

Impact of trading standards – indicative statistics and case studies on key areas

Scams

- More than **600,000 people in the UK are known to be on suckers' lists** – this means their details are bought and sold by criminals who can target them in the knowledge they have previously responded to a scam of some kind.
- Victims whose details appear on suckers' lists can start receiving up to **70 scam letters a day**.
- Mail scams are known to cost victims across the UK more than **£3.5bn each year**.
- Doorstep crime takes approximately **£442m per year** from victims in the UK.
- In the most extreme cases, victims have been known to lose their homes and all of their life savings, making them reliant upon the public purse.
- The average victim of doorstep crime is 83 years old, female and lives alone.
- Vulnerable people get **six times as many scam and nuisance calls** compared with the UK average. A call blocker costing just £100 can **block 95%** of these calls.

Underage sales

- The pilot Community Alcohol Partnership in St Neots, Cambridgeshire, which brought trading standards together with partners including retailers, the police, and schools, saw **anti-social behaviour decrease by 42%, the number of under 18s found in possession of alcohol decrease by over 90% and the volume of alcohol litter fall by 92%**. This project has now been used as a model and spread across the country and shows the benefits that can be achieved by working in partnership.
- A project in 2016 revealed that **more than a third of businesses** were not yet complying with legislation to prevent sales of nicotine inhaling products (NIPs) including e-cigarettes to children under the age of 18. Flavours on sale that are seen to appeal to children include **bubble gum, cherry cola and chocolate**. The highest percentage of underage sales by premise were made at market stalls and car boot sales (68%).

Supporting businesses

- Business advice on complex laws and regulations will become even more important with the uncertainty for business generated by Brexit. Trading standards will play a vital role in making their areas good places to do business.
- With the retention of business rates, local businesses may start to expect more services and assistance from their local council and trading standards can provide this.
- Maintaining a level playing field where everyone plays by the same rules is essential to helping small businesses and start ups survive, as the case study below shows.
- In one unitary authority in England, traders selling counterfeit tobacco began operating out of small shops on the high street, cleverly hiding the goods in stores that sold long lasting low value goods. Their presence in premises on the high street gave these traders a veneer of legitimacy. One local businessman who runs a nearby newsagent says his **takings go down by 40%**, with customers increasingly going to these cheaper suppliers for their cigarettes. It was estimated that these shops were making **profits of more than £20,000 per week**. Seizing the goods repeatedly had little impact on these traders as the fines they were

receiving were so low compared to the gains and the goods were increasingly better hidden – one shop installed a goods lift under a removable floor tile behind the till to store the illegal products. The local trading standards service was able to close down all five shops after persuading the landlords to stop renting their properties to them.

Product Safety

- **500,000 hoverboards** were sold in the run-up to Christmas 2015, **89% assessed as unsafe, with 9 known fires** caused by the item. 468 consignments of hoverboards were identified by trading standards – a total of 115,984 hoverboards in total at a value of £26.1m were intercepted. Amazon put out a voluntary recall as a result of TS action.
- **926 fires** caused by tumble dryers were reported to emergency services between 2011 and 2013 – that's **309 per year**.
- **1 in 5** fake/counterfeit electrical products could explode because of unsafe internal components.
- Of over 3000 second hand items tested for compliance, **1 in 3 was non-compliant**.
- **60%** of consumers buying fakes did so online or via social media.

Food standards

- Of 60 takeaway lamb curries and minced kebabs bought from restaurants in Birmingham and London, **40% were contaminated with other meats**: 7 contained no lamb at all, 24 had been mixed with other meats, and 5 contained unidentifiable meat (likely been overcooked or re-cooked).
- Of 45 samples of fish from random fish and chip shops in Birmingham, Glasgow and Manchester in 2014, **one in six were mislabelled**, with some samples being substituted for cheaper fish.
- Horsemeat scandal in 2013 cost Tesco up to **£2m a year** and wiped £300m off its value.
- In March 2017, two men from Peterborough were found guilty of conspiracy to commit fraud after selling **116 tonnes of turkey thigh as halal lamb leg**. They were prosecuted by Leicester City Council after the council traced the misdescribed meat from shops and restaurants throughout the East Midlands and as far as Middlesbrough and Portsmouth. It is estimated the company made a profit of between £300,000 and £400,000 between January 2013 and October 2014 as a result of the deception.

Animal Health and Agriculture

- Foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001 cost the UK economy **£8bn** and resulted in the **culling of 10m cows and sheep**. The outbreak was traced back to infected meat likely to have been illegally imported that had been fed to animals on a Northumberland farm. From there the disease was spread by animal movements which are regulated by local authorities (often a trading standards responsibility).

Intellectual property

Top 5 products investigated by TS:

1. Tobacco
2. Clothing
3. Alcohol
4. Footwear
5. DVDs

Top 5 links to other criminality

1. Benefit Fraud
2. Money Laundering
3. Organised Crime Groups
4. Drug Dealing
5. Violence

Metrology

- In a 2014/15 project, **23% of medical weighing scales** were found to be unsuitable for weighing patients. The potential impacts of failure are high, with medication and anaesthetic being administered on the basis of these inaccurate measurements.
- Each year in the UK around **£622bn of goods are sold on the basis of measurement of their quantity** to consumers and businesses. If there was just a 1% error in that figure this would amount to £6.2bn of detriment to the UK economy.