

Brent and Harrow

Trading Standards

Annual Report
2021/2022

Introduction

This Annual Report has been developed to outline some of the key outcomes delivered by the Trading Standards Service for the period of April 2021 to March 2022. The Service is managed by Anu Prashar with Samuel Abdullahi covering a Team Leader role.

The Service Manager reports to the Head of Regulatory Service, Simon Legg, who has overall responsibility for Food Safety, Environmental Health, Licencing and Health and Safety. This team sits within the wider Regeneration and Environment directorate.

Product Safety

The work around product safety remains a key priority for us. The team advise and where necessary, enforced safety related legislation on importers and distributors. Our investigations have resulted in thousands of products being withdrawn from the UK and EU market.

Cosmetic Products

We have removed or prevented from entering the supply chain 18,000 non-compliant cosmetic products from from importers, online sellers and local retailers.

The team advised a business on how to amend the labels on **4,800** hair products to ensure compliance. Labels were rechecked before the products could be allowed into the supply chain.



10 types of soap products were removed from an on-line seller as they did not meet the requirements for the safety of ingredients and labelling.



Officers refused entry in to the UK of **1,600** shea butter creams and **1,000** soap products as there was no safety information with the products.



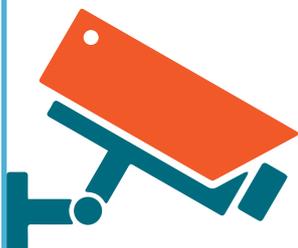
While carrying out other inspections, officers can sometime come across products they are not looking for. In one such inspection officers seized **60** Skin lightening creams which contained a prohibited substance, Mercury. Officers are currently investigating the business.



The team participated in a National led project into formaldehyde in hair care products and identified an importer of such products operating in Brent as well as an online seller decanting the product and selling it in travel bottles. In order to safeguard the welfare of consumers, approximately **2,500** hair straightening shampoos have been removed from sale.



In the most serious non compliances, officers take formal action such as prosecutions. After repeated breaches and ignoring advice of officers one such importer was prosecuted for supplying **1,800** unsafe electrical body massagers. The company pleaded guilty and was fined **£16,000** and we were awarded costs of **£4,000**. The products were forfeited and destroyed.



From our market surveillance work it was identified that a major high street name & global retailer had placed non-compliant cosmetic products on the UK market. Officers worked with the Primary Authority and retailer to identify products and risk levels, which resulted with the retailer issuing **2** separate withdrawal notices for **13** different product brands/lines (foot care, face care, hand care and hair products) for the UK, ROI, Germany, Poland and the Netherlands – at least **7,500 products** were withdrawn from sale.

Ports Work

A good working relationship between the ports teams and inland authorities help keep consumers safe, reduce costs and burdens on local authorities when dealing with non-compliant goods coming into the UK. We take a zero tolerance approach on any imports destined for Brent and Harrow, quarantined by the Port Authorities where safety standards are not met and may cause harm to consumers.



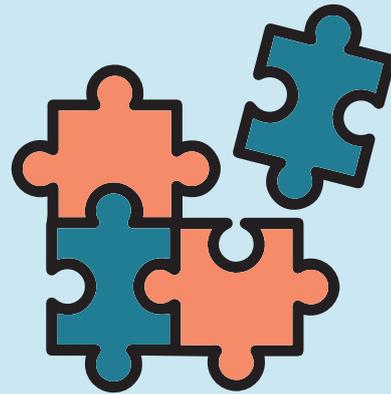
Brexit has seen an influx in local based businesses operating as a “Responsible Person” on behalf of Chinese export companies. Working alongside the Ports Authorities, we investigated a local business acting in this capacity, selling various products on well-known online sales platforms. The business model was not fit for purpose and fell short of product safety compliance requirements – since our investigations, it has ceased trading. The officers have to examine complicated compliance documents to assess whether goods can be released or must be destroyed. No goods that are quarantined for serious non-compliance will arrive in Brent or Harrow which saves officers time and reduces physical visits to business.

Where minor non-compliances are highlighted, we will agree to have goods released under our care to support businesses in resolving the issues and prevent any significant financial losses.

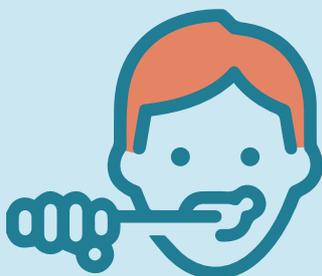
Results have included;



Almost **3,000** soft toys signed over to us by importers for destruction.



832 jigsaws stopped by officers coming into our area as they potentially harmful to children under the age of three.



Officers oversaw the importation of teeth whitening products from a local importer. Almost **10,000** non-compliant products were corrected after extensive advice by officers the products were relabelled and allowed to be placed back on the supply chain.



Officers worked with a business to relabel **600** baby cologne so they could be supplied in the UK.

Partnership Working

Throughout the year, we have continued to work closely with other teams in Regulatory Services in Brent and Harrow, often conducting joint visits with Licensing and Environmental Health to limit burdens on businesses. Home to Wembley Stadium, we support the enforcement operations around illegal sellers and brand protection on event days and deliver a clear enforcement message working in partnership with the Met Police, the FA, the NFL, UEFA and brand protection teams.

The EUROS were one of the largest sporting events post COVID restrictions and we delivered enforcement in the 7 games held at the stadium. There was close co-operation and partnership working with UEFA for brand protection and ambush marketing, Police, as well as our own Community Safety team, Environmental Enforcement and Neighbourhood Patrol Officers. Teams dealt with illegal street trading, brand protection and ticket tout disruption.

We seized or disclaimed approximately 2,000 posters, scarves, flags, whistles, T shirts, free sample goods and advertising leaflets.

We continue to support the high profile events at the stadium throughout the year, working with our partners to safeguard the fans and the integrity of the event. Fans in excess of 90,000 have attended and we continue to seize from illegal street traders and limit anti social behaviour.



Doorstep Crime



We continue to prioritise incidents of doorstep crime and have carried out 4 rapid responses following intelligence that rogue traders are operating in the boroughs.

A rogue Builder was prosecuted in March 2022 after taking **£60,000** from a Brent resident to fund a gambling habit. The resident, who has two small children stated the living conditions were horrific and it was evident the builders actions had a devastating impact on the lives of the family. The victim stated she felt incredibly fortunate to have had our support in bringing the case to trial.

One safeguarding referral was actioned to adult social services and we regularly "look in" on residents who have been the victim of this crime. We also managed to recover a **£2,000** refund for this victim.



Featuring on TV

Defenders UK on BBC 1 featured one of our rogue builder cases. The trader took **£97,000** and left the victim confined to one room, with no kitchen, running water or heating through the winter.

Community Engagement

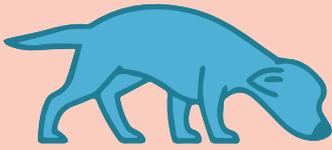
The team continues to work across the community to give advice and information. The service's website was recently updated as part of the council's upgrade.

The team met **24 local businesses** in the "Meet the Boroughs" event offering businesses the opportunity to get advice and guidance on products.



Projects

The team has continued to deliver Operation CeCe to tackle the sale of illicit tobacco.



Working closely with tobacco detection dog teams and test purchasers we have carried out **9 operations** and successfully targeted local businesses who supply these illegal products.

Almost 90,000 cigarettes, 4 kg of hand rolling tobacco and 45kg of shisha and smokeless tobacco have been removed in this operation.



We have just launched the first phase of a vape enforcement project to tackle the sale of nicotine inhaling devices that exceed permitted tank sizes, and fail to comply with the rules around labelling and product notification. The project emphasis is focused on underage sales over **75 businesses** have received advice.

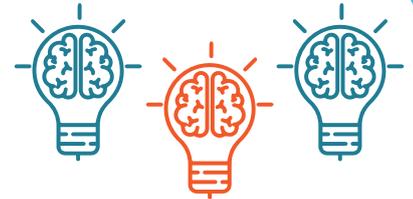
Approximately **3,000** non-compliant vapes have been removed from sale from retailers and wholesalers. This work will continue into **2022-2023** with planned test purchase operations and enforcement visits to seize non-compliant vapes.



Continuing from last year's project on second hand car dealers **4 were visited**. A withdrawal notice was issued against one vehicle found to have an insecure exhaust. This notice prohibited the vehicle from being sold until adequate repairs had been carried out, so the safety of any prospective purchasers was not compromised.

Intelligence

We have produced **111 intelligence reports** this year. These are uploaded on to our National Intelligence database and disseminated by our two Local Intelligence Liaison Officers. This assists us in prioritising our own work identifying the emerging trends and current issues of concern so we can targeted resources where they are needed the most.



Business Advice

Since the ending of the pandemic restrictions affecting businesses it has been paramount that we assist businesses and traders to help grow and thrive in Brent and Harrow. We have seen an increase in the number of small and micro importers selling online who have contacted us regarding advice.



We have responded to **112** requests for advice. Many have been from businesses which have changed from being distributors to imports due to leaving the EU.



Our officers have given over **84 hours** of advice to our Primary Authority businesses. We have continued to support these partnerships and have dealt with requests around Sunday trading restrictions, the use of child models, migration of harmful chemicals, and product recalls to name a few.

Apprentice

We have employed our first Apprentice, Rhea, in Regulatory Services. Her duties are to assist the Regulatory Service teams. Rhea is on course to successfully complete the Regulatory Compliance Officer Apprenticeship.



Complaints

The Service continues to work with our partners Citizen's Advice Consumer Service. Any enquiries they receive which concern either a Brent or Harrow resident or business are referred to us if an alleged criminal breach is identified. Unfortunately, we cannot investigate every complaint so we continue to operate a system of risk assessing each enquiry and prioritise the most serious ones to ensure our resources are applied to those situations where they are needed the most.

485
complaints
investigated
by the team

Financial Investigations



- **5 confiscation orders totalling - £469,131.19**
- **1 restraint order**
- **12 new case referrals**
- **14 production orders**

Due to the pandemic, officers could not undertake visits, and the number of prosecutions were reduced. There was a backlog in the court system which has meant delays in many trials.

Case 1

Confiscation order totalled £211,382.62

On 18th June 2021, a confiscation order was made under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 against a landlord, which totalled £211,382.62. He was ordered to pay up in six months or face 18 months in prison. This order was made following a conviction that Harrow Council secured in relation to an enforcement notice breach at a property in Harrow. This property had been converted from a single dwelling into four self-contained dwellings, without the required planning permission, so Harrow Council prosecuted the landlord for a breach of section 179(2) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990. Following the conviction, Harrow Council used Financial Investigators employed by Brent Council to assist them with the confiscation proceedings, which resulted in the above mentioned confiscation order being made.

Case 2

Confiscation order totalled £111,582.57

On 1st September 2021, a landlord was ordered to pay £111,582.57 for the income received from illegally renting the properties to tenants for a profit. In addition to this, she was fined £18,000 in council legal costs and £15,000 for the breach of the notices. The owner built a number of extensions and converted them into seven flats and two bedsits all without planning permission. During the proceedings it was revealed that she was also in breach of another enforcement notice issued to another property in Wembley. The property had similarly been illegally converted into two homes, with rooms being rented out to multiple students on a short term basis without permission. This property was also formed a part of the confiscation proceedings.

Contacts:

www.brent.gov.uk/business/trading-standards

www.harrow.gov.uk/business/trading-standards

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For businesses: **020 8937 5555**