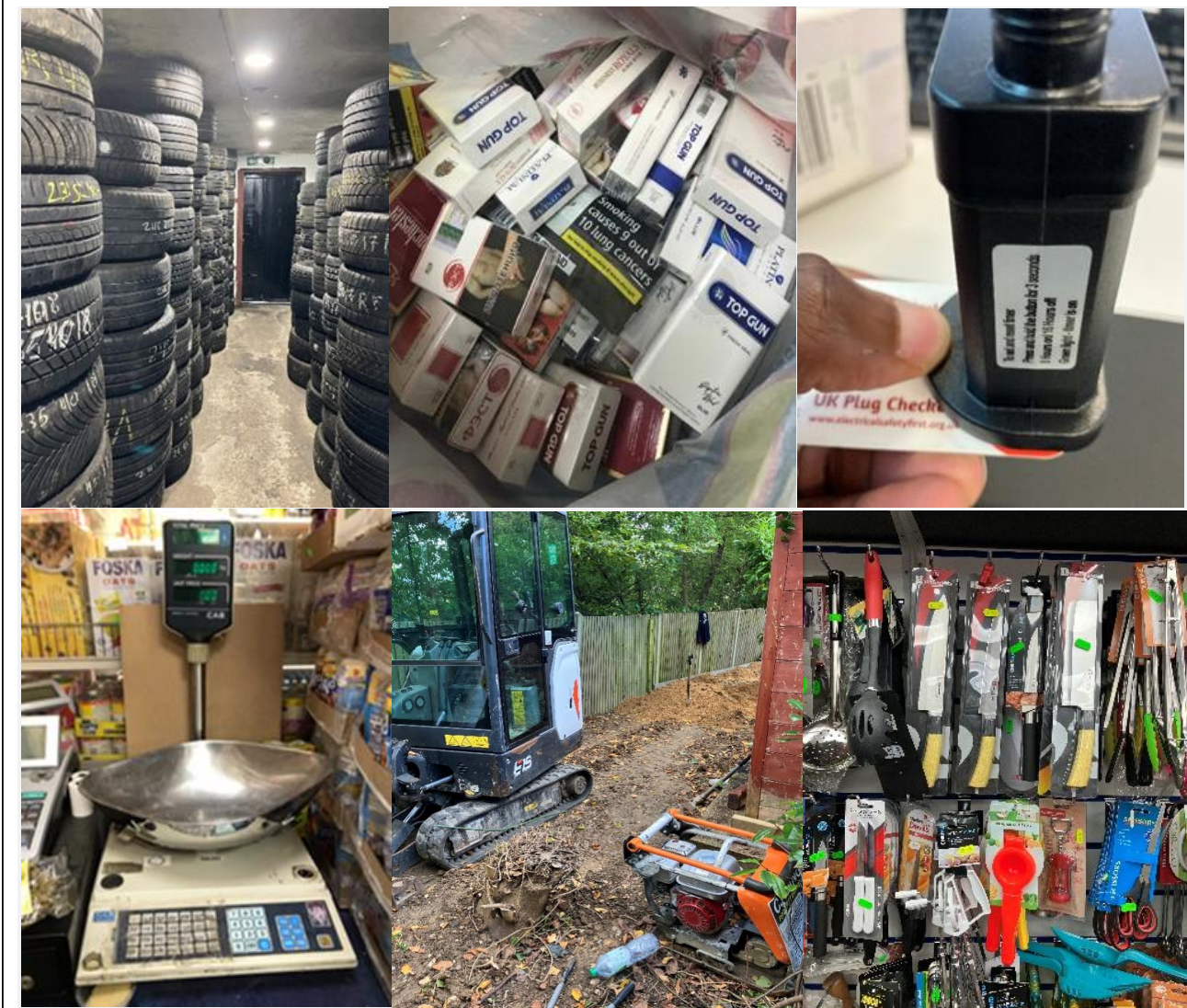




Brent and Harrow Trading Standards Service
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP



Annual Report 2025/26



Introduction

This Annual Report provides an overview of the work carried out by Brent and Harrow Trading Standards, highlighting key achievements and the value the service delivers to both councils and their communities.

The service is managed by Anu Prashar, with Samuel Abdullahi serving as Team Leader. The Service Manager reports to the Head of Regulatory Services, Simon Legg, within the Neighbourhoods & Regeneration Directorate.

During most of the year, the Trading Standards team comprised 3.5 Enforcement Officers in Brent and 2.5 in Harrow. One Brent officer left to join another borough in February 2026. The team is also supported by two qualified and accredited Financial Investigators.

The Role of Trading Standards

Trading Standards is a frontline public protection service responsible for enforcing legislation that protects consumers and ensures businesses trade fairly and safely. The Service fulfils the Council's statutory role as a Weights and Measures Authority, enforcing over 250 pieces of legislation.

The Service plays a key role in protecting residents and legitimate businesses from harm, financial loss, unsafe products, scams, and unfair trading practices, while supporting a safe and confident local economy.

Trading Standards also contributes to wider Council priorities, including community safety, safeguarding vulnerable residents, public health, and economic resilience.

Key areas of work include product safety, illicit and counterfeit goods and tobacco, age-restricted sales, rogue traders, scams, business compliance, letting agents and intelligence-led enforcement activity.

Service Requests

During 2025/26, Trading Standards responded to service requests relating to unsafe products, rogue traders, scams, counterfeit goods, misleading business practices, online sales disputes, and wider consumer protection concerns. The Service continues to work closely with the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS), receiving referrals involving criminal activity, significant consumer detriment, and ongoing harm affecting residents.

A total of 4,355 service requests were received during the year, with 1,093 assessed by the Brent team and 861 by the Harrow team. Referrals originated from residents, businesses, Ports Teams, the Metropolitan Police, other Trading Standards authorities, and industry partners. 2384 of these were notifications from CACS (this is used to indicate transfer of cases from CACS for information purposes only).

All service requests are risk-assessed and prioritised based on available intelligence, vulnerability, and potential harm. During the year, 384 were progressed and investigated in Brent and 228 in Harrow.



Investigations included inspections, evidence gathering, business interviews, and liaison with manufacturers and suppliers. In some cases, businesses voluntarily removed products from sale following Trading Standards intervention, reducing consumer risk at an early stage.



Officers carrying out checks during a business inspection and a weighing scale checked for accuracy

Product Safety & Market Surveillance

Product safety remains a key priority for the service, particularly in relation to electrical goods, toys, cosmetics, and imported products sold through high street and online retailers.

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.

Where products were identified as potentially unsafe, the service worked with businesses and suppliers to:

- Remove products from sale
- Arrange product recalls where necessary
- Conduct further technical assessments
- Share intelligence with other local authorities or enforcement bodies

This work is essential in reducing the risk of fires, injuries, and other consumer harm associated with unsafe goods

Some examples of the work carried out this year are detailed below.

Following a referral from Suffolk Ports Team regarding imported travel cots and strollers, Trading Standards identified product traceability and labelling issues during import checks.

Officers reviewed the technical documentation, confirmed the products met relevant safety standards, and provided compliance advice to the business regarding corrective labelling and traceability measures.

A collaborative approach enabled the products to be safely released to the market while ensuring future shipments and production processes were fully compliant. The intervention protected consumers, supported business compliance, and prevented an estimated £20,000 financial loss to the business.



Officers participated in a joint London Trading Standards, London Fire Brigade and Office for Product Safety and Standards e-bike and e-scooter fire safety awareness campaign in Brent, engaging with food delivery operatives using e-bikes. A short survey on ownership, usage, specifications, modifications and charging practices was completed, with safety advice provided. Most operatives followed guidance, charging bikes outdoors and unplugging chargers once fully charged.



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.

Illicit Tobacco Enforcement

The service continued to target the supply of illicit tobacco products across the boroughs.

Illicit tobacco products undermine legitimate businesses, contributes to anti-social behaviour, and pose significant public health risks. Trading Standards officers carried out targeted inspections and intelligence-led operations in partnership with the Police and other agencies.

Enforcement activity during this reporting period included visits to 57 businesses (30 in Brent and 27 in Harrow, including 11 test purchases, of which 2 resulted in positive sales). Illegal products were seized from 25 businesses (19 in Brent and 6 in Harrow), resulting in ongoing investigations into non-compliant businesses.

Seizures included over 68,300 cigarette sticks, 3.6kg of hand-rolling tobacco, 222kg of smokeless tobacco (chewing and oral), and 3.6kg of shisha tobacco.

During the same period, 5 cases involving 7 defendants were concluded in court, resulting in combined fines of £10,800, costs of £8,220, and victim surcharges totalling £4,400.



Illicit tobacco products recovered and seized during enforcement visits

Letting Agents Compliance Work

The Service continues to pro-actively conduct online audits of agents actively 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.



The websites of agents in both Brent and Harrow were examined and officers issued Notices of Intent (NOI) to issue monetary penalties to agents found to be noncompliant.

5 of the NOIs issued have resulted in Final Notices issued for monetary penalty amounting to £13,000 (£4,800 for Brent & Harrow £8,200).

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 where possible has facilitated refunds, much to the gratitude of the consumers.

Locksmith: A sharp increase in complaints concerning a locksmith prompted a visit. A meeting was held with the manager, who was asked to submit an action plan to reduce complaints and improve compliance. Types of complaints received – unclear billing and overcharging.

Protecting Vulnerable Residents (Doorstep Crime & Scams)

Protecting vulnerable residents remains one of the key priorities for Trading Standards. During 2025/26, the Service supported residents affected by scams, rogue traders, doorstep crime, and financial exploitation through enforcement action, safeguarding referrals, scam awareness initiatives, and partnership working with Adult Social Care, banks, Police, and safeguarding teams.

The Service also supported residents involved in disputes relating to building and renovation works by coordinating visits with Building Control and surveyors and assisting with civil and banking interventions where appropriate.



Trading Standards officers engaging with residents during a community safety awareness event

The Service continued to work with the National Trading Standards Scams Team and Royal Mail to identify and intercept scam mail designed to financially exploit vulnerable residents

Protecting Vulnerable Residents (Age-Restricted Sales Enforcement)

Preventing children and young people from accessing age-restricted products remains a key priority for Trading Standards. During 2025/26, the Service carried out test purchasing operations relating to tobacco, vapes, alcohol, knives, and fireworks to assess business compliance and protect young people from harm.

A total of 84 test purchase visits were conducted across both boroughs using child volunteers, Overall, 90.48% of businesses tested refused sales to children.

	TPs	Sold	% Sold
Brent	33	5	15.15%
Harrow	51	3	5.88%
B&H	84	8	9.52%

Where non-compliance was identified, officers provided advice and issued formal warnings. As a result of enforcement action, two businesses were prosecuted for selling nicotine inhaling products to children. The prosecutions resulted in combined fines of £2,200, with £2,392 awarded in costs and an £880 victim surcharge.



The service also continued to engage with local retailers to encourage best practice and improve awareness of legal requirements.

Supporting Legitimate Businesses

In addition to enforcement activity, Trading Standards continues to support legitimate businesses and contribute to both boroughs' objectives of promoting business growth through effective and proportionate regulation.

Support was also provided to Primary Authority businesses, including guidance on complex product safety matters, recalls, and market withdrawals across the UK and EU.



During 2025/26, officers received 92 requests for business advice and guidance (38 in Brent and 54 in Harrow).

Officers conducted 268 compliance inspections (144 in Brent and 124 in Harrow) across areas including product safety, consumer rights, fair trading, labelling, pricing, and age-restricted sales, supporting compliance and a fair-trading environment for responsible businesses.

During the year, Brent delivered 15 hours and Harrow 20 hours of Primary Authority advice across areas including product safety, fair trading, and trademarks.

Officer providing compliance advice to a local business



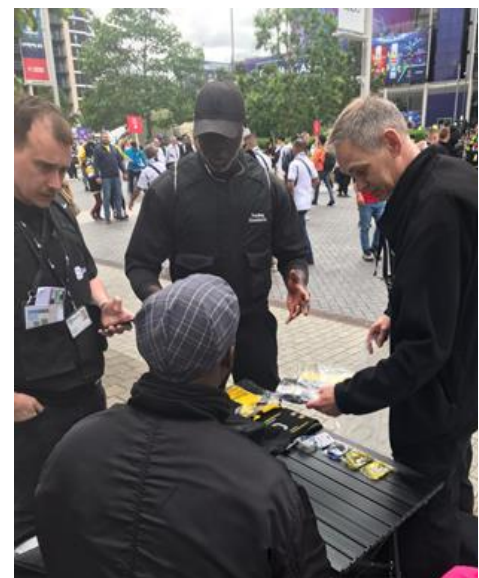
The team has a statutory duty to carry out market surveillance and enforcement activities concerning the storage and sale of fireworks and is responsible for ensuring that fireworks sold in Brent & Harrow are manufactured to the relevant standard and that they are not sold to minors.

The Service issued 34 fireworks licences to 29 businesses in Harrow.

Partnership Working (Events and Days of Action)

Effective partnership working remains central to the success of Trading Standards enforcement activity.

The Service continues to support enforcement operations at Wembley Stadium event days in partnership with the Metropolitan Police, The Football Association, brand protection teams, and environmental enforcement officers to tackle illegal street trading and counterfeit merchandise. This collaborative approach has resulted in significantly improved compliance levels and a substantial reduction in illegal trading activity on event days.



The Service also contributes to Harrow's multi-agency 'Week of Action' initiatives, working alongside Police, Licensing, Environmental Health, Community Safety, and other Council teams to address local enforcement and community safety priorities.

Staff Recognition and Professional Achievement

In June 2025, a member of the Service received national recognition through acceptance into the College of Fellows and was invited to deliver a keynote presentation at the 2025 Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) Conference on future-proofing the profession.

This achievement reflects the Service's continued contribution to professional leadership, innovation, and best practice within the wider Trading Standards community.



Keynote presentation delivered at the 2025 CTSI Conference on future-proofing the Trading Standards profession

Proceeds of Crime (POCA)

The Service has two accredited Financial Investigators to support complex investigations and ensure that individuals who profit from criminal activity do not retain the financial benefits of their offending, they identify, trace, and recover criminal assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA).

The Financial Investigators also conduct investigations other departments in Brent such as planning and for other local authorities. This year they secured 9 confiscation orders totalling £1,726,548.50. 74 production orders were served to investigate financial crime, and 1 restraint order was secured.

Sample Case 1

On 29 September 2025, a defendant was ordered to pay £133,500.00 under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 in relation to doorstep crime incidents and roof repairs. This case was conducted on behalf of Islington Trading Standards.

Sample case 2

In a Brent case, a defendant failed to stop using a house as four self-contained dwellings that were in breach of an enforcement notice, therefore on 20 March 2026, the Crown Court made a confiscation order for £461,473.99 which represented the rental income made over the period of offending.



Sample case 3

Another Brent case was heard at Crown Court on 30 March 2026, where a confiscation order was made for £195,047.15 following the conversion of a house into seven flats that were in breach of a planning enforcement notice.



In conclusion, the Service continues to provide a vital frontline public protection function across Brent and Harrow, delivering significant benefits to residents, businesses, and local communities. During 2025/26, it responded effectively to a wide range of consumer protection issues, supported vulnerable residents, removed unsafe products from the market, and worked proactively with businesses and enforcement partners.

As demonstrated throughout this report, the Service contributes directly to public protection, safeguarding, economic confidence, public health, and early intervention. By tackling scams, illegal trading, unsafe products, and underage sales, while supporting fair and compliant businesses, it helps protect residents, strengthen local economies, and reduce wider social and financial harms.

The preventative nature of Trading Standards work continues to deliver substantial long-term social value and cost avoidance, reducing pressures on other Council services and partner agencies while helping to keep communities safe and resilient.