

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LOCAL COMMITTEE (SURREY HEATH)**

**DATE:** 12 April 2018



**LEAD OFFICER:** Tim Tusler  
Senior Trading Standards Officer

**SUBJECT:** Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards work in Surrey Heath in 2017 – (01/01/2017 – 31/12/2017)

**DIVISION:** Surrey Heath (All divisions)

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

A report to provide an update on the work and activities of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, particularly in respect of the borough of Surrey Heath in 2017.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**The Local Committee (Surrey Heath) is asked to note that Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service:**

- (i) Reacts to any local issues specifically drawn to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards in respect of both Surrey Heath, and of the wider Surrey area, as regards any consumer issues.
- (ii) Responds to any Trading Standards and consumer issues highlighted by intelligence gathering and reporting. This routinely includes Surrey Heath local area in any project or routine undertakings. Such activities may include test purchasing or sampling as appropriate.
- (iii) Responds to business enquiries and bespoke/chargeable requests from businesses based in Surrey Heath focusing on Small/Medium Enterprises (SME) and national businesses. Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards actively encourages partnerships under the Primary Authority Scheme (PA) promoted and administered by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (formerly known as Regulatory Development) OPSS is part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This report is intended to provide information on the activities of Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards, and is for information only. It does not contain any recommendations.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

### **1.1 Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards - an update on the Joint Service:**

Our Trading Standards service exists to:

- protect individuals, communities and businesses from harm and financial loss,
- help business to thrive by maintaining a fair trading environment,
- improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities, and
- fulfil the council's statutory responsibilities to deliver consumer and public protection services.

Since the formation of the joint service in April 2015 the service has continued to perform well and deliver excellent results against key performance indicators. The service is achieving all the savings projected in the business case and is exceeding income generation targets for the year.

The service has six key performance indicators and these are:

- Increase the financial savings for residents as a result of our interventions and investigations.
- Protect residents by stopping rogue traders operating in Buckinghamshire and Surrey
- Prevent residents becoming victims through expanding the use and reach of social media alerts, TS Alerts, volunteers and other preventative initiatives to raise awareness of scams, rogue traders and unsafe products
- To increase the number of Primary Authority Partnerships
- Increase membership of trade approval schemes.
- Work with partners to tackle illegal sales of age restricted products; to explore new ways to reduce harm from the use and consumption of unsafe products; and to tackle poor food quality and nutrition

### **1.2 Trading Standards Approved Trader Schemes:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service is continuing to work with Checkatrade to ensure residents can easily find reputable traders in their area. We have over 2500 Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved members in Surrey. Businesses are removed from the scheme where intelligence suggests that they are not suitable to receive our approval.

To become a Checkatrade/Trading Standards Approved trader and to obtain our 'double' accreditation, businesses must meet set standards and pass rigorous background checks. The minimum standards we set will be maintained for any future partnerships we may enter into with any other trade approval scheme operators.

### **1.3 Volunteering Scheme:**

Trading Standards aims to create an environment of "Confident Consumers and Trusted Traders" through advice and enforcement. Our volunteers are an integral part of this purpose; increasing the consumer knowledge and confidence of residents and helping us to improve customers' experience of using businesses in Buckinghamshire and Surrey.

We offer our volunteers an exciting and enjoyable experience, a chance to do something completely different with new people from a variety of backgrounds. It also gives volunteers an opportunity of learning new skills and gaining practical work experience; most importantly, volunteers will have the satisfaction of being able to make a real difference in their local communities.

Volunteers enable Trading Standards to do more. For example, one Volunteer has visited more than 300 food businesses to provide guidance leaflets about allergen labelling and see what information is already given to the public by each business about this issue. Our volunteer Product Safety Market Surveyors look in their local shops for items that might not comply with safety requirements and we also have Volunteers who are available to give talks within their communities about Trading Standards issues.

Details of our current Volunteering opportunities are available at <https://do-it.org/organisations/surrey-trading-standards-vams>

#### **1.4 Work on scams and protecting the vulnerable**

Protecting the vulnerable and tackling scams continues to be a key priority for our service. We are continuing to work closely with the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST) who are now hosted by this service. We receive from the NTSST details of potential scam victims based in both Buckinghamshire and Surrey. We will go and visit to provide advice and support. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 2017 we ran a Scams Conference at Epsom Downs Race Course which was aimed at existing and potential partner organisations that can have a role to play in reducing the impact of scams.

In 2017 we contacted about 300 scam victims and it is estimated that with all the interventions and investigations carried out last year about £665,000 was saved for Bucks and Surrey Consumers.

Trading Standards and Adult Services are concerned about the effect that nuisance calls have on local residents. To reduce these problems we are arranging to programme and fit devices on vulnerable resident's landline telephones to stop them receiving scam and nuisance telephone calls.

We are loaning these trueCall Care devices to selected residents free of charge. The service is always seeking nominations of older or otherwise vulnerable residents who may benefit from a trueCall device. We welcome suggestions as to any residents in Surrey Heath who would like to be considered. We can supply promotional material and would welcome your contacting us.

Units installed in Surrey Heath are being funded by money we have recovered from criminals using the Proceeds of Crime Act.

On average, 43% of the calls made to participants are nuisance calls. This initiative, as a whole, has now blocked more than 68000 scam and nuisance calls.

So far there are 8 participants in our trueCall project who live in Surrey Heath.

TrueCall data also gets sent to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who have found the information useful intel to penalise people not complying with their obligations – e.g firms that ignore the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) system. We also get intel for our investigation purposes. People borrow the trueCall units from us – don't own them outright and part of the agreement includes agreeing to the data collected by the device being shared with us and the ICO.

Information for residents is available at <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards/finding-the-right-trader/rogue-traders-scams-and-cold-callers/phone-fraud-and-nuisance-callers>.

### **1.5 Stop Cold Calling and Scams Sticker Packs:**

We were one of the first authorities in the country to develop a no cold calling sticker scheme which is designed to empower residents giving them the confidence to deal with cold calling traders.

Cold calling doorstep traders who target the elderly and vulnerable cause most concern, offering services like roofing, block paving, guttering, painting and gardening maintenance. There are of course plenty of reputable traders offering a range of services but they can still be a nuisance if they cold call against residents wishes.

We have also produced a newly updated Scams Sticker Pack that seeks to raise awareness of scam mail, scam emails and telephone calls to assist in dissuading those who might fall prey to scammers from being targeted. Inside the Scams Sticker Pack are stickers for cheque books, telephone handsets and now also computers, all of which remind residents to think twice, to ask advice, and to hang up on telephone callers asking for money or bank details.

### **1.6 Social media:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards issue regular information about our service on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and through TS Alerts.

TS Alerts is a weekly email news bulletin that contains information and alerts about rogue traders, frauds, the latest scams, prosecutions taken, product safety recalls, new legislation and much more. We currently have around 2700 subscribers, however, the actual number of recipients is far higher as it links with the National Trading Standards Scams Team, Cybersafe Surrey, neighbourhood watch and local police beats. It also gets posted on social media. Residents and businesses can subscribe to the news bulletin via <http://scc.newsweaver.co.uk/trading-standards> and clicking subscribe.

We currently have over 4000 twitter followers with some messages reaching thousands more through re-tweets. We have over 900 'likes' on our Facebook page and popular posts reach over 2000 people. We have over 700 connections on LinkedIn with colleagues, partners and businesses. We also have a new Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards company page on LinkedIn.

### **1.7 Eat Out Eat Well:**

The Eat Out Eat Well Award has been developed to reward caterers who make it easier for their customers to make healthy choices when eating out. It has three levels – Bronze, Silver, and Gold, and is symbolised by an apple logo in the shape of a heart. The level of award is based on a scoring system that takes into account the type of food on offer, cooking methods, and how the meals are promoted to customers. This scheme benefits both caterers, by promoting their businesses, and consumers, by helping them make healthier choices when eating out.

The Eat Out Eat Well award is assessed and managed by Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service and the local Environmental Health Service. In 2016 we were highly commended in the Regulatory Delivery Primary Authority Awards 2016 for helping to support 33 branches of Sports and Leisure Management Ltd T/A Everyone Active leisure centres to achieve Gold assessments in the Eat Out Eat Well healthy eating award. The judges described it as “An innovative example of Primary Authority improving public health enabling consumers to make healthy eating choices.”

There are currently 23 Eat Out Eat Well members in Surrey Heath out of 218 in Surrey.

### **1.8 Business Advice Service:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service has extensive experience of advising a variety of businesses from small family companies to international blue-chip corporations. Our Trading Standards Officers provide advice to businesses to ensure that a business is fair, competitive and legal.

Our chargeable business advice service continues to be successful. There are 74 businesses in Surrey Heath that have registered with us for business advice out of 1094 throughout Surrey. We also continue to promote the Primary Authority Partnership (PA) Scheme run by the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS). The PA scheme is offered to businesses, and gives them the choice of more protection from inconsistent advice or even prosecution by other Authorities from around the country.

A total of five Surrey Heath firms have entered into a Primary Authority Partnership with us, including firms such as Krispy Kreme (International Food Retailer and Manning Impex (Food Importer). Within Buckinghamshire and Surrey there are a total of 92 Primary Authority Partnerships. We tailor each PA to the needs of the business and we can be required to provide a wide range of advice and support. We have in the past provided support to some PA Partner's to work more effectively with the Office of Communications (OFCOM) and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

### **1.9 Reported Complaints:**

There were 183 complaints reported to Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service by Surrey Heath residents between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 and during the same period 169 complaints were made about businesses based within Surrey Heath.

Unfortunately we cannot respond to every complaint so we prioritise the most serious cases and use others to plan our preventative work. We look at a range of factors to help us determine which complaints should be investigated. Our investigations criteria is published on our website: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards/trading-standards-policies-and-plans/trading-standards-investigations-criteria>

Details of our latest court action against rogue traders, the selling of counterfeit goods and other unlawful trading practices in Buckinghamshire and Surrey can be found on our website by visiting: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/trading-standards/news-from-trading-standards/prosecutions-and-other-court-actions>

### **1.10 Doorstep Crime/Rogue Trading:**

We are committed to protecting residents from being taken advantage of by rogue traders and also from feeling pressured on their doorsteps to make decisions that they would not otherwise make.

We have a Rapid Action Team made up of dedicated officers who respond to calls for help from consumers by attending the scene of doorstep crime incidents. We work closely with Surrey Police and other agencies to help reduce incidents of distraction

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burglary and rogue trading in Surrey. Our Rapid Action Team are on duty Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm, and can offer residents a range of support from providing information and assistance, to intervening, disrupting activities and taking enforcement action against doorstep callers.

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service have received 1 doorstep crime complaint from Surrey Heath residents between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017.

The service is also working in partnership with Surrey Police, The Banks and others to promote the "Banking Protocol". This is a scheme which trains bank staff to become alert to withdrawals which may be carried out as a result of a attempted doorstep incident. This scheme has only been launched in the latter part of 2017 and is still in its infancy.

The service is currently dealing with a highly significant investigation centred on the Surrey Heath area, involving building work. Since this is an ongoing matter, and with a view to the sensitivities of such investigations, we are not able to go into detail at this time.

### **1.11 Food Quality Standards:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service is responsible for enforcing food standards, for example the labelling and quality of food, to ensure consumers are not misled. We carry out this function in partnership with our colleagues in Environmental Health who are responsible for food hygiene and safety. As well as giving advice and dealing with enquires and complaints we also visit food businesses to ensure they are trading fairly.

Trading Standards and representatives of each of the 11 District and Borough Environmental Health Services meet quarterly to discuss issues of joint interest and to ensure consistency of approach. Included in this are areas such as Eat Out Eat Well, Food Hygiene Rating Scheme and Primary Authority. Public Health England and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are also represented on the Group.

Matters which arise on a day to day basis requiring joint working or where we hope to assist each other are dealt with by officers making direct contact. We also worked with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) across the County to develop and deliver an allergens training package to business and EHOs.

We are currently undertaking an allergens project focusing on caterers and are sampling food from caterers to ensure they are providing accurate allergen information and that the food sampled is free of the requested allergen. We are also sampling products supplied by local small food producers. These projects are focused on all areas of the county, including Surrey Heath.

### **1.12 Animal Health:**

Animal health legislation exists to protect both human, through the food chain, and animal health. This prevents the introduction of serious diseases such as Foot and Mouth and includes requirements for maintaining records and ensuring livestock are identified. Measures also exist to protect the welfare of livestock, whether on farms, in transit or at abattoirs. The county of Surrey is currently designated as "Low Risk for

Tuberculosis (TB)” and we play a role in maintaining this designation by ensuring TB testing is done on any ‘high risk’ cattle entering the county and through a 4 yearly TB testing programme for all holdings with cattle.

Trading Standards have a contingency plan with the Local Resilience Forum for exotic disease in livestock e.g. Foot and Mouth and Avian Influenza and we work closely with Emergency Planning.

The recent Avian Influenza outbreak in wild birds has meant contact with the Emergency Planning Team to update them on the on-going situation concerning Avian Influenza. Guidance has been provided to District and Borough, waste collection services on what to do if a dead bird is reported. We have also made contact with local poultry societies, clubs and other organisations.

In Surrey Heath we have a record of 72 livestock keepers, many of whom may just have a few pigs, sheep or goats as ‘pets’.

### **1.13 Underage Sales:**

Historically the focus of trading standards work was on test purchasing and enforcement, however since early 2013 we have increased the number of advice visits carried out at retail premises.

Premises are targeted for advice visits on the basis of intelligence and risk assessment. We aim to work closely with local businesses providing advice and support to assist them to comply with their legal responsibilities in relation to age restricted products. In addition, intelligence led test purchasing is carried out in partnership with Surrey Police in accordance with the Code of Practice for Regulatory Delivery for Age Restricted Products.

### **1.14 Fireworks:**

Any business storing or selling fireworks is required to hold a fireworks license. The licenses are issued by Trading Standards. In Surrey Heath in the lead up to November 2017, 5 businesses renewed their fireworks licenses. Surrey Heath does not have any licensed to sell fireworks all year round.

### **1.15 Petroleum:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards is responsible for ensuring that sites that store petrol for dispensing are storing it in accordance with legislation designed to prevent a risk of fire and explosion.

There are currently 14 licensed petrol sites in the Surrey Heath area, mostly retail petrol forecourts.

### **1.16 Ensuring the safety of goods entering the European Union (EU)**

The EU Regulation on Accreditation and Market Surveillance (commonly referred to as RAMS) came into force in 2008. This has introduced a duty on Member States to check the safety of products as they enter the EU from third countries. Consignments

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of goods arriving at ports of entry are processed through Enhanced Remote Transit Sheds (ERTS). Heathrow airport has a number of ERTS located near it and 18 of these fall within the boundaries of Surrey although none are in Surrey Heath. As part of a regional project supported by the National Trading Standards Board we regularly receive notifications about potentially unsafe consignments of goods in the ERTS and we will inspect the consignments before Customs release them.

**1.17 Investment in staff:**

All relevant staff are now members of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and are registered for their Continued Personal & Professional Development (CPPD) scheme. Eligible staff are also supported to achieve Chartered Trading Standards Practitioner status. This helps us to ensure the continued competence of staff and enables us to demonstrate this competence to businesses, consumers and other key stake holders. All staff are required to complete a minimum number of hours of training each year to receive their CPPD certification.

**1.18 Local Liaison and joint working:**

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service liaise with the Surrey Heath Police Teams and we work in partnership with them.

In recent months we have been working with the Fire Service to implement partnership working. We are assisting them in the production of community packs to be provided to vulnerable residents. The Fire Service are now actively looking to identify potential scam victims and they will notify us of any concerns. We also now give out the Fire Service "Safe and Well" cards when we visit victims of scams and doorstep crime.

As part of a new initiative to raise awareness of Scams and to protect the Vulnerable within our communities we have been training "Scam Champions" under "the Friends against Scams" initiative working with both volunteers and also partner agencies such as Victim Support, Surrey Community Action, GP's, Housing Associations, Community Support Officers and helping the Police to train new Police Community Support Officers.

Our Volunteer "Scam Champions" as well as our partners cascade this training back within the communities to raise awareness and create more "Friends against Scams" More information can be found at [www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk](http://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk).

**2. ANALYSIS:**

2.1 This report is intended to provide information only.

**3. OPTIONS:**

3.1 This report is for information only.

**4. CONSULTATIONS:**

4.1 This report is for information only.

**5. FINANCIAL AND VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS:**

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

**6. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:**

6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

**7. LOCALISM:**

7.1 The intention of this report is to update the committee on the work of the service, particularly as it affects the borough of Surrey Heath.

**8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Crime and Disorder	The main areas that impact on community safety are age restricted sales and tackling doorstep crime and deception. We protect local residents in a range of ways and help to reduce the fear of crime
Sustainability (including Climate Change and Carbon Emissions)	No significant implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report.
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	We have a dedicated vulnerable person's officer based in Surrey who works in partnership with the Adult Social Care Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
Public Health	The main areas that impact on public health are age restricted sales, tackling doorstep crime and deception and promotion of the 'Eat Out Eat Well' healthy eating scheme. An officer also represents our joint service at Smoke Free Surrey.

**9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

9.1 The Local Committee is asked to note the contents of this report for their information.

**10. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

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10.1 This report is written to provide information only.

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**Consulted:**

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**Annexes:**

None

**Sources/background papers:**

None

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