

**London Boroughs of Brent and Harrow
Trading Standards Joint Advisory Board
11 May 2017**

FOR INFORMATION

TRADING STANDARDS WORK PLAN FOR 2017/18

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides Members with information concerning Brent & Harrow Trading Standards Work Plan during 2017/18.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members consider the report, make any recommendations and comment where appropriate.

3. DETAILS

- 3.1 The Service produces a Work Plan, which details the activities it is planning to undertake for the financial year ahead. The plan has been written having considered Brent's 'Performance Management Framework' dated December 2016 and is closely linked to the budget reflecting the outputs achievable within the resources provided.
- 3.2 In accordance with paragraph 23.3 of the consortium agreement, this report discharges Brent Council's responsibility to estimate the number and type of activities to be achieved by the Service during the financial year and to present this to the Joint Advisory Board.
- 3.3 A copy of the plan for the year 2017/18 is attached as an Appendix to this report.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial considerations arising from this report as the work plan reflects the amount of work that can be achieved within the budget provided for the Service for 2017/18.

5 STAFF IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7.1 Any person wishing to obtain more information should contact Simon Legg, Senior Regulatory Service Manager, Regulatory Services, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley Middlesex HA9 0FJ.

SIMON LEGG
SENIOR REGULATORY SERVICE MANAGER



Brent & Harrow Trading Standards Service

**Team Work Plan
2017-2018**

Contents

Introduction	2
Priorities	3
Work Volumes.....	6
Departmental Service Plan Objectives	8
Key Performance Indicators.....	9
Service Structure	10

Introduction

The Trading Standards Service currently functions within the Council's Standards and Enforcement division providing a focus to support local consumers and businesses alike, alongside our colleagues from the Planning Enforcement and Food Safety & Standards teams.

All three regulatory functions report directly to the Operational Director within the Regeneration and Environment Department. Despite being a larger team within the department, we are in fact a small resource when you consider that our service is provided to two busy and diverse London boroughs.

Staff in the Trading Standards Service provide advice and support regarding a vast spectrum of regulatory legislation that protects both consumers and honest businesses, creating safer communities and a strong, fair, economic environment allowing new and existing businesses of all shapes and sizes to trade confidently and thrive.

Current economic conditions, the increase in internet trading across national barriers, more sophisticated and numerous scams and the ease of which rogue businesses operate to avoid detection of offences, mean that the job of the Trading Standards Officers has become much more complex.

The vast majority of businesses want to comply with the law and maintain good levels of customer satisfaction. We will happily support and encourage such businesses, to help them achieve compliance and future prosperity. However, there are many, who take shortcuts to achieve an unfair competitive advantage or who seek to exploit vulnerable members of the public, to increase their financial gain as quickly as they can. Many of these businesses have no intention whatsoever of carrying out their trading activities lawfully.

Not only do these rogue businesses disadvantage consumers, they harm the reputation of some sectors of trade and take business away from legitimate traders. In such circumstances, we need to provide a tough approach to prevent the rogue businesses from operating whilst at the same time, supporting those who want to trade compliantly. The activities set out in the work plan aim to achieve this, balancing our priorities so that we can keep on top of rogue traders before problems escalate and to make certain their local impact is prevented as easily as possible.

The team enters 2017/18 with several vacant posts and a priority at the beginning of the year will be to recruit new, enthusiastic staff to the team to complement the existing officer's skills. This will see the team maintaining 19 FTE staff. At the time of writing, the Service has the benefit of an investigator funded by National Trading Standards Board, Tri Region Investigation Team working with us. His role is specifically concerned with the investigation of an alleged home improvement fraud.

The Service continues to employ two Financial Investigators who conduct investigations generated not only from within our own Councils, but also on behalf of various other external agencies. Their duties and outputs produced, are measured differently and are outside the scope of this work plan.

The Service's leadership team is currently:

Senior Regulatory Service Manager	Simon Legg
Regulatory Team Leader	Vacant Post (covered by Anu Prashar)
Regulatory Team Leader	Vacant Post (covered Samuel Abdullahi)
Principal Prosecutor	Anu Prashar

Priorities

At our Joint Advisory Board meeting in October 2016, a report was presented to members for discussion titled 'Trading Standards Priorities 2016/17'. This report identified priorities set by the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) which are summarised below.

- Doorstep Crime – Safeguarding of vulnerable adults and consumers
- Scams - disrupting and reducing consumers exposure to scams
- Fair trading issues - reducing incidents of bad practices and their impact
- E-crime - disrupting trading crime perpetrated on-line
- Product Safety - improving intervention on unsafe products, including points of entry into England and Wales
- Illegal Money Lending – disrupting operations and reducing exposure to those most at risk
- Intellectual Property (counterfeiting) - disrupting operations and support partnership working

A similar exercise has also been carried out regionally by London Trading Standards (LTS) who represent the 33 local authority Trading Standards Services across London who have identified the following, as priority areas of work for its members:

- Doorstep Crime and Mass Marketing Fraud
- Fair Trading – focusing on sales of second-hand cars
- Intellectual Property Crime (counterfeiting)
- Product Safety
- Sales of age-restricted goods in the informal economy

On a local basis, each Borough has a documented corporate plan setting out what it is to accomplish in the future and how this will be achieved. Brent has a 'Borough Plan 2015-2019' and Harrow an 'Ambition Plan 2020'. These plans highlight the broad subject areas listed below as priority areas for each Council:

Brent: ¹

- Better Lives
- Better Place
- Better Locally.

Harrow:²

- Build a Better Harrow
- Be More Business-like and Business Friendly
- Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families

All of these priorities have been considered in turn and assessed against the intelligence available to us to determine where we should focus our resources to make certain our work carries the biggest impact, focuses on the areas of most concern, where possible follows the IOM (National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model) and contributes to the relevant Borough objectives.

In determining our work plan for the coming year, the following assumptions have been made:

¹ <https://www.brent.gov.uk/media/14308131/brent-borough-plan-2015-2019.pdf>

² http://www.harrow.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8431/harrow_ambition_plan

- Most of our work will now be reactive (complaint-driven) rather than proactive except for pre-planned project work
- All complaints received for investigation will be risk-assessed via our matrix and will only be investigated if the relevant threshold is reached
- We will always respond to reasonable requests from local businesses seeking advice and support to us up to the agreed number of hours and/or steer business towards primary authority advice
- Any commercial activities which generate an income will be prioritised to maximise revenue to balance budgets
- We will seek to manage demand where possible by signposting service users to other resources and encouraging greater use of on-line advice and information.
- We will promote our work as much as possible to act as an educational resource or deterrent warning when applicable

We have categorised the following areas of work to form the basis of our 2017/18 priorities:

High priority

Most Complained About Traders	Underage Sales – alcohol, tobacco, knives
Doorstep Crime and Scams	Estate Agents/Letting Agents
Unsafe Goods (Manufacture /wholesale)	Clocked & Insurance 'write off' Cars
Business Advice and Primary Authority	Counterfeit Goods (Large Scale Operation)
Niche and Illicit Tobacco Products	Proceeds of Crime Investigations
Large Scale or High Value Frauds	

Medium Priority

Misleading Prices/Price Marking	Incorrectly Labelled Goods (safety)
Consumer Credit/illegal lending*	Counterfeiting and Copyright (low level)
Furniture and Furnishings	Un-roadworthy Cars
Road Traffic – Overloaded Vehicles	Harassment of Debtors
Package Travel holiday complaints	Storage of Fireworks (unless critical safety implication)
Inaccurate Weights and Measures	Hallmarking
Underage Sales – fireworks (as seasonal)	Unsafe Goods (Retail Level)

*High priority cases are also referred to Illegal Money Lending Team

Low Priority

Energy Labelling of Goods	Restrictive Notices
Misleading Descriptions (low value goods)	Underage Sales – lottery, films, spray paints
Energy Performance Certificates	Essential Packaging
Mock Auctions	Motorcycle Exhaust Silencers
Market Sales	Business Names
Metrication	Bogus Colleges
Underage Sales – DVDs / games, butane	Video Recordings – Unclassified DVDs

Work Volumes

The tables below show the projected performance of the respective Brent or Harrow teams during 2017/18. It should be noted that the nature of Trading Standard's duties is variable, for example, some investigations take much longer than others or during some years, it might be necessary to carry out more inspection visits than expected in response to a particular outbreak of noncompliance, such as was seen in 2015 with the influx of unsafe hover boards.

This means that it may be the case at year end, some areas of work have generated a higher than expected volume of work whereas other areas might see a decrease which is necessary to respond to demands as they arise during the year. Our work volumes will be kept under continuous review and reported quarterly, to ensure that they are being implemented effectively and progress is being made.

Harrow Team 2017/18 Based on staff numbers:	Brent Team 2017/18 Based on staff numbers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Team Leader • 5½ Enforcement Officers • 1 Assistant Enforcement Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Team Leader • 5½ Enforcement Officers • 1 Assistant Enforcement Officer

	Planned volume Brent	Planned volume Harrow
Complaints (Service Requests) Completed	650	650
Trader Enquiries / requests for advice	75	75
High Risk / Most Complained-about Trader Inspections	40	50
Other Business Inspections	90	120
Weights & Measures, Average Quantity or Verification visits	5	4
Primary Authority Hours	150	65
Underage Test Purchase Visits	115	125
Infringement reports (average 55 work units per report)	43	43
eReports	11	11
Prosecutions completed – Crown Court	2	2
Prosecutions completed – Magistrates' Court	12	10
Licensing Reviews Completed	2	2
Simple Cautions Signed	10	8
Letters of Warning Issued	15	15
Local and Regional Projects Completed	3	3
Service Improvement Work	150	150
Approved Trader Scheme New Recruits or Audits	50	60
Doorstep Crime Rapid Response Actions	6	7
Number of Referrals To or From Safeguarding Board	4	4
Number of Scam Victims Contacted c/o NTS Scams Hub	50	50
Partnership or Area Based Working Events / Weeks of Action	8	10
Samples, Mileage and Websites Checks	75	80
Number of Intelligence Logs Input on Regional Database	99	100
Press Releases Issued	6	6
RIPA Applications	2	2

Departmental Service Plan Objectives

The departmental service plan sets out how each department will contribute to the delivery of Borough's priorities during 2017/18. It includes objectives, key milestones and outcome targets against which we will be judged on our success. Trading Standards have identified the following areas of work which will feed directly into our departmental service plan objectives applicable to both boroughs.

Activity	Milestone	Outcome	Corporate Alignment
Responding to doorstep crime incidents with a 'rapid response' service where required, to safeguard vulnerable consumers from financial harm	All required call outs are responded to within 24hrs with an onsite visit if necessary. Trader and consumer advice given as necessary and where appropriate, settlement of financial agreement.	Prompt support for vulnerable consumers. Trader and consumer legal advice provided. Assistance agreeing terms to remedy work and/or financial settlement.	Better Lives Better Place Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families
Take appropriate action to reduce the number of complaints being received against the Borough's most complained about businesses	Quarterly reporting to identify most complained about traders. Trader advisory meetings taking place. Appropriate enforcement action and/or Primary Authority commitment	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced consumer complaints about these businesses. Less longer term demands on the Service,	Better Lives Better Place Demand Management Be More Business Friendly
Reduce the availability of illicit tobacco products including cigarettes, chewing tobacco and shisha and ensure compliance with the new plain packaging requirements for cigarettes.	Pre-planned inspections of premises believed to be involved with the illicit sales of tobacco including shisha. Trader advice and awareness training regarding new tobacco legislation.	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced availability of illicit tobacco products. Reduction of anti social behavior is shisha bars. Increased health benefits.	Better Lives Better Place Be More Business Friendly Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families
Intervention of unsafe consumer goods from the supply chain, specifically from businesses at the manufacturing, importation or wholesale supply process.	Pre-planned inspections of premises believed to be involved with the supply of unsafe goods. Trader advice and support given. Seizure, suspension or reworking of unsafe goods.	Better educated and compliant businesses Reduced availability of unsafe products from the supply chain. Intervention at the highs' level of the supply chain resulting in efficiencies	Better Lives Be More Business Friendly
Pursue effective day to day robust enforcement action where expedient (in partnership with other Service areas), to ensure serious infringements are dealt with expediently, reducing criminal benefit from crime, tackle large	Take effective enforcement action when required, reduction of illegal shisha cafes and other problem sectors of trade such as second hand car businesses, responding to doorstep crime, fraud and other scam allegations as early as	Enforcement action taken against problem businesses premises and a reduction of any fraudulent trading in the borough.	Better Place Be More Business Friendly Protect the Most Vulnerable and Support Families

scale frauds and to remain one of the most effective regulatory teams in the country.	possible to limit financial harm.		
---	-----------------------------------	--	--

Key Performance Indicators

The Service will report quarterly on the following KPIs:

Activity	Success Criteria
The number of businesses audited in accordance with the terms of membership or recruited to the Responsible Trader Scheme	50 businesses audited or recruited to the scheme per Borough
% of high-risk or most complained about businesses inspected	We shall visit 80% of the high risk traders identified at the beginning of the year or the most complained about traders as identified in quarterly reporting
The amount of consumer's money saved by our intervention following a doorstep crime incident	A collective monetary value reported alongside the number of interventions made

Service Structure

