

2018/19

THE VALUE OF TRADING STANDARDS REPORT

The impacts and outcomes of local trading standards services

This document highlights the value of the work of local trading standards services across England and Wales. In previous years, there has been no national data available on the performance of local authority trading standards services and as a result, it has been difficult to demonstrate the impact that trading standards makes. This is why the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) has created a method that for the first time assesses the value that local trading standards services deliver.

In 2018/19 local trading standards services:



Recovered £4.9 million
in Proceeds of Crime, and prevented **£26.5 million** being handed over to doorstep criminals



Provided support to
over 11,000 scam victims
saving victims over **£4 million**



Visited over 30,000 businesses
to help them comply with their legal responsibilities and responded to **13,615 requests** for advice from businesses



Found 3,399 businesses
that were supplying food that was mis-described, did not correctly declare allergens, contained toxic or illegal components or was involved in food fraud



Tested 5,716 business premises
for illegally selling alcohol, tobacco, knives or other illegal products. On average the failure rate was 22%



Received around 500,000
complaints, and undertook **43,000 investigations**

A message from our Chair

Trading standards officers work tirelessly to protect our local communities, already it is clear that calculating this data for the first time pulls back the curtain on the fantastic work being done by trading standards services across England and Wales. From preventing £42 million in consumer harm to seizing over £20 million worth of unsafe and counterfeit goods to prosecuting more than 1,000 criminals, trading standards services are making a real difference to the communities they serve.

In the following few pages, you will get a sense of the exceptional work delivered by trading standards services in three key areas: Tackling detriment and preventing harm, supporting the local economy and promoting health and wellbeing. I am sure this will give you a useful insight into the hard work and indisputable value of local trading standards services.



Trish Caldwell

Chair of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers

TACKLING DETRIMENT AND PREVENTING HARM

Halting criminal behaviour and bringing to justice those who break the law is a core part of the work of trading standards services.

In 2018/19, the work of trading standards services has seen:



Over 1,100
defendants
prosecuted



At least £42.6m
detriment prevented
by trading standards
activity



Almost £4.9m
in Proceeds of
Crime recovered



£26.8m
not handed over to
criminals through
rapid response



Over 11,000
scam victims
supported

Case study: Fraud and money laundering

A rogue trader in Kent conned thousands of pounds out of almost 20 victims by pressure-selling concrete driveways and patios. The fraud was sophisticated, persistent, carefully planned and professionally executed, many of his victims were elderly or vulnerable.

The trader made claims that were completely false or created a false impression such as that the company had been established for over twenty-five years and had completed major works at well-known sites to encourage his victims to enter into contracts with his company.

He used a variety of aliases in correspondence with customers to give the impression of a large company with multiple departments, despite being a one-man band. When his victims made complaints to the business they were threatened with court action or ignored, in total 19 victims lost a total of £30,000.

Kent trading standards prosecuted and the rogue trader pleaded guilty to nineteen offences of fraud and one of money laundering. He was banned from being a company director and sentenced to more than three years imprisonment.

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

An important part of trading standards services is the support and advice provided to businesses.

Feedback from Primary Authority Partners on the benefits of trading standards advice:

Buckinghamshire and Surrey

'The team have been brilliant in implementing and supporting the business processes... Their willingness to be flexible and consider new approaches to address business challenges has been really valuable... The projects have been delivering a genuine reduction in the regulatory burden on our business operations nationwide.'

– Martin Watkins, UK Operations Manager, Shell UK Oil Products Ltd.

Nottinghamshire

'Facing potential disruption to a major area of sales we sought help. [Trading standards] were fantastically supportive and once past the initial issues we recognised the positive impact they could have in other areas of the business to save time, money and give greater assurance to management.'

– Liam Gill, Operations Director JFT

Key Statistics in 2018/19 included:



13,615
responses to requests for
advice by businesses



More than 43,000
individual complaints where
the case was investigated



31,220 visits
to businesses

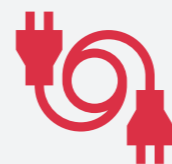


Just under 20,000
businesses are part of a
trading standards supported
trader approval scheme

PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Trading standards services work tirelessly to protect consumers by removing unsafe products from supply chains and to protect young people from age restricted products including tobacco, alcohol and knives.

Key statistics for 2018/19 include:



Over 1.3 million
unsafe products seized or
removed from the market,
worth an estimated £16.9m



£8.7m
value of illegal tobacco
products seized



22% average
failure rate on alcohol test
purchases by young people



**More than
15.3 million**
illegal cigarettes seized

Case study: Dangerous skin lightening creams

Skin lightening creams have emerged as a major product safety issue. Southwark trading standards led an online test purchasing project funded by National Trading Standards.

This resulted in the prosecution of a trader who was selling illegal creams containing up to 17% hydroquinone, a dangerous chemical that can cause skin weakening, liver damage and increase the risk of skin cancer which has been banned in these products since 2001.

Many of the products also had inadequate labelling. The trader had previously been given a suspended sentence in 2015 for similar offences. The trader was given a 20-month prison sentence and order to pay £5,000 in fines.