction given inflationary pressures and local government pay awards.

Trading Standards Services received **over £23 million in income** from a variety of sources including metrology, National Trading Standards' grants and Primary Authority income, a 3% increase from last year. Approximately 20% of the services' costs are funded via this income.

As in 2024/25, approximately **2,130 full time employees** were employed on Trading Standards work. Over 84% of these were operational staff.

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service made **450,000** referrals and notifications to Trading Standards. This is a 5% reduction from 2024/25. ACTSO remains concerned about levels of resourcing for their Service. In addition, Trading Standards also received almost **86,700** referrals from other partners. This is an 18% reduction from 2024/25 and is at its lowest level since 2020/21. The reasons for this are not clear, although there is evidence of much more pro-active partnership working in localities which may reduce the need for formal referrals.

SECTION ONE: TACKLING DETRIMENT AND PREVENTING HARM

Trading Standards' work is focussed on preventing harm and financial detriment to legitimate businesses and to consumers. This can include providing information and advice as well as carrying out work to prevent, disrupt and take enforcement action against those who break the law.

1.1 Stopping Fraudulent, Illegal and Unfair Trading

Trading Standards Services enforce almost 300 pieces of legislation, covering a wide range of issues. Penalties for breaking Trading Standards related laws include imprisonment, fines, forfeiture of assets and undertakings to stop future non-compliance. Formal enforcement action is usually reserved for those cases where someone has deliberately broken the law, ignored warnings or have caused serious harm.

In **2025/26**:

- Approximately **920** defendants were prosecuted.
- Prison sentences totalling almost **400** years were handed down.
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£3.3 million** in fines.
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£18.8 million** in Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) confiscation orders.
- Almost **330 penalty notices** were issued for Trading Standards offences.

There was a 9% decrease in the number of people or businesses convicted of offences compared to 2024/25 but it was higher than any other year since 2019/20.

Prison sentences dropped by over 30% compared with 2024/25. This is likely to be linked to changes in sentencing guidelines related to pressures within the prison system. Sentences were still higher than any other year since 2020/21. Conversely there was an increase of 60% in fines issued by the court and a 60% increase in POCA Confiscation Orders, the highest that has been sent since these reports have been produced.

There was a 20% increase in the number of penalty notices from last year. This is likely to be because there is now a wider range of legislation where they can be used (animal welfare, single use vapes etc.). It also provides an effective alternative for dealing with offences quickly without burdening the court system.

1.2 Detriment and Redress

Trading Standards can obtain compensation for victims in some cases. This can be by asking a court to issue a compensation order as part of a prosecution or via a variety of other means. In **2025/26**, it is estimated that the actions of Trading Standards Services resulted in:

- **Almost £2.2 million** compensation being awarded to victims by the courts.
- **Over £9.2 million** prevented from being handed over to criminals.
- **Almost £4.5 million** gained for victims through advice and intervention.

Compensation from the courts decreased by 36% compared to last year and the lowest it has been since publication of these reports. Conversely there was a 40% increase in preventing money being handed to criminals compared to 2024/25 and a huge 105% increase since 2023/24. This shows the value of disruptive and preventative measures sitting alongside formal enforcement action. The sums gained for victims via advice remained similar to 2024/25.

Overall Trading Standards actions prevented over £594 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, tackling a wide range of offending. The increase of Organised Crime Groups and Serious and Organised Crime is well documented and is particularly apparent on high streets, on-line frauds and rogue trading. Trading Standards are using a variety of enforcement methods to tackle this problem.



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. Trading Standards Services play a key role in tackling fraud and protecting people from scams.

Trading Standards seek to 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 getting telephone or payment systems removed and taking down websites. Most scams emanate from overseas where formal legal action by Trading Standards is not possible.

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Local authority Trading Standards Services provided support to over **9,700** scam victims.
- Work by Local Authorities and the NTS Scams Team, to disrupt mass marketing fraud mailings and stop outgoing payments and mail, saved consumers almost **£57.5 million.**

The number of scam victims directly supported has decreased by 40% from 2024/25. The reasons for this are unclear but may be because this type of vulnerable victim support is very resource intensive and, in some areas, may be being delivered by Adult Safeguarding Teams. In addition, the referral mechanisms did change this year which may have had an impact. However the total savings achieved has increased by 18% which shows that preventative and disruptive measures, such as improvements in banking protocols, better controls on push payments and blocking scam calls and mail is very effective.

Derbyshire County Council: Construction Products

Derbyshire Trading Standards worked with a distributer of a fire-retardant membrane used to surround window frames in new builds, including high rise buildings above 11m in height. The product was found not to comply with its described fire resistance classification. They worked with the business and 360 rolls of product (10,800 m^2) were quarantined. The product was manufactured outside the UK and a formal recall notice was issued.

Lincolnshire County Council: Misleading Pricing

Lincolnshire Trading Standards undertook a targeted pricing project at rural retail premises where consumers have limited choice of alternative retailers and may be more vulnerable to financial detriment. The project aimed to identify and rectify pricing breaches that prevented consumers from making informed purchasing decisions or resulted in them paying more than expected. A total of 51 visits were carried out to 47 premises. Of these, 29 premises were fully compliant at the first visit, 17 had minor non-compliance and one had a major non-compliance. Two businesses were brought into compliance following revisits, with further follow-up visits ongoing. Inspections identified goods offered for sale without prices, inconsistent or unclear pricing information, and failures to comply with unit pricing requirements. This makes it difficult for consumers to compare products and obtain best value. Where breaches were identified, officers provided advice and secured immediate corrective action wherever possible, without formal enforcement in most cases. The project demonstrated the value of proactive inspections in rural communities, preventing financial detriment, improving consumer confidence and promoting compliance through education, advice and proportionate enforcement.



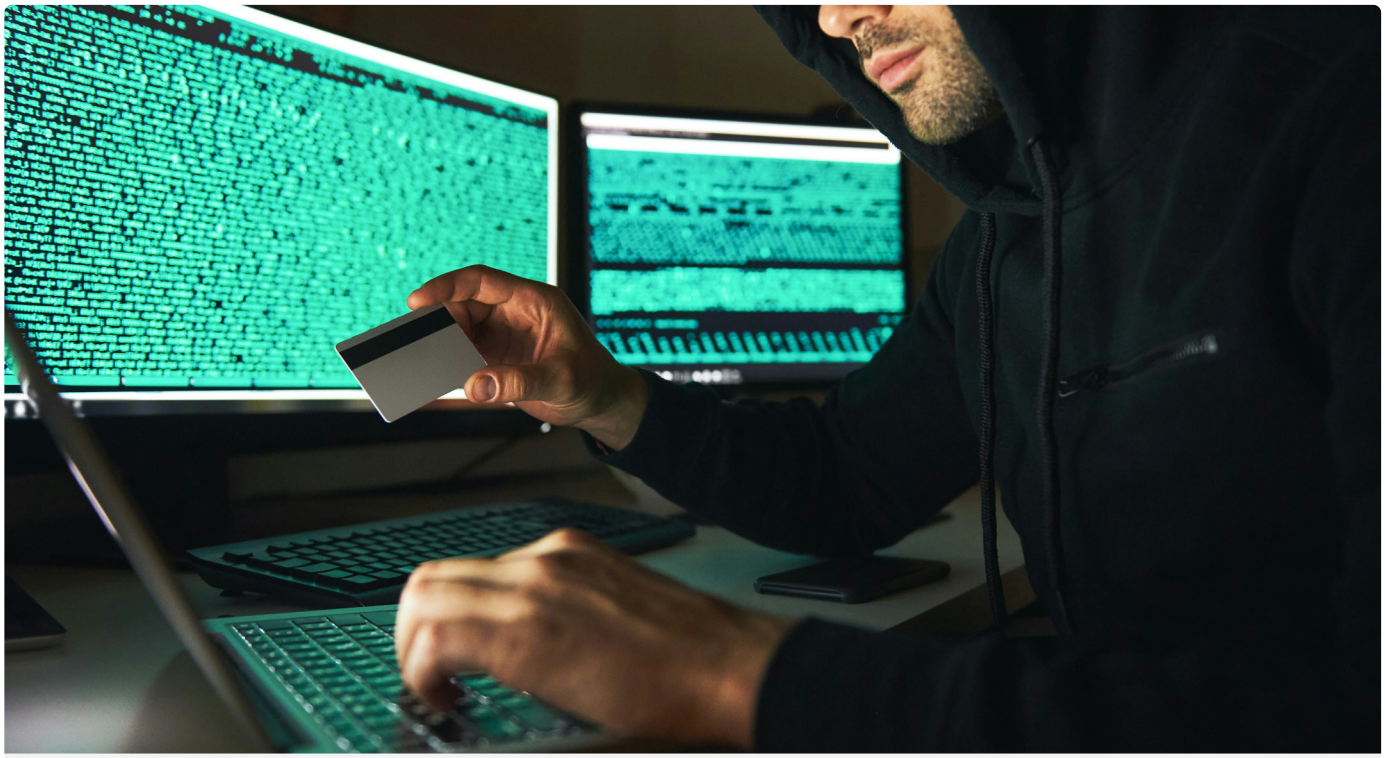
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP): Illegal Money Lending

BCP Trading Standards engaged with the national Illegal Money Lending Team to tackle the issue of unlicensed money lending by delivering awareness raising presentations to address the knowledge gap of partner agencies who may come into contact with clients at risk from loan sharks. Two sessions were hosted in person and one online, with a total of 65 delegates trained. Excellent feedback was received including:

- "That was brilliant - thank you so much! Very informative and interesting."
- "Thank you, this was really useful and will definitely make me mindful of warning signs."
- "It's been really helpful and informative, thank you."
- "Eye opening a world I had no idea about. Thank you."

Dorset Council: Rogue Trader

In November 2022 a man calling himself 'Dan' cold called a vulnerable, elderly, Dorset resident falsely claiming to have done tree work for neighbours. Over several days, Dan and his associates convinced the man to hand over cash and cheques totalling £36,600 using misleading and aggressive tactics to push unnecessary work. An expert valued the work at around £3500. Dorset Trading Standards found the proceeds were laundered through third-party accounts to disguise their origin. In a statement read at court, the victim explained how he had been impacted. "It has been two years since the men targeted me and I still remember those two weeks very well, and parts of it still haunt me. Their actions have had a distinct impact on my quality of life. These men left my garden in a terrible mess. I am still concerned about the state of it today. Every morning when I wake up, I think of what these men did and just hope that nothing similar ever happens to me or anyone like me again, and I am fearful of being targeted again". In September 2025, they were sentenced to over 10 years imprisonment between them. Hearing what had happened, and knowing the victim had been left without his life savings, a local good Samaritan business cleared the victims garden free of charge as an early Christmas present.



West Yorkshire Joint Services: Financial Abuse

The owner of a domiciliary care company in Wakefield was convicted after admitting multiple counts of fraud by abuse of position following a lengthy West Yorkshire Trading Standards investigation into the financial exploitation of vulnerable adults under his care. He was sentenced to 6 years and 9 months in prison, the value of the fraud was over £330,000. He had Power of Attorney (POA) for service users linked to his care company. The court heard he had systematically abused his position, obtaining POA for several clients and manipulating care arrangements for personal financial gain. Care packages were deliberately inflated beyond clients' needs. One of the most harrowing cases involved a victim who was isolated from family and friends, he controlled her finances, became Executor of her will, and after her death, submitted fraudulent invoices to claim her entire estate. He had encouraged her to apply for equity release to pay his bills and attempted to cover his offending by making false statements to adult social care. He insisted on being present at every meeting, preventing the victim from raising concerns. He ignored advice to not become POA for any other clients due to conflicts of interest and became attorney for a 90 year old bed-bound victim, taking control of her finances, redirecting mail and bank cards, and changing her will.

The judge said at sentencing *"It was a gross breach of the trust that the victims placed in you. It was planned and sophisticated offending, sustained periods of offending where you targeted vulnerable people. The consequence of your offending goes far beyond money".*

London Borough of Croydon: Scams Prevention

Croydon Trading Standards has undertaken a range of activities which aligned priority areas with Public Health outcomes including working with partners to relaunch and refresh training on scams and fraud awareness in the community. Adult social workers were trained alongside another 50 police officers, a range of third sector groups and a number of community based groups. A bespoke theatre production/workshop is being designed and rolled out to over 1000 Croydon Year 5 pupils on the dangers of online fraud and scams with a recorded version in production.

London Borough of Islington: Modelling Scam Fraud

Islington Trading Standards have a photo studio operating in the borough that is part of a wider network of other studios that operate as part of a model agency scam. In the past, there had been criminal investigations and prosecutions. Although complaint levels seem to have now lowered appreciably, Islington Trading Standards chose a preventative approach. They have had a poster designed to display across the borough on street furniture and electronic display boards. The aim is to raise awareness of the scam because awareness of the scam seems to come from web forums with no councils advising the public about it.



Bury Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Stockton on Tees Council, Manchester City Council, Brighton and Hove City Council

Illicit Trade

Illicit trade and the supply of illegal tobacco and vapes is a priority across many Local Authorities. Some examples of this work are detailed below.

Bury Trading Standards conducted multi-agency days of action with Greater Manchester Police, Licensing, the Fire Service and Immigration Enforcement. All new off-licences and convenience stores were visited. Where contraventions were found, representations were made to the licensing panel. This led to four licence reviews/ representations in the last 12 months. Trading Standards continue to contribute to Greater Manchester's Keep It Out campaign, inputting intelligence on illegal tobacco.

Stoke-on-Trent Trading Standards has used Anti-Social behaviour powers to close illegal tobacco and vapes premises, with 14 court orders for three-month closures being granted and five voluntary closures because of work with landlords. It is estimated that the financial impact on the Organised Crime Groups is over £1.7m. This work has been in partnership with Staffordshire Police, as part of wider Clear Hold Build strategies and "Making Great Places" target areas in the city.

Stockton on Tees Trading Standards successfully obtained 11 closure orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014, in relation to premises involved in the sale and supply of counterfeit and illegal tobacco and vapes.

Manchester Trading Standards participated in a Greater Manchester Police-led multi agency operation to target the sale of illegal items such as cigarettes, vapes and other illicit goods alongside linked issues such as illegal immigration, money laundering and drugs. This also involved Immigration Enforcement and local housing teams. Trading Standards seized 31,800 cigarettes and 23.85kg of hand rolling tobacco. In addition, police arrested five men for drug offences.

Brighton and Hove Trading Standards identified that some young people in Local Authority care were working in the illegal tobacco trade and being manipulated when making applications for council housing and other support. Trading Standards worked with Children's Services to help support vulnerable young people and prevent the use of council resources and properties for illegal activity.



Worcestershire County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Central Bedfordshire Council

Rogue Builders

Home improvements and rogue builders continue to be one of the top causes for complaint and financial detriment. Some examples of this work are detailed below.

A rogue trader was sentenced to 5½ years and was disqualified from being company director for 10 years, following a prosecution by **Worcestershire Trading Standards.** He was estimated to have defrauded victims out of more than £120,000. Opulent Lifestyle Ltd was investigated after a significant number of complaints from residents from across the country. The court heard that between October 2016 and December 2020. They took money from victims for home improvements which were either not started, partially completed, or completed to a poor standard. The court also heard how a number of tradesmen and small businesses who had worked for the rogue trader had not been paid, with further substantial sums also owed to suppliers.. A number of victims provided statements outlining the detrimental effect of the rogue trader's offending, with his victims suffering clear financial and emotional harm, some of which led to physical illness. In passing sentence HHJ Jackson said the defendants had "lied and lied and lied', and were 'thoroughly manipulative'. The case is the second brought by Worcestershire Trading Standards after the defendant was prosecuted for identical conduct a decade ago. The Judge commented that, in his view, it was clear that the rogue trader had waited for the expiry of the suspended prison sentence previously imposed by the court before embarking again on a virtually identical course of conduct and offending.

Bath and North East Somerset Trading Standards sent 443 'how to choose a builder' advisory letters to residents who had lodged a planning application on the Council's planning portal. This project was initiated after it was discovered that rogue traders were using the portal to target victims and offer their services. Whilst difficult to prove a direct outcome of these letters, it has been noted that complaints against rogue traders conducting major work declined in the past 12 months.

Stoke-on-Trent Trading Standards successfully extradited a rogue builder from Spain with the support of police. Guilty pleas on four counts of fraud were agreed, with a sentencing outcome awaited. There were at least 20 victims, the total fraud for the prosecution was £187,000 and detriment prevented was at least £100,000 in the last year. Whilst this type of fraud has an economic and psychological impact on all injured parties, the victim impact of the offending was particularly significant where building work was being done to provide accessibility for elderly and disabled relatives, and where foster parents were creating an additional room to keep two siblings together.

Central Bedfordshire Trading Standards intervened to assist a consumer who had reported the matter to the Police and has been advised it was civil only. The bank refused to refund the consumer based on this view. Trading Standards assessed that there were multiple frauds so provided the consumer with a written regulatory opinion. The bank reviewed the matter and the consumer received a full refund of £36,750.

SECTION TWO: SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Economic growth and business support continues to be a priority for the Government and local authorities. Businesses need access to sound 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.

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **18,000** hours were spent by Trading Standards advising Primary Authority businesses. This was an increase of 11% from last year but remains lower than any previous year.
- Trading Standards responded to almost **11,900** requests for advice from businesses that were not part of the Primary Authority scheme. This is a reduction of 2% from 2024/25 and is now at half the level it was in the years prior to 2022/23.

This may be attributable to more businesses seeking information on-line and via Artificial Intelligence (AI). Sites such as Business Companion are recognised as an effective and trusted resource especially for small and medium sized businesses.

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

Illegal trading puts consumers at risk, can cause legitimate businesses to suffer and damages 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 **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Almost **67,500** 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 was a 6% decrease from last year.
- Almost **26,500** businesses were subject to an intervention, such as advice, investigation, or referral. This was a 5% reduction from 2024/25.
- Almost **970,000** counterfeit products with a market value of almost **£6.6 million**, which breach the intellectual property of legitimate businesses, were seized.

There was an 82% increase in the removal of counterfeit goods from 2024/25. However, we know this figure fluctuates by a wide margin as one or two very large seizures can skew figures.

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





London Borough of Barking & Dagenham: Responsible Retailer Scheme

Barking and Dagenham Trading Standards took an ambitious approach to get businesses to sign up to the Responsible Retailer Agreement on Knife Sales. This was from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and is a Responsible Retailer scheme for the prevention of selling knives to young people. This has now been extended to include the sale of vapes and also to operate a challenge 25 policy. More than 100 premises have signed up, some during a "Day of Action" initiative led by the Council's Communications Team.

Stoke-on-Trent Council: Advice to Market Traders

In an initiative with the City Council Markets team, Stoke-on-Trent Trading Standards conducted compliance days at all Council run markets. Almost 100 market traders were inspected, and officers also engaged with shoppers. Counterfeit and unsafe goods were identified and businesses were advised on consumer law obligations. The advice was received very positively by the market traders.

"It's positive to see Trading Standards in the community and it's fantastic that traders can seek advice without leaving their stall, it's good for the community to protect victims of scams and educate consumers regarding scams".

"How good it is to have trader advice that I can access quickly and conveniently in the market".

London Borough of Southwark: Illegal Traders on the High Street

The Chairperson of a local tenants and residents association approached the Council to report that local businesses in Camberwell were suffering due to the presence of a new shop which was selling illegal tobacco and vapes. The nearest well-established newsagent was being particularly undermined by the availability of cheap illegal cigarettes. The Chair was concerned by illegal activity in their neighbourhood and the negative impact on local businesses. The Chair provided a statement outlining this and expressing their Association's wish that businesses on their local high street have a fair market in which they can thrive. Southwark Trading Standards undertook multiple test purchases and inspections where seizures of illegal tobacco were found in sophisticated concealments. A closure notice was served, and a contested hearing took place to try and secure a closure order. The notice was objected to by the landlord but crucially the Magistrate took into account a statement obtained from the Chairperson and when combined with the weight of trading standards evidence of continued illegal activity the court had no hesitation granting the closure order application. The Residents Association were satisfied with this action and received very positive feedback from residents and businesses.



Lincolnshire County Council: Support for Local Food Businesses

The food industry is particularly important in Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire Trading Standards delivered a project to support newly established food businesses in complying with Prepacked for Direct Sale (PPDS) labelling requirements. This helped businesses understand their legal responsibilities while supporting growth and protecting consumers. Officers visited businesses to provide tailored advice and answered business-specific questions and built positive relationships. Follow-up emails containing guidance packs and resources reinforced the advice and provided ongoing support.

Businesses engaged positively, welcoming the opportunity to discuss compliance challenges. Common concerns included the time and cost of compliant labelling and the impact of larger labels on product presentation and limited awareness of PPDS requirements. Working in partnership with businesses allowed officers to provide practical solutions, increase confidence and encourage compliance. The project provided valuable insight into the causes of non-compliance. Most resulted from knowledge gaps and practical implementation challenges rather than deliberate breaches. This has shaped future service delivery by identifying where businesses need further support and clearer guidance, including an educational social media campaign.

A key outcome was recognising new food businesses as a priority for early engagement. Providing early advice helps businesses trade safely and legally, reduces the need for formal enforcement and creates a level playing field for compliant businesses. By supporting businesses from the start, Lincolnshire Trading Standards is strengthening partnerships with local businesses, improving consumer confidence and contributing to a thriving local economy.



Cheshire East Council: Under Age Sales Advice

Cheshire East Trading Standards undertook a programme of compliance checks at local businesses and issued 113 Under Age Sales packs. Positive feedback was received including:

"I'd like to thank you so much for looking at this matter so quickly and efficiently, and also for ensuring I'm not going to get anybody into trouble. You went to them within three days and that's so brilliant, I am so thankful for how quickly you have resolved this matter".

"Thank you for your time yesterday it was both a pleasure and very informative. I appreciate the insights you shared, and I will ensure this information is put into practice".

"Thank you also for your guidance on Tuesday. Some great practices for us to work on and implement".

"Some fantastic points for us to work on, many thanks for all the support you have provided also".

"Overall, I feel we are in a good place following your visit, and the actions taken will help ensure our procedures are more robust and watertight going forward."

"Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and for the detailed follow-up email. I appreciate you sharing your experience and guidance, and for setting everything out so clearly following your visit".

Derbyshire County Council: Trusted Trader Scheme

Derbyshire Trading Standards operates a trusted trader scheme which provides a source of local tradespeople for consumers in Derbyshire. Members are vetted and assessed by Trading Standards for their commitment to meeting the principles of trading fairly. The scheme has around 850 members, 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 96% 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 Standards advice and mediation if needed. When needed, outcomes of mediation range from rectification of work to negotiation of monetary redress. 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.

SECTION THREE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Trading Standards enforce a wide range of age restricted sales legislation to help to keep young people safe from vapes, cigarettes, alcohol, and knives. This year, the landmark Tobacco and Vaping Bill completed its passage through Parliament. Trading Standards also has a vital role in ensuring that consumer products, such as toys, cosmetics and electrical goods, are safe, that food is correctly labelled and that standards in animal health and welfare are maintained. This supports the health and well-being of communities which is a key priority in most local authorities.

3.1 Ensuring the Safety of Consumer Products

Product safety laws ensure that products do not injure anyone and do not cause fires. Trading Standards advise businesses and check goods at manufacture, import, wholesale and retail level to ensure that they comply with the law.

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Almost **5.9 million** unsafe or non-compliant products were seized or removed from the marketplace.
- The savings to society, in terms of product value and injuries and fires prevented, is over **£219 million**.

There was a 15% decrease in the number of unsafe and non-complaint goods removed from the market place compared to 2024/25 but higher than any other time since 2021/22.

3.2 Protecting the food chain

Food prices are continuing to increase and remain a key part of cost-of-living concerns. Unscrupulous businesses may adulterate or falsely label food to enhance profits or gain a competitive advantage. Consumers need to be able to trust in the food they buy: whether that it is what is says it is or that it is good value for money. Allergens must be clearly labelled which can cause serious injury or even death.

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Almost **11,100** businesses were identified as supplying food that was misdescribed, did not correctly declare allergens, contained toxic or illegal components, or engaged in food fraud. This was an 8% increase on last year and has increased every year since 2020/21. This upward trend shows a continued focus on ensuring the integrity of the food chain.

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

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Almost **5,900** businesses were found to be in breach of animal health and welfare legislation.

This dropped by 35% compared to 2024/25. However figures have changed significantly over the last few years. Having been relatively constant in the four years up to 2023/24, it rose significantly in 2024/25 but has now dropped back to lowest recorded levels. The wider use of national restrictions in responses to animal disease outbreaks, especially avian influenza, could explain some of the reduction, as fewer local interventions were required.

Animal disease outbreaks create risks to the UK economy and the farming industry, which is already under significant pressure. Trading Standards remain at the forefront of responding to these issues. Disease risks are changing, driven, at least in part, by climate change and the related increase of insect borne diseases such as Blue Tongue.

In **2025/26**, there were **111 confirmed avian influenza cases.** This was a more than quadruple the number in 2024/25. Cases of Bluetongue disease continued to rise significantly. In 2025/26, local authorities dealt with **323 confirmed cases of Bluetongue**, a 40% increase on 2024/25 but an even more significant 325% increase on 2023/24. In addition there was one suspect African Swine Fever, one suspect Lumpy Skin Disease and one suspect Foot and Mouth Disease case, all of which were negated.





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 vapes, tobacco, alcohol, knives and fireworks. They also provide businesses with advice on how to comply.

In **2025/26**, it is estimated that across England and Wales:

- Over **1,526 premises** were tested for alcohol sales.
- The average failure rate for alcohol test purchases was **15%.**
- Over **160 premises** were tested for tobacco sales.
- The average failure rate for tobacco test purchases was **23%.**
- **Almost 2,700** premises were tested for vape sales.
- The average failure rate for vapes was **23%.**
- **Almost 1,782** premises were tested for other products.
- The average failure rate for other products was **24%.**

In total, the number of age restricted sales test purchases were lower. The most noticeable fall was in tobacco test purchases. This is most likely due to the focus being on illegal goods being sold, rather than just sales to young people. The failure rate for alcohol test purchasing was 15%, down from 20% in 2024/25. Failure rates for other products remained almost the same as in previous years. Underage sales of vapes remains a high priority and is indicative of the increased public health concerns about children vaping.

3.4 Reducing the availability of illegal products

Smoking remains a significant driver in health inequalities. Trading Standards have a key role in delivering the Government's strategy to reduce demand and tackle the supply of illegal tobacco. Price has been proved to be a critical factor in determining whether people quit smoking. Packs of illegal cigarettes are often between a third and a half the price of legitimate products and its availability undermines peoples' efforts to cut down or quit smoking.

The amount of tobacco and vape products seized has continued to increase significantly. This reflects the prevalence of vaping problems and the priority this work is being given within local authorities.

In **2025/26**, across England and Wales:

- Over **6,000 checks** on businesses were carried out to ensure that they were not supplying illegal tobacco. Over **54%** of these visits resulted in seizures of illegal tobacco.
- From these over **33.6 million** illegal cigarettes were seized, worth an estimated **£19.3 million**. This is an increase of 43% from 24-25 and an increase of 76% from 2023/24.
- Almost **10 tonnes** of illegal hand-rolling tobacco were seized, worth over **£6.1 million**. Again, this is a very large increase of 39% compared to last year and almost double that seized in 2023/24.
- **2.96 million** illegal vapes were seized by local authorities. Approximately half of these were seized at ports. This was a 20% increase from 24-25 but more than double that seized in 2023/24.
- The value of seized vapes is estimated at over **£18.3 million.**

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 approximately **285 Licence Reviews** being carried out, a decrease of 14% from last year. This may be because of an increased use of closure notices, or the agreement of stricter licence conditions, replacing the need for a formal licence review in some cases.



Milton Keynes City Council: Asbestos in Childrens' Products

Milton Keynes Trading Standards worked closely with government agencies including OPSS, the Health and Safety Executive and the UK Health Security Agency in relation to potential risks surrounding traces of asbestos in play sand. They had a large producer and two national retailers based in Milton Keynes that were impacted by this issue. Government asked businesses to withdraw the products from sale while they undertake further research.

London Borough of Brent: eBikes Safety

Brent Trading Standards participated in a joint London Trading Standards, London Fire Brigade and OPSS e bike and e scooter fire safety awareness campaign, engaging with food delivery operatives using e bikes. A short survey on ownership, usage, specifications, modifications and charging practices was completed, with safety advice provided. Most operatives followed guidance, charging bikes outdoors and unplugging chargers once fully charged.

Hampshire County Council: Unsafe goods at Ports

During the year, as part of their ports and borders work, Hampshire Trading Standards intercepted and inspected 130,000 products with 90,000 refused entry due to safety concerns. They use border profiling and intelligence to target work at consignments of most concern, in most cases agreeing for products to be destroyed and any online advertising on UK selling platforms to be removed. Recent examples found include a teething toy, soft play octopus and toy xylophone which all were aimed at children under three and posed a serious risk of choking; a chainsaw where the test report indicated a clear risk of death and an e-bike with a high risk of fire due to the unsafe battery (where the lab technician also cut his hand on a rough piece of solder when he removed the bike from the box).



London Borough of Southwark: Cosmetics Products and Procedures

Southwark Trading Standards undertook test booking attempts at 12 salons in relation to the supply of dermal fillers. Appointments were sought over the telephone by a 16-year-old female police cadet being monitored by a trading standards professional. Only four salons enquired about the person's age during the call. Those that did not were contacted and received appropriate informal warnings along with advice and guidance materials.

Southwark undertook enforcement activity against a Peckham cosmetics business and its director, who were ordered to pay over £30,000 after being convicted of dealing in illegal skin lighteners for a second time. Samples seized from the shop contained prohibited chemicals, including the banned skin bleaching agent hydroquinone and the powerful steroid clobetasol propionate. One lotion had nearly 6% hydroquinone, three times the legal limit before an EU wide ban in 2001. These chemicals pose serious health risks, including skin damage, liver and kidney problems, and increased cancer risk. The case highlights how dangerous and illegal ingredients are hidden in products with end-users having no clue they may be applying substances so potent they should only be used under medical supervision under a prescription.

Derbyshire County Council: Medicinal Claims

Derbyshire Trading Standards received contacts from other agencies that a business was selling medicines and supplements from a stall claiming to cure cancer. It was established that the business was selling prescription only medication (which they seemed to be manufacturing themselves) and unauthorised novel foods. Social media suggested that he was supplying micro dosing of psilocybin ('magic mushrooms'), which is classified as a Class A controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Contact from Derbyshire Police found that the business owner was arrested following national monitoring of the importation of chemicals. The Police searched and seized a number of large items, including the stall advertising. Other items imported by the owner were blocked from delivery to him due to the chemical's links to explosive substances and poisons. Part of the owners' bail conditions were to not offer medicinal or homeopathic treatments to members of the public.

Swansea Council: Food Fraud

Swansea Trading Standards undertook a multi-agency operation into the supply of kebabs from a company called Kismet kebabs. They supplied to premises across the UK and abroad. It was established that their lamb kebabs did not contain any lamb and were made of other meats and excess, skin and fat. The company was prosecuted and had to pay £800,000 in fines and costs. Their profit for one year was £3 million and over the period of the offending was over £16 million. The fraud affected consumers and other business in the whole supply chain.



Barnsley Council, Suffolk County Council, Heart of the South West

Food Safety (including allergens)

Barnsley Trading Standards prosecuted Asda for a failure to put in place a safe system for the removal of out of date 'use by' food. The company had moved to a more automated means of "signposting" lower numbers of staff to where out of date food might be found, rather than a more traditional means of humans checking the fridges, with management cross checks. This meant that if the product was missed, it was missed for lengthy periods until someone eventually stumbled across it. The barrister for the defendant told the court that pressure from a handful of prosecutions nationally had led them to move away from using signposting devices to a more traditional way of checking.

Suffolk Trading Standards continues to focus on allergens in its food sampling work and out of 192 food samples taken, 117 included an allergen. Food projects targeted safety concerns such as checking American sweets for non-permitted additives and slushies for glycerol.

Heart of the South West Trading Standards carried out a mystery shopper exercise of 75 food businesses in Devon and Somerset to check allergen management compliance. The businesses were a mix of garden centres, coffee shops, bakeries and restaurants. At each, an officer specified their allergy and asked for a product that did not contain that allergen. Each product was then tested. On 16 occasions, allergens were found. Milk was the most common allergen to be present. There were immediate inspections conducted at 13 of the businesses to address poor food management systems. Follow up inspections were conducted at an additional 15 businesses. A press release was issued to remind businesses of the importance of regularly reviewing their food preparation protocols.

Derbyshire County Council: Contaminated Animal Feed

Derbyshire Trading Standards worked with the Food Standards Agency in response to an incident involving large volumes of animal feed reportedly contaminated with botulism, linked to multiple cattle deaths. A Derbyshire-based feed manufacturer had received significant quantities of a contaminated ingredient, which had been incorporated into a finished feed product. Approximately 200 tonnes of this manufactured feed had been distributed to customers both within and beyond Derbyshire. All affected products were either quarantined or subject to recall. The business estimated that the incident, including loss of earnings, would cost the insurance company more than £1 million.

Swansea Council: Illegal Slaughter of Animals

Swansea Trading Standards investigated a local hobby farmer who was mistreating animals, locking them in wet shipping containers, feeding them animal by products and then placing, in a local river, carcasses of animals which had been illegally slaughtered. This meant that the local river was contaminated from point of entry all the way to the estuary. Every farm that had land adjacent to the river had to be put on movement restrictions. Notices were ignored. Officers had to remove product from the stream to be incinerated to ensure that movement restriction wouldn't remain ongoing. Five sets of animals have been seized from the individual. He was prosecuted and has been given a lifetime ban from keeping animals. All animals were rehomed to sanctuaries to live how they should.



Essex County Council, Manchester City Council, Suffolk County Council and London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Tackling Illegal Tobacco and Vapes

Many Local Authorities are undertaking work to tackle the illegal supply of tobacco and vapes. Some examples of this work are shown below.

Essex Trading Standards seized 224,000 illegal cigarettes, 115kg of illegal hand rolling tobacco and almost 8,000 illegal vapes from 72 premises. Three evictions have taken place after working with landlords, one licensing review was carried out and 22 referrals were made to HMRC for civil sanctions. There were five successful prosecutions for underage sales of vapes. Over 20% of premises were found to be repeat offending.

Working with Public Health and police, **Manchester Trading Standards** have proactively engaged with young people in the area. Work was undertaken with Media Cubs to deliver workshops and programmes in community settings to reach children and have their voices heard. A school was chosen in Wythenshawe where students were asked to attend a workshop specifically in relation to youth vaping. A short media video was made where expert panel members were interviewed by the students with questions which mattered to them. The clip will be shared on social media to get the furthest reach and engage with as many young people as possible to highlight the dangers of vaping.

Suffolk Trading Standards continue to engage with Public Health regarding the supply of vapes, alcohol and tobacco and provided training to the Tobacco Control Alliance. Working with District Councils, they secured the first four closure orders in the county. There were multiple seizures of vapes and illegal tobacco. Regular referrals were made to HMRC for civil sanctions. There were also multiple under age sales test purchases, primarily for vapes, and a prosecution for repeat sale of vapes which resulted in the premises being permanently closed.

Barking and Dagenham is one of the poorest London boroughs and the presence of illegal tobacco is rife. **Barking and Dagenham Trading Standards** undertook enforcement work to tackle the problem and worked with Stop Smoking Services to train frontline staff to provide very brief advice of quitting or signposting to specialist help for residents and small businesses. They worked alongside MHRA to remove hundreds of unauthorised medicinal products from these premises. Shisha venues were brought into compliance with a robust multi-agency enforcement approach with Planning Enforcement. Barking and Dagenham Council successfully prosecuted a Chadwell Heath business and its directors after they repeatedly ignored a planning enforcement notice and continued to operate as a shisha lounge without permission. The judge found the breach to be deliberate and persistent, noting that the business continued to advertise itself as a shisha lounge on social media even after formal action had begun. The court issued a £25,000 fine, along with £4,511 in costs, reflecting both the seriousness of the breach and the financial benefit accrued through operating unlawfully.

SECTION FOUR: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Trading Standards enforce a range of legislation that is either designed to protect the environment (e.g. bans on single use plastics, energy labelling and energy performance claims) or has collateral advantages of protecting the environment (e.g. weight restriction on vehicles). Data for this work is included in the figures above. However, the following case studies have been provided to give some examples of environmental work that is being carried out.



Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames: Single Use Plastics

Kingston Trading Standards used the DEFRA grant to undertake a project assessing how extensively single use plastics were available in shops and food businesses on one of their high streets. Guidance and warning letters were sent to some businesses.

Dorset Council: Green Energy

To help contribute towards carbon reduction and to marginalise rogue traders, Dorset Trading Standards worked with colleagues in Economic Development to secure £5,000 funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support good local businesses in the energy retrofitting sector to join Buy With Confidence. Potential applicants were incentivised with a significant discount on their application and their first year membership fee. With only a short window to apply, they worked with the local communications team on a marketing and promotional campaign and were able to achieve applications from seven new businesses. These businesses will be promoted to Dorset residents alongside corporate schemes to help householders improve their home's energy efficiency, reduce their carbon footprint and save money.

SECTION FIVE: COST OF LIVING

This remains a key priority for the Government and remains one of the main causes of concern for the public. The new Prime Minister has spoken about the need to create "breathing space" for people's finances. By ensuring people are getting what they pay for, especially in relation to food and fuel, Trading Standards can support this objective.

Data for this work is included in the figures above. However the following case studies have been provided to give some examples of this kind of work.



Stoke-on-Trent City Council: Energy Advice

Stoke-on-Trent Trading Standards worked with partners to deliver a Community Safety Awareness Day. Partners included Beat the Cold and Groundwork West Midlands. Face-to-face education and advice were given to residents regarding safe heater use, reducing fuel poverty, cold related ill health and energy saving measures to keep homes warmer for less, advice was also given on how to combat cold and damp. Following a grant from Electrical Safety First, 152 free heaters were distributed to vulnerable residents, primarily of pensionable age or with a disability. Further heaters have been distributed following the event. The feedback received was very positive;

"I am disabled with arthritis, and it plays up more in the cold weather, this is an excellent idea by Trading standards to help us older people out in the cold months. I am very grateful to have a heater as I have been very cold when the weather dropped many thanks to this. Having this heater means more than you can know, I just feel that Trading Standards is invaluable."



Cheshire East Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Salford City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Powys County Council, Monmouthshire County Council:

Consumers getting the food and fuel that they have paid for

Cheshire East Trading Standards has been ensuring that equipment for use in trade is accurate. They have inspected 31 liquid fuel dispensers, and all were compliant, 64 non-automatic weighing instruments under 30kg and 11 notices were issued, four automatic weighing instruments and guidance was issued, 771 intoxicating liquor measuring instruments and 41 notices were issued and four disqualified. Five packaging plants were also inspected and two required assistance to help them into compliance, and from 101 retail inspections 20 were assisted into compliance.

Lincolnshire Trading Standards ran an average quantity project where they examined quantity control arrangements across a representative sample of food manufacturers. Inspections were undertaken at a range of food manufacturing premises producing prepacked products including fresh poultry, potatoes, herbs, coffee and bakery products. Officers reviewed packing operations, quantity control systems, quality assurance procedures, weighing equipment, product labelling and supporting documentation to assess how businesses monitor and maintain compliance throughout the production process. Average quantity testing was undertaken alongside an assessment of operational practices to provide a comprehensive evaluation of each business's quantity control arrangements.

The project identified a consistently high standard of compliance across the businesses inspected, with effective quantity control arrangements supported by documented procedures, routine verification activities and appropriate management oversight. The inspections also provided an opportunity to engage with businesses, discuss technical aspects of quantity control and reinforce good practice where appropriate. Whilst regulatory projects are often judged by the identification of non-compliance, the outcome of this project demonstrates that confirming compliance is equally valuable. Establishing that businesses have effective systems in place, are meeting their legal obligations and are maintaining accurate quantity control provides assurance for regulators, supports compliant businesses and helps maintain confidence in the marketplace. This work helps protect household budgets by ensuring consumers receive what they pay for, while supporting fair competition for local businesses.



Salford Trading Standards led on a regional packaged goods project to revisit retail premises and conduct checks on a number of product lines that had failures in 2023, such as sliced white bread, cheese, ready meals and sausages. Results varied with 60 individual packs found to be below legal weight levels. The maximum levels of deficiencies ranged from 3% (sausages) to 15% (ready meals). The subsequent detriment to consumers ranged from 2p per pack (bread) to 90p per pack (ready meals). Conducting sample weight checks, identifying and rectifying short measure issues and providing business advice has reduced the risk of short measure products being placed on the market and contributing to cost of living difficulties for consumers.

Bath and North East Somerset Trading Standards undertook a project to check meters on bulk fuel tankers that deliver heating oil, testing eight tankers. All were found to be accurate. They checked measures at 10 pubs along with authenticity checks on spirits and found that many pubs using handheld spirit measures, some of which were not stamped. Guidance was given that these unstamped measures could not be used. It was also found that the legal notice for gin, rum, vodka, whisky is not often in place.

Trading Standards Wales coordinated a project checking the weight of bags of coal. Nine authorities participated and they checked the weight of 870 packages at 47 premises. There were 24 different packers of coal are represented in the results. People using alternative forms of heating are more likely to be in fuel poverty. Powys Trading Standards checked the weight of 157 bags of coal, across 6 business premises. It was found that 5% of the bags held a quantity less than that indicated on the packaging. These deficiencies were rectified at the time of the visit. Further checks will be carried out in the future to ensure that consumers get what they pay for and that issues around fuel poverty and ill health can be tackled at source. Monmouthshire Trading Standards checked 194 bags of pre-packed coal. All bags checked in Monmouthshire were compliant and not short weight, providing reassurance that households relying on traditional heating fuel were receiving the quantity for which they had paid.