



WS

Chartered Trading Standards Institute
Workforce Survey
June 2016

Preface

It will come as no surprise to those working in or with local government that two years after the last workforce survey, the 2016 refresh shows that there has been a further decrease in resources for trading standards services across Great Britain. Austerity has continued to bite, leading to the loss of a further 12% of staff working in trading standards since 2014 on top of the 45% drop identified over the previous 5 years.

The total spend on local authority trading standards services has fallen to an estimated total of £124 million, down from £213 million just seven years ago in 2009. This means that trading standards now costs an average of £1.99 per person per year – less than the cost of some Sunday newspapers.

Some 81% of respondents feel that budget cuts have impacted upon their service's ability to protect council residents. There is certainly a sense that cuts have gone far deeper than simply finding efficiencies and services are being forced to deprioritise issues. All too often these decisions about what to stop doing have not been made clear to the residents and businesses they affect, and local authorities need to be more transparent about the effects of cuts on this scale.

There are more challenges ahead, as the economic impact of the UK exit from the EU points to a continued period of austerity and further funding reductions for local government. Meanwhile, outside the EU it is arguably more important than ever that the UK is able to demonstrate high standards in regulatory compliance and consumer protection in order to gain access to key markets.

Add to this challenge the existence of several parallel reviews of the service and it is clear that the future is uncertain. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute remains committed to providing the data and evidence necessary to inform central and local government decision makers and support them in finding solutions throughout this process.

The Institute's thanks go to heads of service, managers and others in the profession who have contributed to the survey. It is crucial that we continue to work together to use this evidence to best effect and address the challenges outlined in these pages.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "G. Hixmore".

Chief Executive

Methodology

Where possible this survey makes direct comparisons with the Trading Standards Workforce Survey 2014. However, as the earlier survey only concerned England and Wales, and there was a separate shorter survey for Scotland, in some cases direct comparisons are not possible.

Following feedback from the 2014 survey a number of questions were clarified. For example, the definition of a qualified trading standards officer has been made clearer. In addition, opinion-based questions have been introduced in an attempt to gain an insight into the mind-set of the trading standards workforce.

The survey contained 35, predominantly closed questions and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

It was distributed via email to CTSI's regional co-ordinators (who were encouraged to share it with their authority members) and via the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) and Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) to trading standards heads of service across England and Scotland. The survey remained open for five weeks.

At the closing date of the survey 152 submissions had been received but a number were incomplete or duplicate entries. After standardising the data, 122 responses were deemed usable for the statistical analysis presented in this report. With a total population of 192, this sample provides a confidence interval of ± 5.37 at a 95% confidence level.

Overall there was a reasonable response rate from local authorities across Great Britain. However, taking into account the regional breakdown of responses there are some significant weaknesses in the data; for example, in Wales just eight of a possible 20 authorities responded.

Response rate

Council type	Responded	Total
English Unitary	28	45
Scottish Unitary	28	31
Welsh Unitary	8	20
MBC	20	32
London Borough	18	32
County	20	32

Region	Responded	Total
Central England CenTSA	12	14
East England EETSA	6	10
London LoTSA	18	33
North East NETSA	9	12
Scotland SCOTTS	28	31
South West SWERCOTS	9	14
East Midlands TSEM	4	8
North West TSNW	11	20
South East TSSE	11	17
Wales WHoTS	8	20
Yorkshire and the Humber YAHTSG	6	11

Budgets

Service Budgets

The survey indicates that, on average, nominal budgets for local authority trading standards services (LATSS) fell by 7% between 2015-16 and 2016-17, and are projected to fall by a further 0.3% in 2017-18.

It is notable that only 58 respondents were able to provide projected figures for 2017-18, and respondents cited continued uncertainty as the core reason why they were unable to provide a figure.

	Response (N)	Minimum (£)	Maximum (£)	Average (mean)
Budget in 2015-16	103	117,500	3,116,000	693,313
Budget in 2016-17	110	143,789	3,038,000	642,530
Projected Budget 2017-18	58	143,789	2,986,000	640,633

It should be noted that the smallest services are least likely to respond to the survey due to limited resources, and indeed many of the smaller services who responded to the last Workforce Survey failed to respond this time around. Examining the data from 2014, just two of the five respondents with the lowest budgets responded to the 2016 survey – notably one had suffered a further nominal budget cut whilst the other had procured a small gain. 80% of services who responded in both 2014 and 2016 saw budgets drop in the two years to 2016, with 66% reporting a cut of over 10%.

Although a small number of services have seen budget increases since 2014 – the highest was an English unitary that saw a nominal budget gain of 26% - many have suffered further significant losses. The service with the biggest cut was a large county council service that lost 73% off of its budget in the two years to 2016. In some cases, budgets have continued to fall significantly since 2010; one authority that had reported a 68% budget reduction from 2010-2014 has recorded an additional 34% drop since 2014.

CTSI perspectives: In total, five services reported a budget of less than £200,000 this year, with the lowest budget recorded for 2016-17 at £143,789. With complex prosecutions often costing hundreds of thousands of pounds such cases are increasingly becoming too costly to proceed with.

Even seven figure prosecution costs are not unheard of. The Competition and Markets Authority spent £1.4 million prosecuting a £21 million pound pyramid scheme, in the Bristol area, a figure that is well beyond the reach of most local trading standards services.

Combining the results of the previous Workforce Survey, there was a real terms percentage drop of 46% between 2010-11 and 2016-17 (47% if accounting for 2017-18 projections).

Real terms budget reduction 2009 - 10 to 2017 - 18

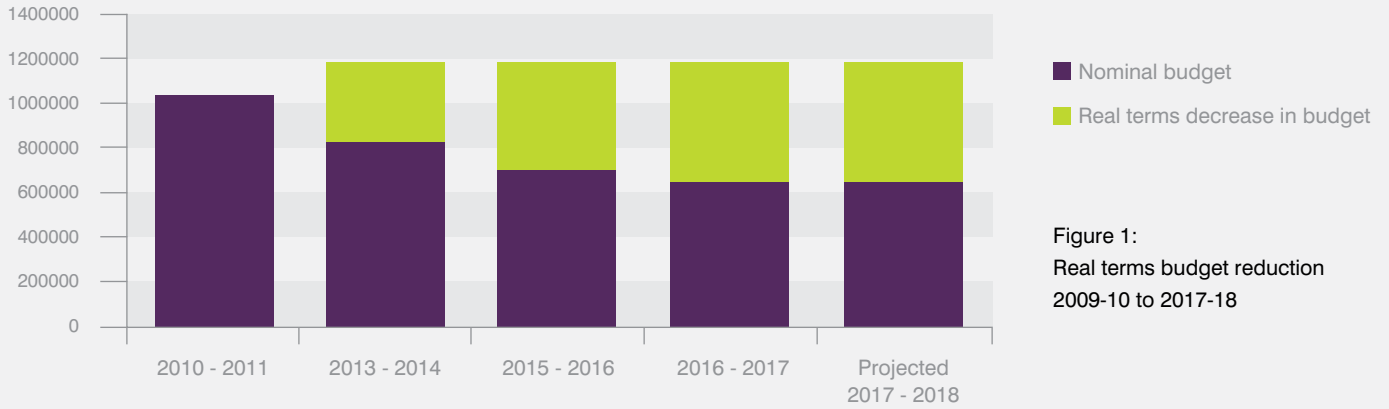


Figure 1:
Real terms budget reduction
2009-10 to 2017-18

Average budget over time

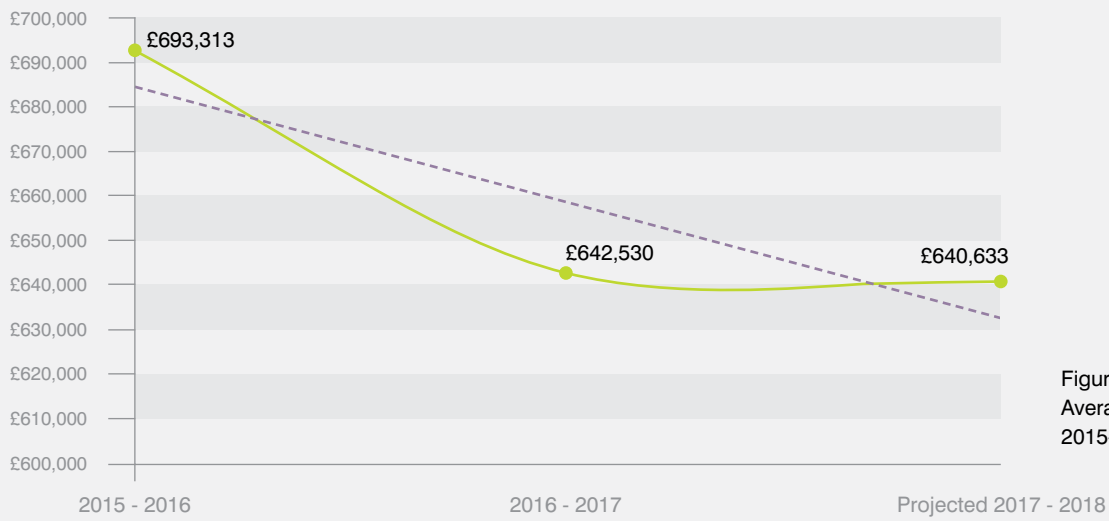


Figure 2:
Average budget over time
2015-16 to 2017-18

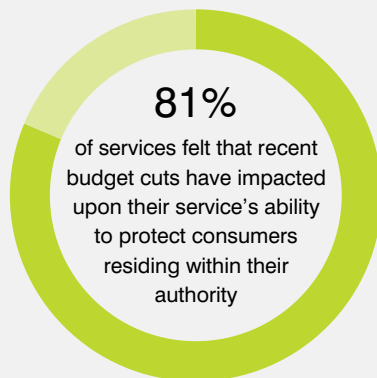


Figure 3: Percentage of services feeling the negative impact of recent budget cuts

Total spend

It is estimated that the total spend on local authority trading standards services in Great Britain is around £124 million down from £148 million in 2014 and £213 million in 2009-10¹. The breakdown for the nations is as follows: England £97m, Wales £15m and Scotland £16m.

Income generation

Respondents were asked whether their budget included any income generation and if so, what their target was for this.

	Minimum (£)	Maximum (£)	Average (mean)
Income generation targets	1,000	635,000	56,284

Two thirds of respondents reported that their budgets included some income generation. Across respondents, targeted levels of income generation varied widely from £1000 (0.5% of the overall budget) in one London Borough to £635,000 (21% of the budget) in a large county council service. On average, income generation targets amounted to 9.5% of a service’s overall budget.



Figure 4: Number of authorities with income generation in their budget

National Trading Standards (NTS) Grant Funding

Respondents were asked whether they received any grant funding from NTS (England and Wales only as NTS does not cover Scotland). 23% reported that they did.

NTS grant funding varies considerably in its nature and intended scope between authorities. Some money is allocated to specific cases which are prioritised and tasked through a regional structure, while other funding supports long term projects and permanent teams.

Three quarters of respondents who identified as receiving grant funding from NTS detailed how much they received and this amount varied significantly from £3,500 in one metropolitan borough council to £751,000 in a large county council.

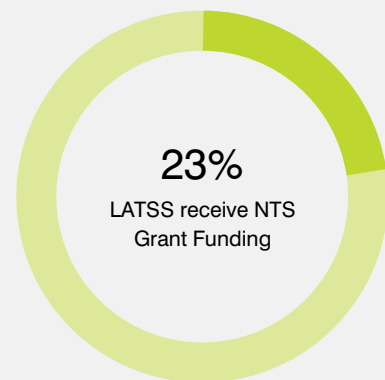


Figure 5: Number of trading standards services receiving NTS grant funding

Budget per head of the population

The average budget per head for each trading standards service was calculated using the 2016-17 service budget figures and population estimates for each authority.

In the local authority with the smallest budget per head (a large county council service), there was just 75 pence allocated per resident to cover trading standards. In the service with the largest budget per head this amounted to £38.25 (a London borough). It should be noted, however, that this particular service is a significant outlier as it contains an unusually small population. A Scottish service reported the second largest budget at £10.62 per head.

In terms of the regional picture, WHoTS averaged the largest budget per head at £3.76 with EETSA averaging the lowest at £1.46.

Across the whole of Great Britain, budget per head came out at £1.99 or £1.76 per head across the English regions only.

Region	Average budget per head
CenTSA	£1.88
EETSA	£1.46
LoTSA	£1.83
NETSA	£1.95
SCOTTS	£3.23
SWERCOTS	£1.84
TSEM	£1.66
TSNW	£1.79
TSSE	£1.62
WHoTS	£3.76
YAHTSG	£2.20

CTSI perspectives: Budgets per head for Scotland and Wales are significantly higher than any of the English regional budgets. This can be explained with reference to the geography and population density of both countries and is related to the fact that they are entirely composed of small unitary councils. It is widely accepted that there are economies of scale for the larger county council services in England and discussions have taken place in both Scotland and Wales about reducing the number of trading standards services to improve efficiency.

Primary Authority

Primary authority arrangements usually exist between multi-site businesses or trade associations and a single trading standards service. The aim is to improve regulatory consistency across local authority borders and create mutually beneficial relationships between businesses and regulators. The survey found that 44% of respondents held primary authority agreements.

Proportion of LATSS that hold primary authority agreements

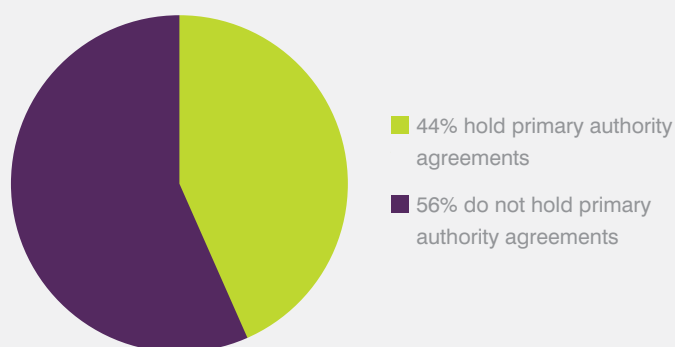


Figure 6: Proportion of trading standards services holding primary authority agreements

CTSI perspectives: At present, services can only charge for their primary authority services on a cost recovery basis. This is problematic as 'cost recovery' is defined differently across services.

CTSI believes that services should be free to go beyond cost recovery and charge commercial rates for services to business such as primary authority. They should then be able to use any income to fund services that are not suitable for cost recovery, such as protecting the vulnerable.

Respondents who already have primary authority agreements in place were asked whether they consider them to be a potential income generator. 90% said that they do.

Proportion of local authorities that hold primary authority agreements and view them as a potential income generator

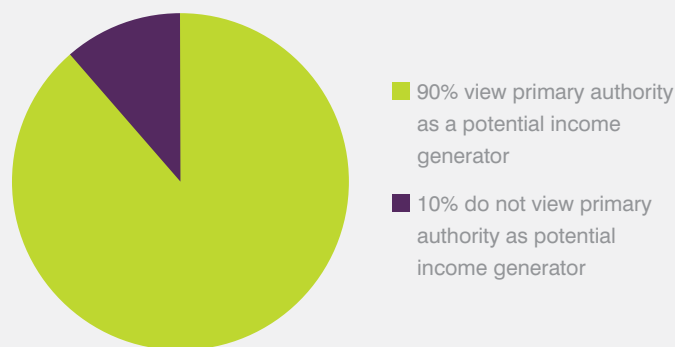


Figure 7: Proportion of services holding primary authority agreements that view them as a potential income generator

CTSI perspectives: CTSI are concerned that an increasingly competitive market for primary authority amongst local authority services will reinforce the postcode lottery of services as larger services are better able to win contracts with large businesses. These services benefit from economies of scale and can provide a broader offer to businesses, including access to more specialist officers and advisers. This will impact on the viability of smaller services which will not be able to generate any income from such agreements. Moreover, smaller services could become dangerously dependent on primary authority agreements they do hold.

Staffing

Based upon the figures collated for this survey it is estimated that overall staffing levels for trading standards have dropped by 11.5% since 2014.

Budget Expenditure on staff

Respondents were asked what proportion/amount of their budget was allocated for 'staffing costs'. On average, LATSS spent 87% of their budgets on staffing costs – this is up 7% on the 2014 survey.

Qualified staff

Respondents were asked how many 'qualified' trading standards staff; ie those holding DCATS, DTS, CTSP or equivalent qualification, they had within their service.

The survey identified a total of 1029.9 qualified trading standards staff across 116 authorities in England, Scotland and Wales.

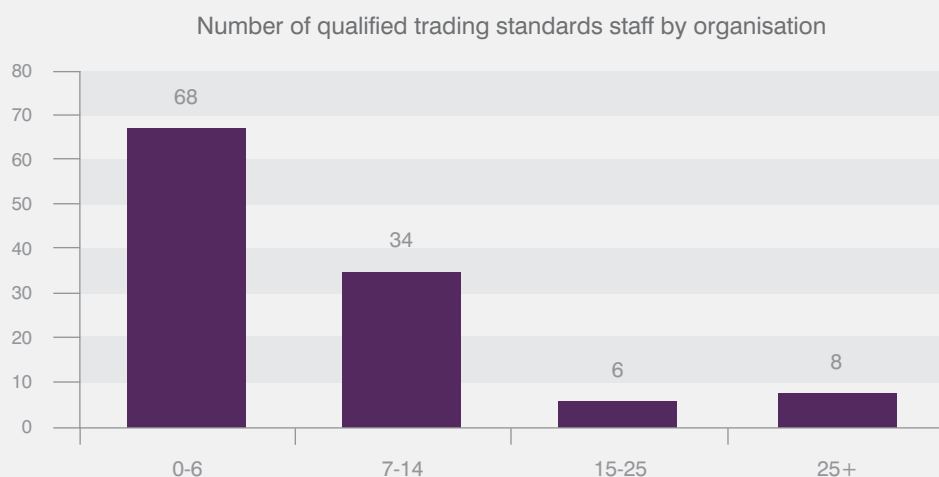


Figure 8: Number of qualified trading standards staff by service

The survey highlighted that 59% of services have six or fewer qualified staff members with eight services holding two or less qualified trading standards staff in their teams (this is comparable to 2014 where eight services reported having less than two full time equivalent staff). The highest number of qualified trading standards staff in any service was 46.

While 16 services had more than 25 staff in total, just half of these services reported having 25+ 'qualified' trading standards staff. This is because many authorities have a number of 'other staff undertaking trading standards work' or 'administrative staff' working within their service alongside 'qualified' officers.

Figure 9 illustrates the total number of staff by organisation including all 'qualified', 'other staff undertaking trading standards work' and 'administrative staff' in 2014 and 2016.

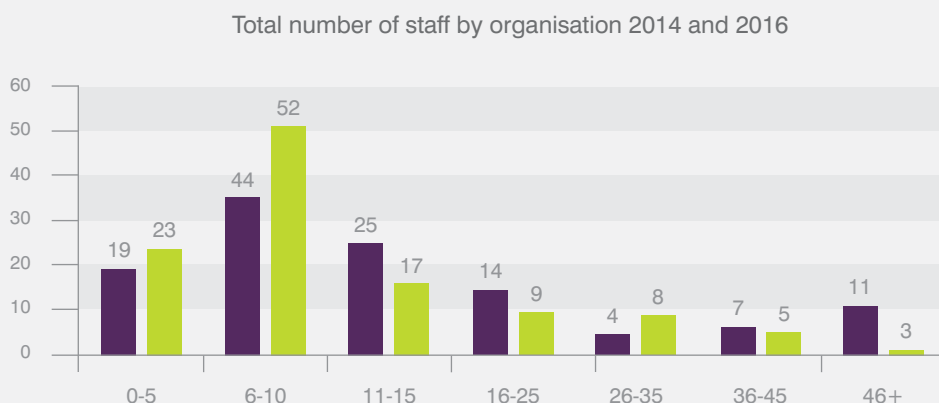


Figure 9: Total number of staff by service 2014 and 2016

Comparing the latest results with the 2014 survey, the number of services with a total of '0-5' or 6-10' staff has risen, signifying an increasing number of smaller services.

In 2014, 11 services reported having 46+ staff in their authority; in 2016 just three services reported having this number.

The two smallest services (a metropolitan borough council and a Scottish unitary) reported having just 2.5 staff, whilst the largest (a shared county council service) reported a total of 67.5 staff including 46 qualified officers.

Audit Scotland has suggested that a minimum of 8 staff is necessary to ensure efficiency and flexibility across the range of areas in the trading standards remit². The 2016 survey indicates that 50% of respondents had eight or less total staff with 64% respondents maintaining 10 or less staff.

CTSI perspectives: The large variety among trading standards services in terms of the areas they serve and the issues in their remit means that it is too simplistic to set a single minimum budget figure or staff number. However, Audit Scotland's 2002 report found that small services (defined as those with less than 8 staff) did not have sufficient staff numbers to achieve a cost effective mix of staff, and as such is a useful indicator for sustainability of services.

Apprenticeships

68% of respondents reported that they would consider employing a trading standards apprentice.

How many authorities reported that they would consider employing a trading standards apprentice

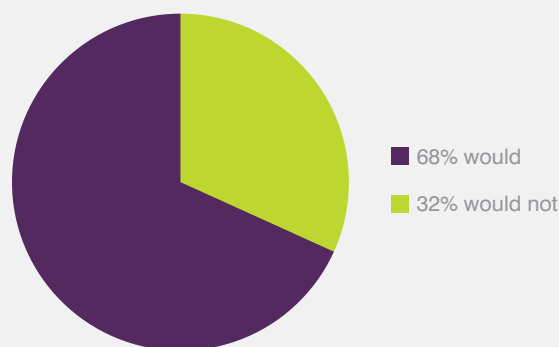


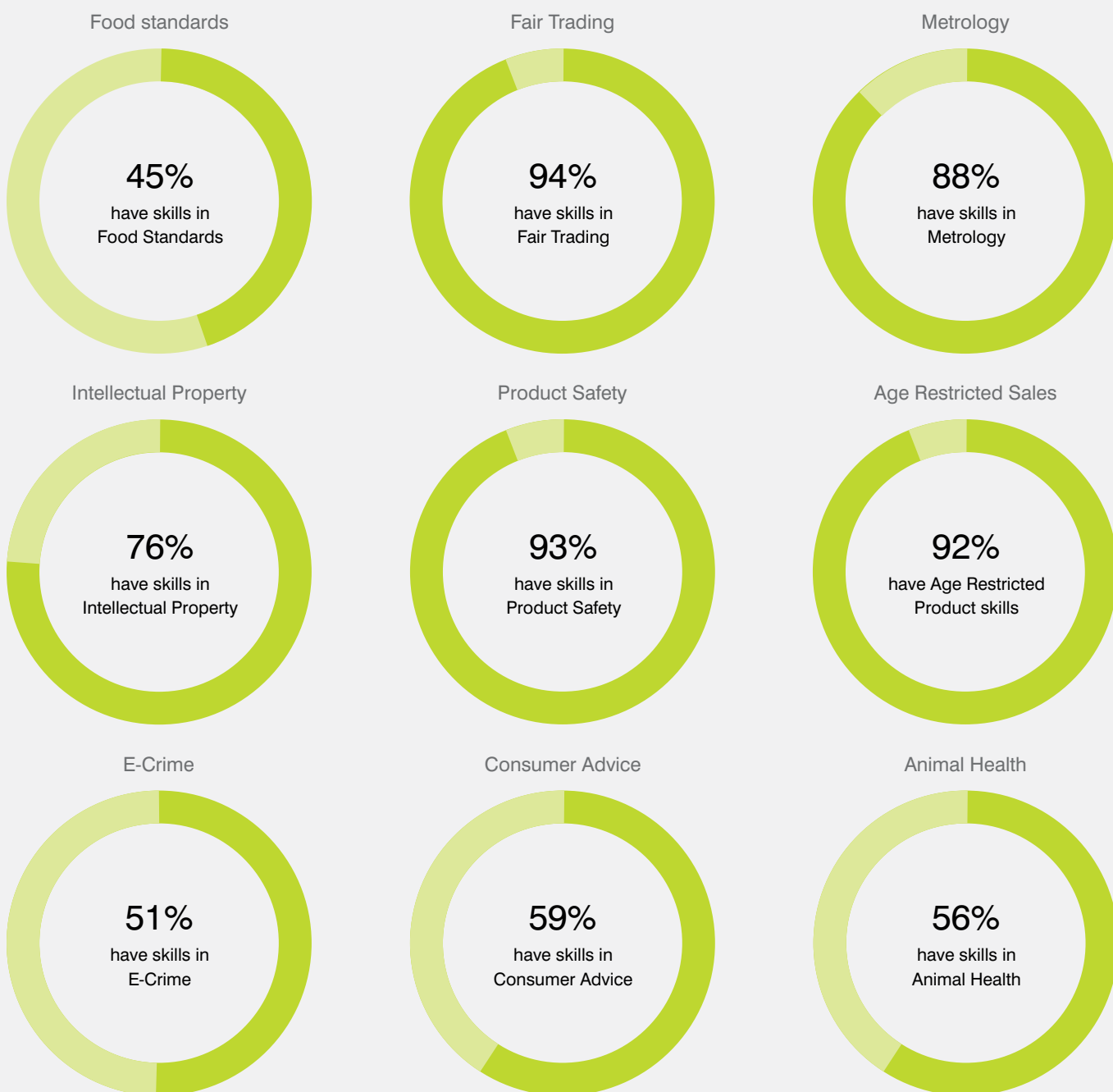
Figure 10: Number of authorities who would consider employing a trading standards apprentice

Skills

Specialist skills

Respondents were asked whether their staff had specialist skills in a number of core trading standards subject areas.

As with the 2014 survey, fair trading came out on top with 94% of authorities holding specialist skills. This was closely followed by product safety (93%), age restricted sales (92%) and metrology (88%). Slightly more authorities stated that they had skills in animal health than in 2014 (a rise of 7% to 56%) whilst the number reportedly holding skills in e-crime dropped by 9% from 2014 to 51%.



Respondents were also asked to comment on whether they planned to stop any services due to funding cuts. The survey results indicate that consumer advice is most widely set to be cut with 34 services reporting that they would stop providing the service. Intellectual property (9 respondents), age restricted sales (7 respondents) and doorstep crime (6 respondents) are also set to be stopped in a number of authorities.

Shared skills

Respondents were given a number of subject options and asked if they had any arrangements in place to share specialist skills with other local authorities.

Metrology skills were shared most often with 31 respondents indicating that their service shared this skills set. Animal health was shared by 17 respondents and 4 said that they shared e-crime. A further 3 services shared product safety, petroleum and explosives. Other services reported sharing food standards, age restricted products, weighbridges, fair trading, intellectual property, doorstep crime and business advice.



Wider service agreements

50% of respondents indicated that their head of service has responsibility for managing other services besides trading standards. In these instances, the trading standards team is usually situated in a larger department within the local authority.

Similar to the 2014 survey, respondents indicated that licensing and environmental health were commonly incorporated into the same department, followed by community safety which was also repeatedly noted as being included with trading standards in a joint department.

Other services which have been brigaded with trading standards in wider shared departments include pest control, scambusters work, sustainability/energy, public health, parking, CCTV and security, and emergency planning.

In terms of how these merged departments are labelled, 'Regulatory Services' was the most common title, however, there was a wide variety of department names with many authorities reporting titles such as 'Community Safety', 'Stronger Communities', 'Public Protection' and 'Business Support'.

CTSI perspectives: The array of subject areas brigaded with trading standards, and department titles used to describe these services, demonstrates the diversity in how trading standards as a service is perceived and understood. However, research in this area suggests that there are limits to the efficiencies to be made by combining trading standards with other regulatory services and this is not a solution to the challenges faced by the service due to falling budgets.



Figure 11: Percentage of heads of service with responsibility for managing services other than trading standards

Shared service agreements

In the last Workforce Survey several respondents indicated that they were exploring shared service options. This time around, the survey explored this theme further by asking respondents whether their authority was considering a shared service agreement for their LATSS. Figure 12 provides the full breakdown of the responses.

While 31% are considering shared service options, 60% (either 'are not considering' or 'have considered in the past') are not pursuing them at this time.

CTSI perspectives: The fact that almost two thirds of services have either discounted or are not considering shared services in response to the clear financial challenges is notable, particularly as the Local Government Association's recent review of trading standards strongly encouraged councils to consider sharing services. There is a broad consensus on the advantages of larger services including significant economies of scale, but it is clear that structural change will not happen on its own and requires clear leadership.

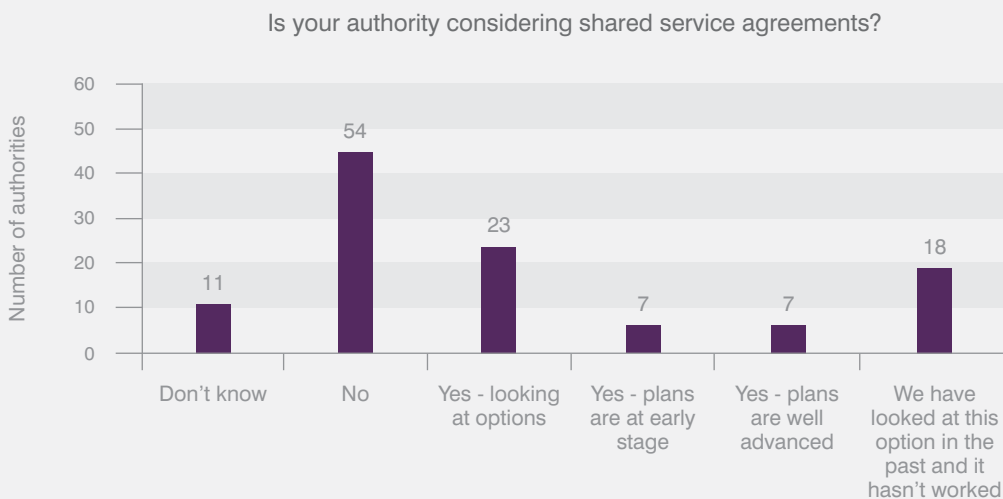


Figure 12:
Number of authorities
considering shared agreements

Management structure

All heads of service still sit at level 3 and below with the majority sitting at levels 4 and 5. However, there has been an overall reduction in seniority for heads of service in the past two years.

In 2014, 18 services in England and Wales identified as sitting at level 3, whereas in 2016 just 9 services were sitting at this level. Furthermore, in 2014 6 services identified their head of service as sitting at the sixth (bottom) tier. This year the options given to respondents were expanded (level 1 to level 10) and nine respondents stated that their head of service sat at level 6 or below. This indicates a further drop off in seniority and influence for heads of service operating within local authority trading standards across Great Britain.

Tier of management the head of trading standards sits within the council, where CEO is level 1

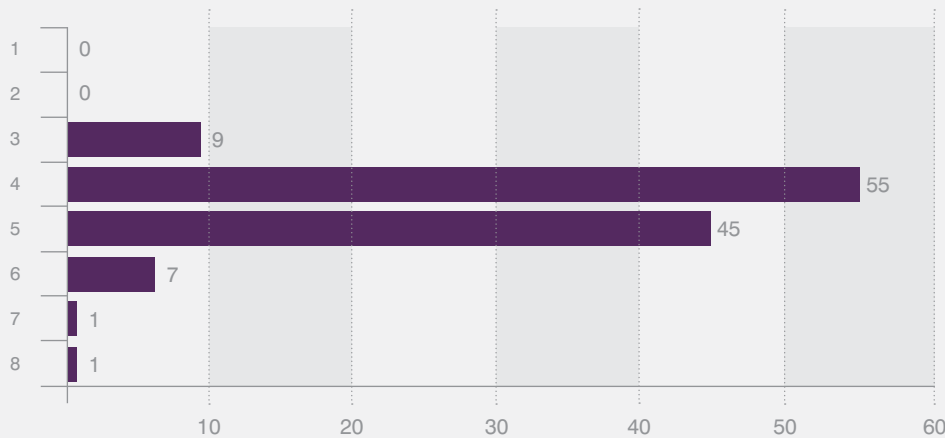


Figure 13: Tier of management or heads of service within local authority structures

Engagement

Respondents were asked to rate their cabinet member and chief executive's overall involvement with trading standards on a scale of 1 (very little involvement) to 4 (in depth involvement).

It is notable that chief executives were ranked as having far less involvement in the work of their local trading standards team than portfolio holders.

Just 11% of respondents indicated that their chief executive had a significant level of involvement with trading standards work (score of 3 or 4) while 38% said their cabinet member was quite involved.

Involvement of Cabinet Member and Chief Executive with trading standards work

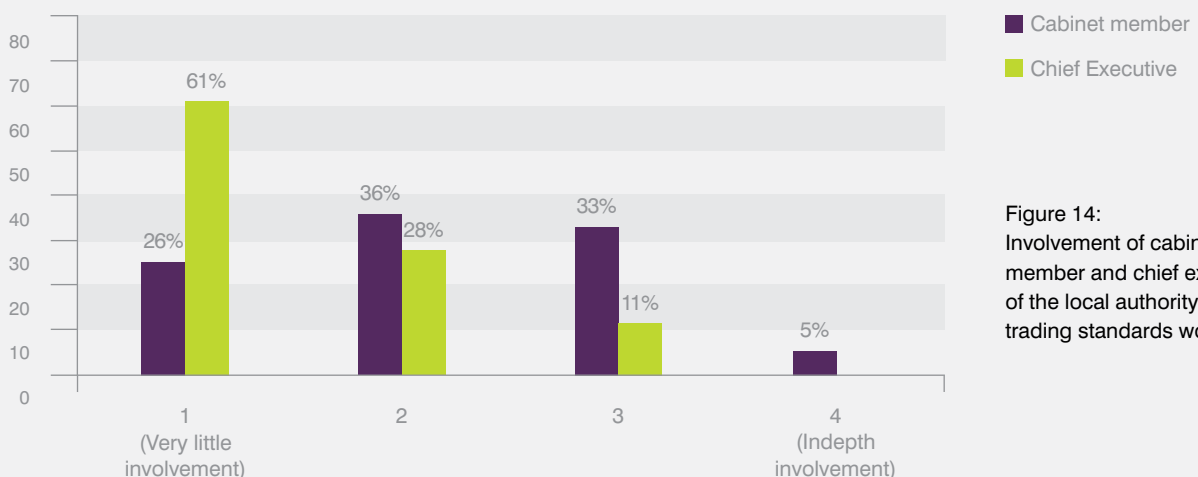


Figure 14: Involvement of cabinet member and chief executive of the local authority with trading standards work

Looking to the future

Participants were asked to identify what they saw as the most important factor to ensure the future sustainability of the trading standards profession. They were given four non-exclusive options: fewer larger trading standards services, public awareness, training and the opportunity to provide a free text response. The graphic below demonstrates the breakdown of results with the most popular answers from the 'other' category listed separately.



Figure 15:
Perceptions on which factors are most important to ensure a sustainable future for trading standards

CTSI perspectives: There is clear support amongst respondents for consolidation of the existing 192 services to create fewer, larger services. This aligns to CTSI's vision for the future of trading standards. However, this does not appear to be happening on a voluntary basis, with 60% of survey respondents saying that they are not currently considering shared services or have considered and discounted this option.



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