



**Brent and Harrow Trading
Standards Service**
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Annual Report 2024/25



Introduction

This Annual Report has been written to highlight some of the key outcomes delivered by the Trading Standards Service from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The Service is managed by Anu Prashar with Samuel Abdullahi as the Team Leader.

The Service Manager reports to the Head of Regulatory Service, with the team working as part of the wider Regulatory Services provision within the Neighbourhoods & Regeneration Corporate Directorate.

The Trading Standards team consisting of with 3.5 Enforcement Officers for Brent and 2.5 for Harrow the team's work continues to demonstrate and focus on protecting residents, communities, and businesses from harm and financial loss, and maintaining a confident marketplace supporting businesses and the local economy growth. The Service fulfils the local authority's statutory role of a 'weights and measures authority' tasked with enforcing more than 250 pieces of legislation.

Service Requests

The Service continues to work in partnership with the Citizen's Advice Consumer Service (CACS) and accept referrals of cases involving criminal activity, or ongoing consumer harm that affect our residents.

The Service received a total of 4217 service request, 1093 reports were further analysed by the Brent team and 725 by the Harrow team. These originated from members of the public as well as businesses seeking professional advice and guidance. Other referrals came via the Ports Teams, the Metropolitan Police, other Trading Standards Services, and trade industries.

Unfortunately, we cannot investigate or deal with every request received, so each service request is assessed and scored to determine whether it will be investigated further. This year 321 reports were investigated in Brent and 145 in Harrow.

Supporting Businesses

The Service strives to contribute towards both Borough's objectives of supporting business growth by delivering effective regulation for the benefit of legitimate businesses. Officers have responded to 112 separate requests for advice and information from our local businesses (Brent 62 and Harrow 50). This was an increase of 12% from the previous year.

We have conducted 236 compliance inspections (Brent 117, Harrow 119) to verify that businesses are adhering to consumer protection laws, product safety standards, and fair trading practices.

We have continued to deliver support and advice to our Primary Authority businesses and guided our partners through complex safety matters including product recalls and withdrawals from UK and EU markets. Our reputation in Primary Authority has resulted in a new partnership created with Sabre Retail Fashion Limited trading as Mint Velvet, a national clothing retailer. We maintain our partnership with the other businesses.

Brent delivered 57 hours and Harrow 20 hours of Primary Authority advice, covering areas such as Product Safety, Fair Trading, and Trademarks.

In March 2025 the Service wrote to 703 businesses (422 Brent and 281 Harrow) advising them of the single use vape ban coming into force as of 1 June 2025.

Product Safety & Market Surveillance

The Service continues to undertake a wide range of activities to protect its residents and promote the well-being of our communities. Compliance inspections, market surveillance and investigations have been carried out on an e-bikes modification business, cosmetic products, PPE, and homeware products.



The power supply to a neck massager was found to present a serious risk of fire/explosion. The business was based in Hong Kong and had no UK office but sold all its products via Amazon, one of which reached a Brent consumer. Officers managed to overcome this difficulty and engage with the business to secure a recall of 156,000 units preventing further occurrences in neighbouring boroughs and nationwide.

We have facilitated a product recall on a climbing arch presenting risk of injury and strangulation to children. The company worked with the team to ensure that the recall was adequately delivered, and the replacement product was safe and compliant.

Following the receipt of intelligence from a Brent based importer, several non-compliant pressure cookers not intended for the UK market were removed from sale. Unlike the importer, the business had failed to have the products manufactured to UK standards, creating unfair competition among businesses and potentially risking consumer safety.

Body lotions and creams claiming to have skin lightening properties were found in two businesses and surrendered and seized. These cosmetics were found to contain hydroquinone, a dangerous banned ingredient that can cause pregnancy complications, skin infections and osteoporosis.

Officers have examined general purpose sunglasses to ensure the products being sold locally are compliant with traceability obligations. These products must also have a full set of instructions and category protection declaration for example "Cat 1, Light tint sunglasses - limited protection against sun glare, moderate UV protection".



Through our online market surveillance work we have identified:

- 3 pin adapters which do not confirm to safety requirements and had access to live parts and 500w plug in heaters that have been subject to previous product recalls and known to be unsafe. Engaging with the online platforms, officers have successfully removed these from sale and prevented further injury to consumers nationally.
- We have also removed hundreds of "One Shot" drain cleaner, a highly concentrated and powerful chemical made up of 93% sulphuric acid. This has been found on various marketplaces and homeware shops throughout the boroughs and is misused in criminal activity, particularly in acid attacks. There are restrictions to the supply of this product that businesses were not adhering to, so to safeguard our communities and the wider public, our officers have had the products removed from sale.
- Officers looked at hair care products often found to contain butylphenyl methylpropane, a synthetic fragrance recently banned due to concerns about reproductive toxicity. Following expiry of the sell through period, these products remained on shop shelves and several businesses were instructed to remove them from sale.

A fire was reported from a Li-ion battery in a robotic vacuum cleaner that required detailed examination of manufacturers technical files.

Whilst an isolated incident, officers know the importance of checking technical documentation and not accept that large manufacturers have full due diligence procedures in place.



The team has a statutory duty to carry out market surveillance and enforcement activities concerning the storage and sale of fireworks and is responsible for ensuring that fireworks sold in Brent & Harrow are manufactured to the relevant standard and that they are not sold to minors.

The Service issued 32 fireworks licences to 29 businesses in Harrow.

Partnership Working (Events and Days of Action)

The Service continues to participate in enforcement operations at Wembley Stadium event days to deliver a strong message that illegal sellers and counterfeit merchandise is not welcome.

Working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, the Football Association, brand protection teams, and our environmental enforcement officers, we have seen a huge improvement in compliance levels on event days, with a substantial decline in illegal street traders, making the events much more pleasurable for all who attend.

The service contributes to the 'Weeks of Action' in Harrow working alongside the Police, Licensing, Environmental Health, Community Safety teams and other colleagues within the council. Officers conduct compliance checks on local businesses across all areas including knife sales, vapes, counterfeit products. Our officers provide and information concerning the responsible trader scheme and seek to sign up new members where appropriate.

Age-Restricted Products

As part of our ongoing commitment to protect consumers and our communities, preventing children from accessing age-restricted products, is a key priority for the Service. We provide training and advice to businesses selling age restricted products both online and in-store. Throughout the year, we run several test purchase operations whereby child volunteers are employed to test business processes and ensure compliance in the sale of knives, vapes, cigarettes, alcohol, solvents, and butane.

Business that sells to our minors are subject to formal action.

This year we have conducted 61 visits using child volunteers. 30 were carried out in Brent and 31 in Harrow. 83.61% of businesses tested, did not sell to our children. 4 were prosecuted and the remainder were giving warnings or a caution.

	Test Purchases	Number of sales	% of businesses that Sold
Brent	30	6	20.00%
Harrow	31	4	12.90%
B&H	61	10	16.39%

Responsible Trader Scheme

The Service Operates a Responsible Trader Scheme. The scheme provides guidance to assist our businesses with the training of their staff regarding age restricted products.

The Scheme promotes best practice and allows businesses to demonstrate a commitment to protecting our young people.

The training pack provides advice on a whole range of age restricted products including knives, vapes and corrosive substances.

34 Businesses were visited concerning the Responsible Trader Scheme.



Knife Crime

13 visits targeting retailers of knives in Brent & Harrow (5 Brent and 8 Harrow) were carried out as part of Operation Sceptre, the national initiative led by UK police forces to combat knife-related violence. Officers focuses where on educating businesses on safe storage and display of knives so they cannot be stolen or used as a weapon against staff or someone else.

Tackling Criminal Behaviour and Creating a Level Playing Field

One of the key functions of Trading Standards is to protect consumers and support legitimate businesses. We have an array of penalties available to us where businesses deliberately break the law, ignore our advice or cause serious harm. This ranges from monetary penalties and undertakings to fines and imprisonment.

Operation CeCe (Illicit Tobacco Enforcement)

The supply of illicit tobacco undermines the efforts to reduce tobacco consumption by smokers and the uptake of smoking. Operation CeCe commenced in 2021 to tackle the sale and supply of illicit tobacco products such as cigarettes, hand-rolling tobacco, and shisha. The Service remains committed to carrying out this work.

A total of 36 businesses have been visited during this reporting period with 21 in Brent and 16 in Harrow. Some of these visits have included the use of a tobacco sniffer dog to find hidden tobacco and conduct thorough searches.

From 13 businesses in Brent and 3 in Harrow the Service seized:

- Almost 60kg of cigarettes sticks
- 4kg of hand rolling tobacco
- 39kg of Shisha tobacco
- Almost 10kg chewing & oral tobacco



In February 2025, the Service secured a successful conviction of a prolific illicit tobacco trader in Wembley. Willesden magistrates court handed a six-month custodial sentence to Thakker the owner of the business. This sent a strong

message around the seriousness of this criminality and the potential penalties the court will impose for persistent sellers of illicit tobacco.

Letting Agents Compliance Work

The Service continues to pro-actively conduct online audits of agents advertising rental services as well as responding to complaints. We have created a new partnership with our Housing colleagues and share intelligence to provide a meaningful response to local businesses and residents.

We have examined the websites of 50 agents (22 in Brent and 28 in Harrow) and issued 10 Notices of Intent (NOI) to issue monetary penalties

5 of the NOIs issued have resulted in monetary penalty amounting to £9,550 (£4,200 for Brent & Harrow

Ensuring a Level-Playing Field

As a Service, we deliver several projects and areas of enforcement in response to the cost-of-living crisis which is aimed to support legitimate businesses and raising consumer confidence in the goods and services they buy.

One of the areas of concern is within the supply and sale of second-hand tyres (part-worn tyres). Businesses that supply and sell part-worn tyres were written to last year providing advice and guidance with practical steps on complying with relevant safety legislation. 7 of these businesses have been visited and all found to be compliant.



A total of 11(B&H) businesses have been visited and 26 weighing instruments in use for trade were tested 9 in Harrow and 19 in Brent by our inspectors.

8 weighing scales were found in use without initial verification (3 in Harrow and 5 in Brent), however, they weighed accurately, and short measure was not an issue.

Following an allegation of short fuel delivery from a petrol station, officers carried a check on 7 liquid fuel measuring instruments (petrol pumps) to confirm the delivery was accurate and consumers were paying for the fuel dispensed.

High Risk and Most Complained About Businesses

The Service is intelligence-led and has focused resources around high-risk and most complained-about businesses, from used car dealers and cosmetic importers to small convenience shops. Officers have conducted compliance visits, providing detailed advice and information to 56 of these businesses (25 in Harrow, 31 in Brent) and facilitated refunds, much to the gratitude of the consumers.

Officers secured a refund of £1,500 from a used car dealer in Harrow and £7,300 from another in Brent following complaints received around false and restrictive statements on receipts/invoices, vehicle descriptions and vehicle quality.

In October 2024 a used car dealer pleaded guilty to car clocking and was fined over £5,000 and made to pay £17,500 to the victim.

Doorstep Crime & Scams

The Service is set to deliver a rapid response service to our residents to prevent, disrupt, and deter doorstep criminals, this financial year officers have saved residents a total of £37,000 (£9,000 in Brent and £28,000 in Harrow). In one case, a vulnerable Brent resident was grossly overcharged for roofing works. Working with the bank fraud prevention, the local Safer Neighbourhood Team, officers contacted the business and secured a £1,500 refund for the resident.

We continue to receive complaints about building and renovation services which we will investigate further. Officers have supported residents by arranging for Building Control and surveyors to visit and assess work carried out to assist with civil routes of redress, including interventions with banks.

The National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams team has been working closely with Royal Mail to intercept and stop mail which is designed to defraud unsuspected victims out of their money. There are various types of scams, but the most common are fake lotteries, deceptive prize draws, get-rich-quick schemes, investment scams, miracle cures, and clairvoyant/spiritual scams. The Trading Standards team has received referrals from NTS who have responded to such mail and in some cases enclosed a cash payment in response to either one or more of these which have been intercepted, cheques totalling up to £1,040 (£450 in Brent and £590 in Harrow). All victims have been contacted, advised and where possible their monies were returned to them.

The team has officers who are Friends Against Scam 'SCAM Champions' and can provide training on how to support and reduce the chances of being a scam victim. In September 2024, an officer presented to Safeguard Practice Month (ASG) - This is one of the actions of the Safeguarding Improvement Plan. Including roles and responsibilities, undertaking safeguarding referrals, liaison, and co-operation of

Trading Standards with ASG. We also have an officer who sits on the Harrow Safeguarding Board.

Proceed of Crime (POCA)

- A total of 4 Confiscation Orders –totalling £301,502
- 3 Restraint Orders granted on assets
- 29 Production Orders
- 2 International Letters of Request granted to establish the individuals behind an overseas corporation and associated business activities

Case 1

In a Brent case two defendants failed to cease the use of the premises as four self-contained residential units and demolish a two-storey side, rear extensions and roof extensions. Confiscation order of £176,000 was made by Harrow Crown Court.



Case 2

Brent Council conducts financial investigations for other local authorities, and one such was for Harrow Council which resulted in a confiscation order being made by Harrow Crown Court on 16 May 2024 for £126,946.16 which reflected the rental income that had been made from breaching a planning enforcement notice. This notice related to a house which had been converted into six self-contained dwellings which did not have the required planning permission.