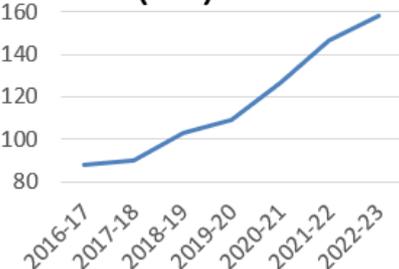


# PERFORMANCE & SERVICE UPDATE

## Q1&Q2 April to September 2022/23

### Trading Standards Snapshot

April 2022- September 2022

<p><b>Financial Impact of Scams Prevention Work</b></p> <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;">£1,342,971</p> <p>Direct &amp; Future Savings: Positive impact on society of our Scams Prevention work</p>	<p><b>Demand on the Service &amp; Market Surveillance</b></p> <p><b>3,529</b> emails, phone calls, partner referrals, letters and referrals from the Citizens Advice Consumer Service</p> <p><b>351</b> requests for help and advice from Businesses</p> <p><b>228</b> interventions made to support scam victims</p> <p><b>55</b> food samples taken to check food standards, labelling and authenticity &amp; <b>48</b> businesses identified as supplying: misdescribed food, or not correctly declaring allergens, or selling food containing toxic or illegal components, or involved in fraud involving food</p>	<p><b>Call Blocking</b></p> <p><b>66</b> call blockers installed in homes of high risk individuals since April</p> <p><b>504</b> active call blockers in place at September 2022</p> <p><b>24,046</b> nuisance and scam calls blocked</p>																
<p><b>Helping Communities to fight Scams</b></p>  <p><b>827</b> Friends Against Scams trained</p> <p><b>17</b> Door Cameras Installed</p>	<p><b>Active Investigations</b></p> <p><b>47</b> active investigations in the following areas:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 12px; color: #008000;"> <span>animal health</span> <span>food</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 14px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;"> <span>money laundering</span> <span>unfair trading</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 12px; color: #008000;"> <span>companies act</span> <span>fraud</span> <span>trade marks</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 12px; color: #008000;"> <span>estate agents</span> <span>illicit tobacco</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 12px; color: #008000;"> <span>unsafe goods</span> </div>	<p><b>Unsafe or Non-Compliant Goods Removed from the Market</b></p> <p><b>180</b> consignments inspected</p> <p><b>40,745</b> Unsafe or non-compliant items stopped from entering the marketplace</p> <p style="font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold; color: #008000;">£1,427,297</p> <p>Value to society of these goods being stopped</p>																
<p><b>TS Primary Authority Partnerships (total)</b></p>  <table border="1" style="display: none;"> <caption>TS Primary Authority Partnerships (total)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total Partnerships</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2016-17</td><td>85</td></tr> <tr><td>2017-18</td><td>90</td></tr> <tr><td>2018-19</td><td>105</td></tr> <tr><td>2019-20</td><td>110</td></tr> <tr><td>2020-21</td><td>135</td></tr> <tr><td>2021-22</td><td>150</td></tr> <tr><td>2022-23</td><td>160</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Total Partnerships	2016-17	85	2017-18	90	2018-19	105	2019-20	110	2020-21	135	2021-22	150	2022-23	160	<p><b>Volunteers</b></p> <p><b>163</b> Volunteers willing to help the Service deliver its priorities, having given ...</p> <p><b>3,846</b> hours of their time to Service priorities</p>	<p><b>Illicit Tobacco &amp; Vapes</b></p> <p>Illegal tobacco seized from <b>7</b> premises visited with the help of a tobacco detection dog</p> <p>Suspected illegal goods seized:</p> <p><b>69,000</b> cigarettes,</p> <p>over <b>6kg</b> hand rolling tobacco,</p> <p><b>1,234</b> illicit vapes,</p> <p><b>31</b> bottles of alcohol</p>
Year	Total Partnerships																	
2016-17	85																	
2017-18	90																	
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2021-22	150																	
2022-23	160																	
<p><b>Awards</b></p> <p>The Service won two Awards in the OPSS Regulatory Service Excellence Awards: The <b>Service Excellence</b> Award, and a <b>Leadership</b> Award for our Business Team Manager</p> 																		

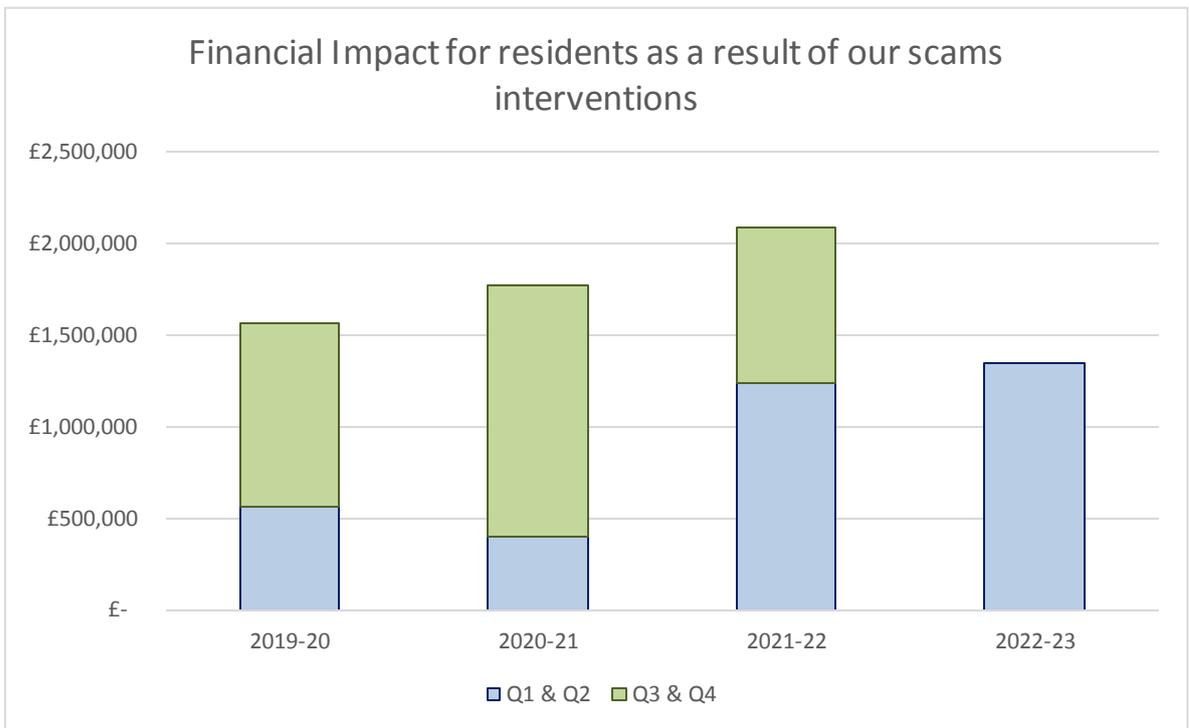


**Service Priority Area 1 - Protecting the most vulnerable. Tackling fraudulent illegal and unfair trading practices, including serious and organised crime.**

<p><b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> To increase the financial impact of our interventions with scam victims, as measured by the NTS Scams Calculator</p>	<p><b>Status</b> <b>Green</b></p> 
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**Comments:**

Work to prevent and tackle scams and consumer frauds is a high priority for the Service. In Q1&Q2 **£1,342,971** has been saved for residents as a results of Service interventions compared to £2,090,836 in 21/22 in total.



A further £723,789 has been saved in in avoided health and social care costs as a direct result of our scams interventions compared to £1,172,090 in 2021/22.

To the end of September interventions were made with 228 individuals vulnerable to scams.

The Service can deploy a range of interventions depending on the individuals needs and circumstances. Some examples include call blockers, doorbell cameras, door cameras, tackling social isolation, referrals to other agencies, acting on their behalf in disputes with traders, training Friends Against Scams, Scam Marshals, SCAMchampions and SCAMBassadors.

## **Call Blockers:**



Call blockers are an extremely effective way of stopping criminals accessing vulnerable residents by telephone. To combat cold call fraud and to give residents piece of mind Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards provides and installs call blocking technology free of charge to those who are being plagued by nuisance and scam calls.

Research into the impact of call blockers show that they decrease the householder's financial losses to phone fraud and they increase the householders wellbeing against a standard scoring methodology. The increase in wellbeing is greatest in those who self-identify as vulnerable. The cost: benefit ratio of the call blockers is 32:1 i.e. every £1 spent saves £32.

If a local resident feels either they or a relative may benefit from a call blocker they can email this request to us at [trading.standards@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@surreycc.gov.uk). One of our Prevention Team officers will then contact the resident and discuss how the call blocker works and assess whether this would be an appropriate solution for the resident. A simple form will be completed and the fitting of the call blocker will be arranged. In urgent cases our officers are trained to install the units there and then.

Some qualitative feedback on call blockers we have installed includes:

*"The telephone is a necessity, a lifeline. I do become concerned by scammers and tradespeople who are insistent. I have been badly scammed by someone who seemed to know all about my bank, my account and who worked in the bank, even though he wasn't local! My husband & I are much happier now that we have the Truecall device.*

*We don't feel threatened now when we answer the phone."*

*"The Truecall device has made such a difference to my elderly mother (98) and my disabled sister (70) as they can now answer the phone with confidence. As their carer I have peace of mind knowing that nobody can get through who they don't know. They were victims of a scam and the phone is now one thing I do not have to worry about. Thank you."*

*"Since fitting the Truecall filter, unwanted phone calls have virtually ceased! - scams now mostly confined to internet. Since installation I have had NO calls from bogus HMRC, survey groups? Internet "problems" reports. Particularly - overseas computerised calls are now history!!!"*

**Call blocker case Study Mrs E:** Mrs E was a recently bereaved widow who was receiving cold calls from individuals posing as investment specialists. She was initially persuaded into 'investing' £5,000. The cold calls continued, and she handed over another £10,000. The cold calls continued incessantly, and Mrs E daughter contacted Surrey Police in a very distressed state. The case was referred to Trading Standards via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

The Trading Standards Prevention Team, working in partnership with Surrey Police immediately took steps to safeguard this vulnerable lady. A key part of this activity was to stop the cold calls. Mrs E was an independent lady who was initially reluctant to the idea of installing a call blocker. She had been convinced that these 'investment traders' were genuine and was diligently keeping notes of her conversations. Trading Standards continued to support Mrs E and endeavour to get her money returned to her.

A month later Mrs E contacted her Trading Standards case worker, she had received two very aggressive cold calls from the scammers demanding an additional £20,000 which had left her upset and very shaken. She asked for us to stop these calls and agreed to install a call blocker. The effect of the call blocker was immediate. Mrs E was no longer plagued by cold calls and she was no longer afraid to answer the phone. With continued support from Trading Standards she even had £15,000 returned to her, money she thought she had lost forever.

## Door and doorbell Cameras



Doorstep crime (fraud) refers to rogue traders, bogus callers, and distraction burglary. These crimes can not only have a huge financial impact on their victims but can also lead to both psychological and physical damage. Home Office research shows that the majority of the victims of this type of offending are over 65 and are two and a half times more likely to be in care or die within two years as a result of victimisation compared to their non-defrauded neighbours.

Between April 2020 and April 2021, nationally, there were 3,509 doorstep fraud incidents reported into Action Fraud with losses of £17.2m. This does not take into consideration the incidents reported to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service. The National Trading Standards Scams Team says that scams are under reported with estimates of between only 5-10% reported. The actual figures are therefore likely to be a lot higher than the Action Fraud data conveys.

As explained above, effective interventions have been proven to work in relation to phone fraud with the installation of call blockers. Mail redirection services stop scam mail landing on vulnerable consumers door mats. With this in mind the Service took an active role in developing a pilot project in 2021 across London and the South East to assess the impact of installing doorbell cameras in the homes of people particularly vulnerable to doorstep crime. Many of those taking part in the pilot had recently experienced doorstep crimes and their average loss was just over £18,300. Consumers who experience doorstep crime are more at risk of suffering from lower wellbeing leading to depression so the pilot included assessing the householder's wellbeing using a standard scale before the camera was installed and several months after.

The pilot showed that

- The use of camera technology can dramatically increase consumer wellbeing and allow people to live independently for longer. Wellbeing scores went up, and 60% of respondents reported feeling more confident in answering their door.
- The use of camera technology on the doorstep can reduce the chance of being defrauded at the doorstep. (The average financial loss went from £18,300 prior to installation down to £0 after installation)
- The cost: benefit ratio of the project was 39:1 i.e. every £1 spent saves £39.

Following the pilot, the Service was instrumental in obtaining additional regional funding from national Trading Standards for doorbell cameras and we have fitted a further 17 since April. The service is now running a new pilot to assess the impact of door cameras which aren't linked to the doorbell to see whether these can also be effective as a tool to protect vulnerable residents.

**Social isolation:** Whether voluntary or involuntary, social isolation is a leading factor contributing to the financial exploitation of individuals. Social isolation when combined with factors such as diminishing cognitive capacity, bereavement, communication difficulties and lack of self-esteem/confidence etc can affect the judgment and decision-making capacity of residents making them more susceptible to fraud and financial abuse.



As part of our portfolio of target hardening and safeguarding measures, we encourage socially isolated people to try to increase their engagement with friends and neighbours. This could be attending one of our Friends Against Scams community events or by becoming a Scam Marshal and helping to prevent others becoming victims of fraud by sharing their experiences, helping others to report and recognise scams and by sending any scam mail that they receive to the National Trading Standards (NTS) Scams Team so that it can be utilised as evidence in future investigative and enforcement work. We also promote local befriending services such as those offered by Age UK and Bucks Mind.

We are a founding member of the Brewing Friendships initiative. This partnership of Trading Standards, Adult Social Care, Tech Angels, local churches and the mental health charity Surrey and Borders Mind Matters provides monthly sessions, at various locations around the county, to small groups of lonely or isolated people, encouraging social interaction while learning new skills over tea and biscuits and in a safe, friendly environment.

### **Returning money lost to an international lottery scam:**



43 of the people Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards officers are engaged with have been defrauded by an international lottery scam. In a landmark investigation, the National Trading Standards Scams Team, working with the United States Federal Trade Commission, identified US-based fraudsters who targeted UK households with scam mail offering alleged cash wins and claiming 'guaranteed' cash prize pay-outs.

The Kansas based crime gang deliberately targeted older people living alone or those with long-term health conditions, sending deceptive personalised mail to individuals in the so-called 'Next Gen' sweepstakes scheme. They enticed victims into paying an upfront fee ranging from £25 to £40 and many paid the fee several times before realising there was no prize.

Following action taken by the US Federal Trade Commission, a Federal Judge ordered that \$25 million of forfeited cash and assets be made available to compensate victims around the world. Trading Standards officers have identified and contacted 32 Surrey residents and 11 Bucks residents affected by the scam, all of whom will be returned their defrauded money. The amounts returned vary between £25 and £2700, with more than £8k being returned to residents in total. Officers are also advising those affected on how to identify scams and stay safe in future.

One Surrey resident is receiving £243.10 back. Unfortunately, due to her dementia we have been working with her and her family for a number of years, including weekly phone calls during lock down to check on her wellbeing. The lady is now in a care home, so we are liaising with her son to transfer the money into her account. He gave this feedback:

"I am so impressed with the ongoing service Trading Standards provides to my mother. Even now, although she has moved into a care home you continue to look after her best interests".

Another piece of feedback was received from the daughter (with power of attorney over her mother's finances) of a Bucks resident, another repeat victim, who is receiving £44.28:

"The service you provide is great and very reassuring that the money is being returned by a person that the family are already familiar with"

**Returning money lost to clairvoyant scams:** The NTS Scams Team working with UK Border Force, Department of Justice and United States Postal Service identified clairvoyant type mailings which were fraudulent in content being sent to vulnerable and senior consumers. The content of the mailings was at times threatening and required victims to send cash only, usually between £40 and £80 to various addresses in Europe. The team working with a number of European country colleagues shut down a number of operations however mail was still being sent to Austria by victims. Following a protracted enquiry the team working with UK Border Force have put in place a mechanism to identify the mail leaving the country and pass it to NTS Scams team. This has allowed for identification of victims, and where they are Surrey or Bucks residents their details are passed to the Service so that we can return monies they have given to these fraudsters. Below is a case study and example of the mailings being used:

**Case study:** AB is the carer for her partner, who is 93 years old and has the early onset of dementia. AB has several health conditions including mobility and although she receives support from a dementia team she has highlighted that her partner refuses respite care and can become 'stropky' with her. AB lives in the Staines area of Surrey. She has no family or friends and although her partner

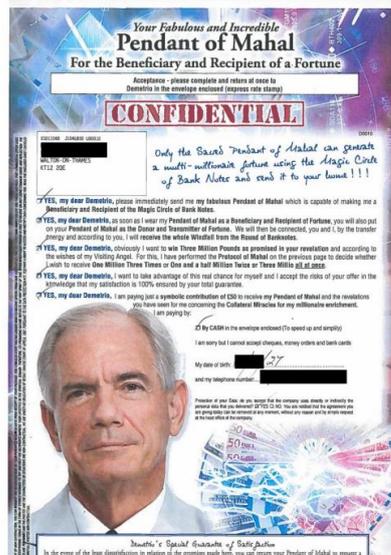
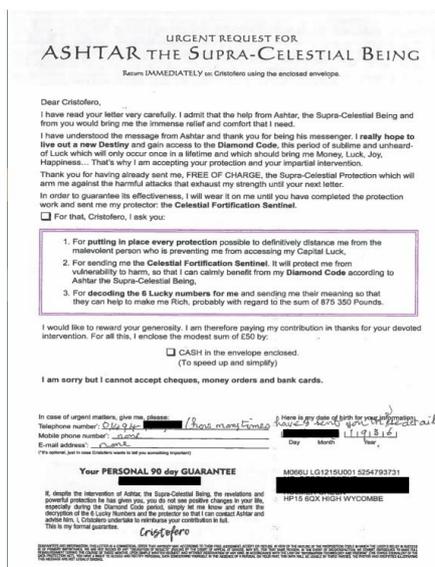
has two daughters, they have limited contact as they have health conditions of their own. AB is in receipt of 2 pensions and disability allowance and feels financially stable.

When contact was made with AB she acknowledged that she receives post from psychics and clairvoyants however she believes the letters are genuine. AB considers herself to be clairvoyant and psychic herself and although she recognises that there are scam clairvoyants/psychics out to scam people she is adamant that she only has regular contact with psychics and clairvoyants that she knows are not scammers. AB has been engaging with 'Christopho' via mail and telephone for over 15 years and has purchased many crystals etc. She has been interacting regularly with 'Michael' for about 2 years.

Following a number of telephone conversations AB, although initially reluctant, agreed to meet our officer in person so her cheque could be returned to her. She refused to meet at her own home and would only meet at a local pub. Over a number of similar meetings, a bond of trust was slowly formed. As the relationship developed AB slowly became more receptive to the message that this was a scam. At one pivotal meeting our officer showed her several sanitised scam letters, addressed to different people but saying the exact same thing. She saw how other people had responded, the distress it was causing and that the 'clairvoyant' she had been communicating with for so many years, that she thought was genuine and her friend, had been sending the exact same correspondence to hundreds if not thousands of people. In a very emotional moment of realisation, she understood that this was a scam.

Trading Standards continues to provide support to AB, who subsequently agreed to become a scam marshal and use her experience and fierce intellect to help others ensnared in the situation she had been in. AB also agreed to engage with Adult Social Care and to seek help with caring for her partner and is considering agreeing to a safe and well visit by Surrey Fire and Rescue.

AB is now in a much better place. She continues to welcome the welfare calls trading standards make to her, but now enjoys respite days out of the house and visiting her social club. Her partner's medication has been changed which in turn has stabilised his behaviour and he now enjoys one day a week at a day centre.



### **Intervention examples:**

**Case study:** Trading Standards received a referral from a champion of the Armed Forces Covenant team. A veteran and his wife who they were supporting raised concerns regarding some building work. Trading Standards intervened and identified the couple had handed over £30,000 to their son in law and £7,000 to another man. What started as a request to fit a handrail had escalated into demolition of their driveway, building of walls, landscaping, fitting of garage doors etc. The driveway was left in such a state of disrepair that when the traders failed to return to complete the work the two elderly residents had been left trapped within their own home.

While trading standards and Surrey Police investigate potential criminal offences, Adult Social Care are assessing the needs of the veteran and his wife, who suffers from dementia, and the Armed Forces Champion is working to address the couple's social isolation and ensuring they are receiving their full entitlement of financial support.

**Case Study:** Mr B received a phone call from unknown individuals purporting to be from the investigation branch of his bank, ringing about a push payment problem. By coincidence the wife of Mr B had been a victim of a previous push payment scam so he believed it was a legitimate call. The fraudsters rang Mr B numerous times and he was subsequently persuaded to make 3 bank transfers totalling almost £26,000. Upon realising what had happened Mr B immediately contacted his bank and submitted a report to Action Fraud.

Mr B subsequently received two letters from his genuine bank. The first letter acknowledged that he had been a victim of authorised push payment fraud but also implied that because it was his own fault that he had been scammed, he would only receive a 50% refund. A later letter from his bank heralded the "good news" that Mr B would be credited with £5.

Three weeks later, following interventions by Trading Standards, Mr B received confirmation that his bank would be refunding the total amount he lost, £25,743.27.

**Case Study:** Mrs K received a scam text purporting to be from one of her daughters. The text said that a new number was being used because she had a new phone, that the banks were stopping her account and she needed £1,470 urgently. She tried to ring her daughter but received no reply. The fraudsters had obtained the daughter's date of birth via social media and tricked Mrs K to provide her husband's number. He was then contacted and was instructed to transfer £1,470. The criminals tried to obtain more money which roused suspicion. An attempt to stop the transfer was unsuccessful as Mrs K in her panic couldn't answer the security questions, and Santander refused her request to stop the transfer. All this happened while Mrs K was struggling to look after her mother who was suffering with dementia.

Trading Standards intervened to provide overall advice and support and following engagement with their bank the decision to not refund any of the lost money was reviewed and they decided it would be appropriate to refund the full amount of £1,470. Mrs K has sent us the following message:- "I do hope you are keeping well. I have some great news for you - we received £1,470 into our account - I have waited to advise you of this brilliant outcome (thank you so much), until we received a letter to see why they reversed their original decision - unfortunately, we have still not received a letter from them".

### **Supporting the wider community**

As well as supporting the most vulnerable individuals to be resilient to frauds and scams, the Service undertakes a range of work to help the whole community be aware of and resilient to frauds. We have a range of media channels, including Twitter<sup>1</sup>, Facebook<sup>2</sup> and electronic newsletters<sup>3</sup> for both residents and businesses that people can subscribe to. As well as direct recipients these electronic newsletters are often circulated on within communities e.g. through Neighbourhood Watch, Housing Associations and Thames Valley Police Alerts. We also subscribe to the neighbourhood alerts system which is an online, secure community messaging system. It allows us, alongside other agencies such as Police, Fire and Neighbourhood Watch to communicate directly with individuals and groups in very specific geographic areas. We particularly use it to send alerts of doorstep crime incidents, scams, and other imminent threats.

### **Friends Against Scams, SCAMchampions and SCAMBassadors**



Friends Against Scams and Business Against Scams are both National Trading Standards Scams Team initiatives, aiming to galvanise communities to protect and prevent people or businesses from becoming victims of scams through empowerment.



For those Friends Against Scams who want to do more, we also provide SCAMchampion training. A SCAMchampion hosts their own awareness sessions to recruit Friends and drive Friends Against Scams forward in their communities or workplace.

Both face to face and online courses (both free) are run largely by our volunteers. The online courses (which run regularly once a month) can be booked through our Eventbrite page<sup>4</sup>.

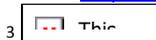
**SCAMBassadors**: The SCAMBassadors scheme is where people in positions of influence help to raise the issue of scams and fraud as a key topic of concern. As a SCAMBassador, they help to spread scam awareness messages to the wider community and act as a role model. Victims of scams are often embarrassed and ashamed that they were tricked into losing money to criminals and SCAMBassadors can help them by breaking the silence and speaking out about fraud and scams.



<sup>1</sup> [https://twitter.com/Bucks\\_Surreys/](https://twitter.com/Bucks_Surreys/)



<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BucksSurreyTS>



<sup>3</sup> <https://scc.newsweaver.co.uk/tradingstandards/ywh4mymr502>

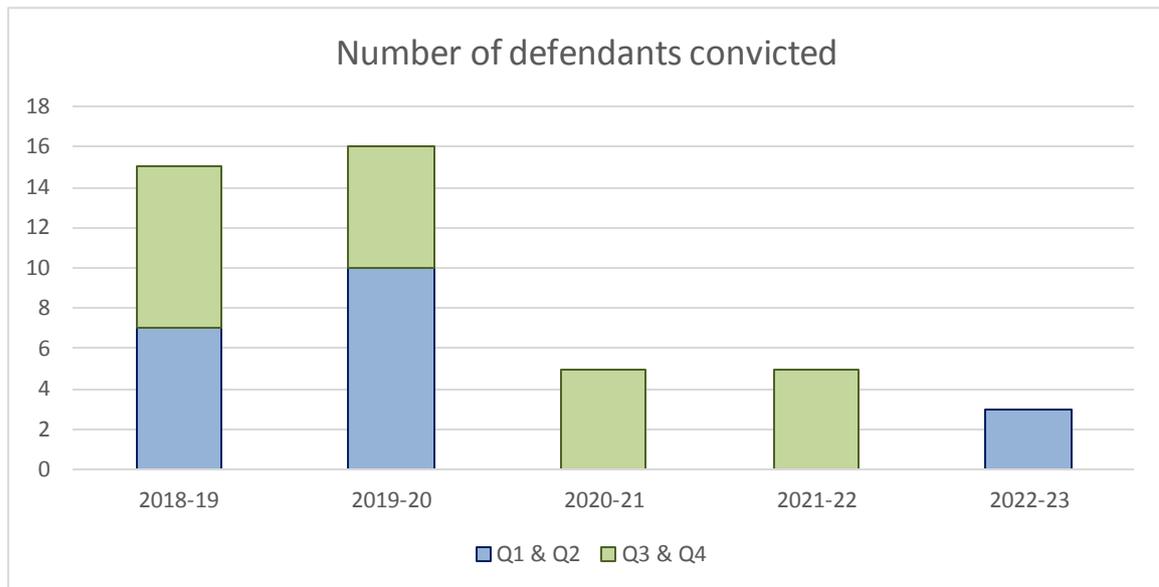
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/buckinghamshire-and-surrey-trading-standards-32720403671>

**Key Performance Indicator:**

Actions to stop rogue traders operating in Buckinghamshire and Surrey

**Status****Green****Comments:**

Despite severe ongoing problems in getting trials heard, due to the ongoing impacts of Covid on the court system and more recently a barrister strike, 3 defendants have pleaded guilty to offences between April and September compared to 5 convicted (after prosecution led by ourselves) in total during 21/22:

**Investigation Outcomes:**

One defendant pleaded guilty to various charges related to the sale of illicit tobacco which was found with the help of a tobacco detection dog. He was fined and given consideration for his early guilty plea.

One defendant pleaded guilty to money laundering following his involvement in home improvement frauds. He will be sentenced, alongside others who have also pleaded guilty to offences, in December. In this case, one of the defendants (a company) has provided voluntary surrender of its' assets (which were under restraint as part of our linked financial investigation) and this ~£198,000 is being used to compensate the 5 victims for approximately 95% of their losses. The victims have all been extremely grateful for the Services help to receive this money, previously imagining that they would never get it back. Unfortunately, and underlining the vulnerability of these victims, two of the victims have died since the offences occurred so their compensation will be paid to their estates. Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings will follow in relation to one of the defendants which may allow for the victims to be compensated for the remainder of their losses.

The final defendant pleaded guilty to an offence of not exercising Professional Diligence under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations. This was for his involvement in home improvement works where two other defendants had previously pleaded guilty to various fraud and other charges and had fully compensated the victims with £178,000. In this case the offending took place in Surrey but this particular defendant lives in Buckinghamshire. The case was covered in the press when the other two defendants were sentenced to immediate custody:

[Fraudster duo who targeted elderly in Surrey jailed | Surrey Comet](#) and in relation to this most recent conviction:

[Chalfont St Peter roofer who charged pensioners £7,000 for just £60-worth of work is fined | Bucks Free Press](#)

After investigations by the team two individuals have signed undertakings under the Enterprise Act. This is a civil route to seek compliance which can be done separately or alongside criminal proceedings. In one case the individual has undertaken to stop selling counterfeit goods (car spares such as keys and wheel hubs); in the other case the individual who runs a home improvement business has made multiple undertakings including: not to conduct sales aggressively, including not to put pressure on consumers to agree for work to start the next day (within the cooling off period) for a discounted price; not to make misleading representations about the condition of consumers properties and whether they need the suggested work; not to make misleading representation about whether the company is authorised on behalf of government or that consumers are eligible for grants; not to make misleading representations over the phone that consumers current insulation no longer meets current standards with no evidence or this; and not to aggressively towards customers who cancel contracts. The compliance with these undertakings will continue to be monitored but we are pleased to note to date a sharp decline in complaints about this company since the undertakings were signed.

### **The Backlog:**

In addition to the above outcomes, there are a further **25** defendants across 12 cases whom we have made the decision to prosecute and are in the legal system awaiting the next stage of their case. Eight of these defendants have had their trials delayed at least once and in one instance after an original plan for the trial to take place in January 2021 (after a decision to prosecute was made in December 2019) the trial has been rescheduled twice and is now planned for June 2023. Whilst Covid was the source of the earlier delays, the latest delay was caused by the defence barrister strike. The delays become increasingly concerning because of the effect on justice, and particularly on the witnesses who are often vulnerable and elderly. It can be difficult for witnesses to understand why the case in which they are giving evidence keeps being delayed, and it does not assist with their recollection of events. As mentioned above two victims in Op Moon have died since the offending, and in two of the delayed trials the main witness has also sadly died and will not see the outcome.

In one of our longest running cases, the defendant has moved to another Country and we continue to work with a range of authorities to attempt to bring him to justice.

The majority of longer running cases awaiting trial relate to home improvement frauds because the trials tend to be longer with more witnesses and experts, requiring more court time, than, for example, an illegal tobacco case.

### **Actions to disrupt rogue traders operating:**

Working alongside Bucks Public Health, over the summer together we ran an illicit tobacco awareness campaign to help people understand what it is, what the impacts can be and how to report it. Some examples of the materials used, and photographs of the dog and an officer on engagement days are shown below.

**Illegal Tobacco**

All tobacco is harmful, but illegal tobacco poses **additional dangers**, such as

- containing unknown compositions
- helping fund low-level & large-scale organised crime
- causing house fires
- taking advantage of cash-strapped families
- undermining stop smoking services
- encouraging the uptake of smoking in young people

See Report **STOP IT**

Scan for more information

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards

**Illegal Tobacco**

Pocket-money prices **could cost you more** than you bargained for

See Report **STOP IT**

Scan for more information

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards

**Illegal Tobacco**

Do you know **the real cost** of your "cheap whites"?

See Report **STOP IT**

Scan for more information

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards

**Illegal Tobacco**

**Far from** a victimless crime...

See Report **STOP IT**

Scan for more information

Buckinghamshire & Surrey Trading Standards



The Service continues to carry out operations to disrupt the supply of illicit tobacco by using tobacco detection dogs to locate hidden tobacco which is seized pending the full investigation. Details of the outcomes of this are given in priority 3 below.

**Service Priority Area 2 - Enabling businesses to get the help and support they need to thrive and grow. Delivering public protection through supporting businesses to comply with their legal responsibilities and ensuring a level playing field.**

Research shows that a positive regulatory environment can contribute significantly to economic development and sustainable growth, improving the openness of markets and creating a less constricted business environment for innovation and entrepreneurship. It can protect compliant businesses by enabling fair competition and promoting a level playing field and provide business with the confidence to invest, grow and create new jobs.<sup>5</sup> Supporting businesses to understand what they need to do to be compliant is a vital part of a positive regulatory environment, ensuring that they can confidently focus their resources in the right areas.

Primary Authority is a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice (Primary Authority Advice) on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. This enables all businesses to invest with confidence in products, practices and procedures, knowing that the resources they devote to compliance are well spent. Primary Authority is based on legal partnerships between businesses and individual local authorities and / or fire and rescue authorities. Businesses can set up their own partnership or belong to a trade association (or other type of group) with an existing partnership.

<p><b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> To increase the number of Primary Authority Partnerships</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> Green </p>																		
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <p>The number of Partnerships we have has increased to <b>158</b> from 147 at the start of the year. The logo's of our current partnerships are shown below. Of these 158, 43 have a head/registered office based in Surrey, and 23 have their head/registered office in Bucks. Although the remainder are not based in our areas, many have significant links, either with an office/manufacturing site or retail within our counties. This number also includes some "coordinated" Partnerships where one partnership covers numerous member businesses. For example, the Association of Convenience stores who have nationally over 5,000 members (95 in Surrey and 76 in Bucks) who between them have around 33,500 shops.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Number of Primary Authority Partnerships</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of Partnerships</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2015-16</td> <td>78</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016-17</td> <td>88</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017-18</td> <td>90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018-19</td> <td>103</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019-20</td> <td>108</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>128</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>147</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>158</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>		Year	Number of Partnerships	2015-16	78	2016-17	88	2017-18	90	2018-19	103	2019-20	108	2020-21	128	2021-22	147	2022-23	158
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<sup>5</sup> [Regulation and Growth \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Service's reputation for providing high quality reliable advice to businesses on a range of regulatory areas, including those beyond Trading Standards (delivered through our network of partners in Environmental Health, Fire Services and the devolved nations) causes businesses to come to us to seek a Partnership, we no longer invest resources in proactively seeking partnerships.

Examples of some recent partnerships include:

- Associated British Foods Plc (July 22), a food, ingredients and retail group with a range of brands including Kingsmill, Blue Dragon and Silver Spoon
- The Jordans and Ryvita Company (July 22), manufacturers of cereal and breakfast foods
- Vendi Vapes (July 22), suppliers of vapes through vending machines in age restricted premises such as nightclubs

### Examples of Primary Authority business advice:

Individual businesses have been supported in preparing for the new controls relating to high fat salt and sugar products and calorie labelling, the new legislation and changing implementation dates lead to a high degree of uncertainty for businesses. For a wider audience, officers have worked with the Association of Convenience Stores to deliver updated guides covering this legislation. The guidance is public and can be found here: [acs\\_hfss\\_guide\\_may\\_2022\\_update.pdf](#)

**ACS** the voice of local shops

acs.org.uk

HFSS PRODUCTS: PROMOTION AND LOCATION REGULATIONS An ACS advice guide for retailers

Convenience retailers' obligations under these regulations depend on the number of employees in their business and the size of their selling space in store(s). ACS' Assured Advice guide will help convenience retailers to understand:

- Which convenience retailers are impacted by the regulations.
- What volume promotions you can and cannot run on HFSS products.
- Where in your store you can and cannot display HFSS products.
- What areas of your website and online platforms are affected.
- How you can determine if a product is HFSS.
- How the regulations will be enforced.

**Implementation dates**

There are differing implementation dates for certain parts of these regulations:

- The location restrictions will come into force from **October 2022**.
- The ban on volume promotions will come into force from **October 2023**.

<b>October 2022</b>	<b>October 2023</b>
<b>Introduction of location restrictions</b>	<b>Ban on volume promotions</b>

**What is a HFSS product?**

The regulations apply to the categories of prepacked goods set out in the list below. However, this does not mean every product within each category will be impacted. Products must be assessed on an individual basis to determine their 'nutritional profiling score' (NPS).

Retailers should work with suppliers to establish what products are HFSS. The majority of suppliers will be clearly communicating what products are HFSS.


**1. IS MY BUSINESS IMPACTED BY THE REGULATIONS?**

**STEP 1/3: Restrictions on volume promotions (From October 2023)**

Convenience retailers with more than 50 employees must not offer volume promotions on HFSS products from October 2023. The calculation of your employee numbers could be impacted by your participation in a 'franchise agreement', including membership of symbol groups.

```

graph TD
    Q1[Do you have 50 or more employees?] -- YES --> A1[You cannot run volume promotions on HFSS products in store or online.]
    Q1 -- NO --> Q2[Do you operate any part of your business as a franchise or are you a member of a symbol group?]
    Q2 -- YES --> A2[Ask your symbol group or franchise head office whether their advice is that you are included in these regulations.]
    Q2 -- NO --> A3[You are exempt from all parts of these regulations.]
    A2 --> A1
  
```

**Franchise agreements and symbol groups**

Convenience retailers that are deemed to have a 'franchise agreement' will have to calculate their employee numbers based on **all employees within the whole franchise business or symbol group they are part of**, not just the people directly employed in store(s).

Convenience retailers will need to consult their symbol group supplier or franchise partner to discuss whether their agreement is considered to be a 'franchise agreement' as defined in the regulations. The regulations define a 'franchise agreement' based on **ALL** the following criteria:

1. You agree with another party to the sale or distribution of food.
2. You agree with another party to the supply of particular food products specified in an agreement.
3. You agree with another party to comparable contractual arrangements as other businesses to:
  - a) products provided by the franchisor.
  - b) the internal or external appearance of the premise.
  - c) the business model used for the operation of the business.

**Retailers should gain access to legal advice on the status of their contracts, either:**

- a) advice provided by their symbol or franchise head office, or
- b) advice the retailer has sourced themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Source: The Food (Promotion and Placement) (England) Regulations 2021, Section 4 Qualifying Business

A local Surrey company who sells products online have received help in redrafting their terms and conditions and bespoke training on consumer rights and managing customer complaints. The company was experiencing a lot of returns for repair (due to wear and tear) where the product was not cost effective to repair and the owner never retrieved it. Due to the cost implications of storage space the business needed help understanding how to avoid this situation in the future and how to

resolve such cases fairly. We have also supported the business with a safety query when importing a product.

A small Bucks based business looking to import lighting products from the EU into the UK required advice on UK requirements such as labelling and UKCA marking. The advice centred around ensuring they understood their responsibilities as an importer of products into the UK following Brexit and the increased responsibilities placed upon them that were not there prior to our exit from the EU. Advice was given both in writing and in a virtual meeting with them and their German suppliers to ensure all was correctly understood with regards to the labelling requirements.

Another Bucks based trader is a manufacturer and importer of educational games and toys for use in schools and for sale to general public. They required advice on toy safety regulations and standards, appropriate testing regimes and due diligence procedures to ensure the products are safe for children in both educational and home environments. Advice has been given regarding their position as the manufacturer and importer in relation to EU exit requirements (UKCA marking) and also the testing hierarchy and structure.

A larger Buckinghamshire Primary Authority Partner is a significant manufacturer and distributor of food ingredients both to the general public through retailers and to the catering industry in the form of condiments and ingredients supplied to national chains. As a Primary authority Partner we work closely with the business and during this year we have worked on issues such as the substitution of sunflower oil in products due to availability caused by the Ukraine War, contamination of herbs and spices with known allergens and assisted them with recall activity and liaison with both the Food Standards Agency and the FSAI in Ireland. Other enquiries have related to labelling of meat products being brought into the UK and product naming issues.

Feedback recently received from one of our Primary Authority Partners was:

*“Entering our partnership with Surrey Trading Standards was one of the best decisions we have made, and it has continued to deliver every year following the merger into Surrey & Bucks Trading Standards and the growth of the assured advice scheme to cover more guides and regulatory areas. The quality of support from your team has been consistently professional, pragmatic and engaged. This has helped us to tackle new and existing compliance challenges with confidence. The result has been a better-informed membership able to draw on our advice and trade safely and responsibly.”*

#### Primary Authority Partnerships In Buckinghamshire



#### New Partnerships since 1 April 2022



Primary Authority Partnerships in Surrey



New Partnerships since 1 April 2022



National Primary Authority Partnerships





**New Partnerships since 1 April 2022**



<b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> Support to trader approval schemes & support to local businesses and ensuring a fair marketplace	<b>Status</b>
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <p><b><u>Trading Standards Trader Approval Schemes:</u></b></p> <p>The service launched Traders4U.co.uk early in 2020 to support local residents and local businesses. The take up of this scheme, in a currently challenging home improvement market, is proving limited with 73 members.</p> <p>We continue to work in partnership with TrustMark to support their scheme with an option to upgrade to trading standards approved status. There are around 120 Trading Standards approved members. In total since April we have carried out 72 intelligence checks on businesses who wanted to join either Traders4U or be a Trading Standards approved TrustMark member.</p> <p><b><u>Support to local businesses:</u></b></p> <div> </div> <p>Our work to support businesses covers a range of issues and as well as running regular “Business Against Scam” webinars (details of which can be found here: <a href="#">Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Events   Eventbrite</a>) in October we are running a webinar for businesses to help them understand modern slavery better. The webinar is being run alongside the Police and at the time of writing had over 200 attendees registered. Although there is no legal requirement for small and medium enterprises to publish modern slavery statements, the issues of modern slavery, including child labour and human trafficking can be just as relevant to them. Speakers include the Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, Trading Standards and the co-chairs of the Surrey Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Partnership.</p>	

**Business Advice:** In addition to providing advice under formal Primary Authority Partnerships, we also run a Business Advice helpline where local businesses can request a small amount of free advice, be signposted to other resources, or pay for more in depth advice on the same rate as our Primary Authority Partners.

In the first half of the year we have responded to 351 requests for help and advice from businesses, 102 of which were enquiries related to licensing such as for explosives (fireworks) and petroleum storage.

There is overlap between requests through this helpline and those we receive from Primary Authority Partners, some examples of the type of advice given include:

International **shortages of sunflower oil** caused by the Ukrainian conflict means our local manufacturers previously using it as an ingredient seek support in navigating appropriate substitutions and any potential allergen implications. Sunflower oil, partly due its perceived healthier benefits over other fats such as palm oil that are higher in saturated fats, is a key ingredient in many foods. Our Primary Authority Partners and food businesses contacting us through our helpline (see below) have sought advice as to how they can still provide food to their customers without compromising on food safety or misleading the public. Our business team has advised on which alternative oils they can use, such as rapeseed which has a similar nutritional profile, labelling changes and in store information for customers. The advice helps reduce disruption to the supply chain and saves businesses thousands of pounds by avoiding unnecessary waste of both products and packaging.

Since the **UK's exit from the EU**, the various changes in import and export rules, and their timing for implementation, lead some businesses to contact us for advice relating to health marks and certificates for their exported food products.

In addition to a mix of **fair-trading advice** such as the description of goods and services and help with business-to-business contracts the team provides **safety advice**. Product safety can cover an extremely wide range of goods. This year, some examples include, in relation to personal protective equipment used in sports, candles, children's craft kits, toys, fairy lights and product recalls. Through our business advice line, we assisted a local Surrey based wooden toy maker with a recall after there was found to be a loose part which became a choking hazard once detached from a product that they were selling. They completed a voluntary recall and we helped guide them through the process. The company do not currently have a Primary Authority Partnership and because of working with us are now entering the process of formal nomination to enable us to support them in other areas.

Businesses regularly also contact the helpline to check **compliance for product labels** (often food labels) before placing them on the market. This not only enables us to deliver compliance at the source but also helps give confidence as a label print run can be a significant investment for a business.

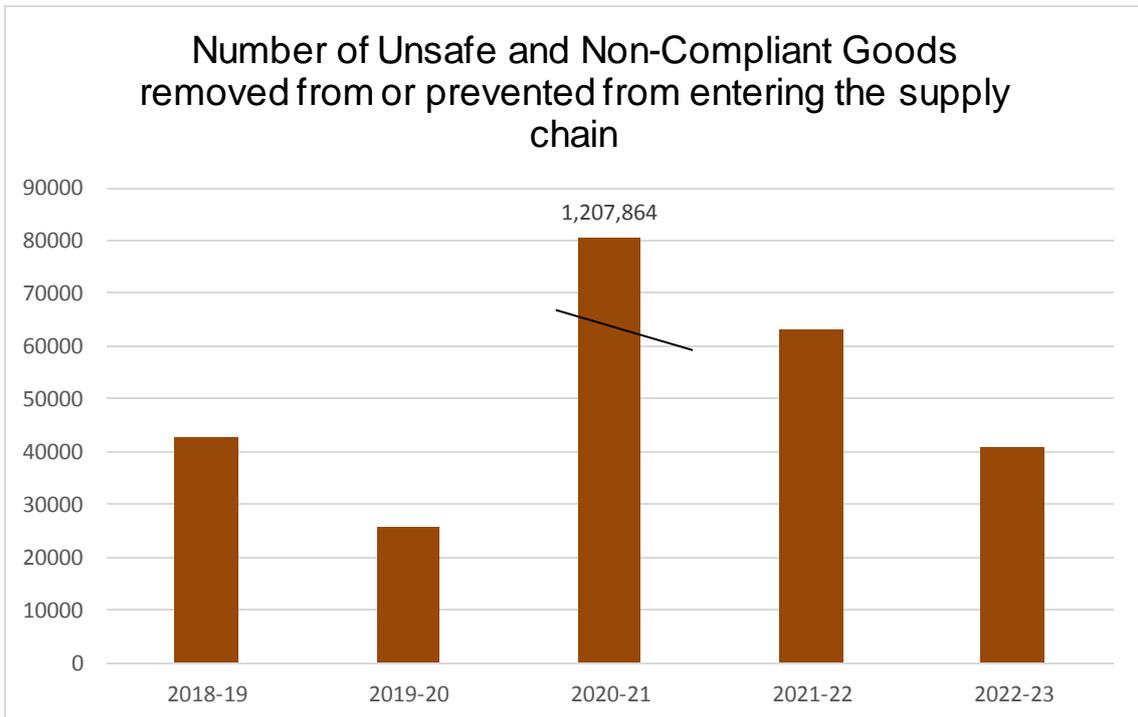
**Service Priority Area 3 - Improving wellbeing and public health; tackling the supply of unsafe, dangerous or age restricted products and working to maintain the integrity of the food chain, including food quality, nutrition, and animal health.**

<b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> Number and estimated value of unsafe/non-compliant goods removed from or prevented from entering the supply chain.	<b>Status</b> <b>Green</b> 
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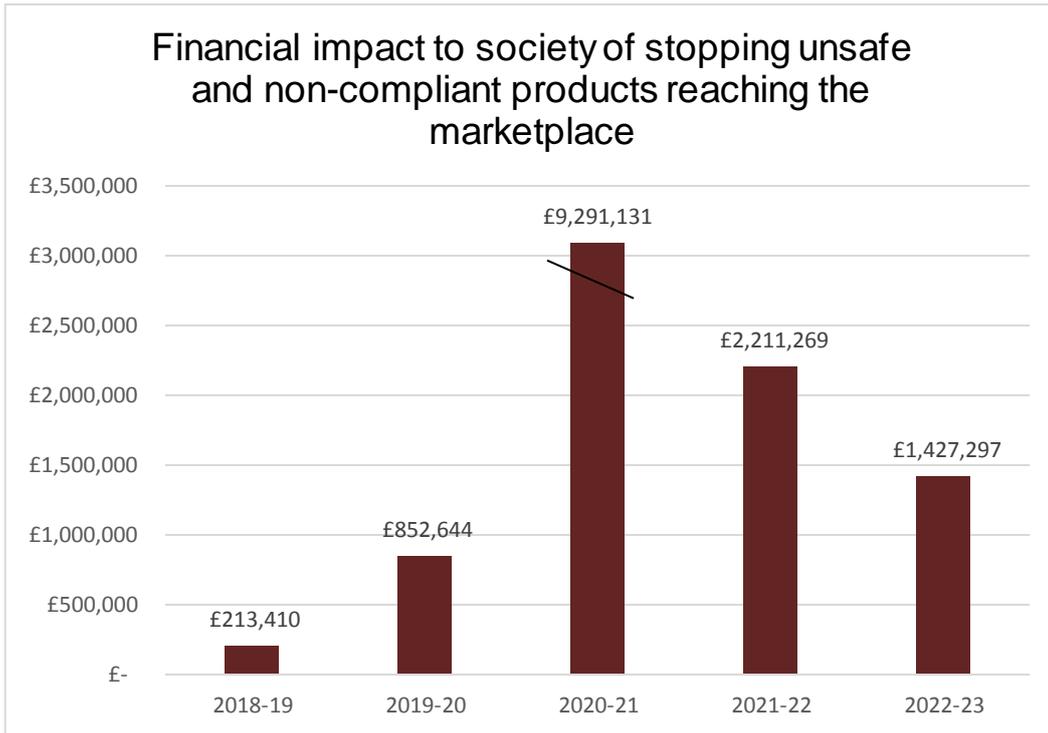
**Comments:**

With the cost of living crisis putting household budgets increasingly under pressure, it is important that people remain protected from injury and harm whatever their budget and whatever they are buying. Since April **180** consignments of goods (containing over 225,000 individual items) to be imported via Heathrow were examined to the end of September compared to 319 during all of 21/22.

Many of these are still being worked on (there is often a significant time delay between goods being placed on hold and the required information being sent through by the agent/importer) so the current number of items identified as unsafe or non-compliant is likely to increase. However, at this point we have prevented **40,745** unsafe and non-compliant goods from entering the country with an estimated impact to society (from prevented fires, injuries and deaths) of **£1,427,297**. This compares to 63,000 unsafe or non-compliant goods stopped from entering the country last year.

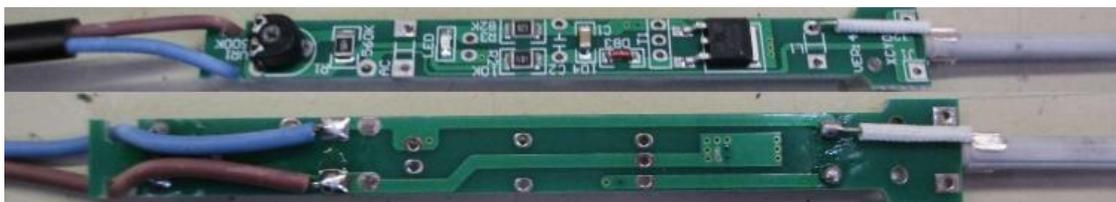


### Financial impact to society of stopping unsafe and non-compliant products reaching the marketplace



Some examples of unsafe products prevented from entering the country since April include:

- Soldering irons that posed a risk of electric shock because you could access live parts without tools (the cable cover could be removed by hand) and there was electrical strength breakdown through the material mesh making the nib live (as well as the plug being the wrong size and counterfeit cabling):



- eBikes being imported with the wrong plugs:



- Toy gel guns that was unsafe because the gel balls it fires, which could fit in a child's throat, were capable of significant expansion when exposed to liquid, so presenting a choking or intestine obstruction hazard either of which could be fatal. It was also incorrectly labelled with no UK contact details for the importer or manufacturer.



- Various make up and cosmetic products containing banned or excessive chemicals that pose risks of cancer, kidney failure and neurological damage among other things

<p><b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> Number of premises tested for selling illicit or age restricted products inappropriately, and approximate value of seized goods.</p>	<p><b>Status</b> <b>Green</b></p> 
<p><b>Comments:</b></p> <p><b>Illegal Tobacco:</b> As a cheap source of tobacco, often with no health warnings in English and sometimes not in plain packaging, illicit tobacco is linked to smoking in young people and those from more deprived groups for whom price affects how much they can smoke.</p> <p>A recent OHID review reported that current smoking was associated with a 1.8 times higher risk of severe COVID-19. In addition to increased risk of severe COVID-19, smoking remains the biggest single cause of preventable mortality and morbidity. In Surrey smoking was responsible for 3,958 deaths (2016-18) and 7328 hospital admissions (18/19). The estimated cost to society of smoking in</p>	

Buckinghamshire is estimated to be £106.2 million<sup>6</sup> per year (made up of losses to the local economy due to productivity losses, costs to the NHS, additional social care costs and costs of house fires caused by smoking).

Because smoking is so harmful, differences in smoking prevalence across the population translate to health inequalities, and differing smoking prevalence rates (for example in Surrey smoking prevalence in routine and manual workers is 24.4% compared to 7.5% for those in managerial and professional occupations (2019)) will be exacerbated by it being more likely that those with lower incomes will be more likely to purchase illegal tobacco because of its lower cost.

In the UK increasing tobacco prices is one approach to encourage smokers to quit and discourage young people from starting smoking. Illegal tobacco undermines this because it is cheaper.

With the cost-of-living crisis increasing the potential demand for cheap goods, including tobacco, we continue to conduct work to develop our intelligence around the sale of illicit products or legal products to underage purchasers and to follow this up with appropriate enforcement action.

Following **75** unannounced test purchasing visits for illegal tobacco, **3** days of operations with the tobacco detection dogs have been conducted, leading to seizures from **7** premises of around **69,000** cigarettes, nearly **1,000** illegal vapes, over **6kg** of illegal hand rolling tobacco and some potentially illicit alcohol found. Further investigations are ongoing in relation to these seizures.

The test purchases help us to know where to target our time with the detection dogs. The dogs themselves are vital for locating illegal tobacco, which is often professionally well hidden, underlining the criminal intent behind its supply. In many cases our officers would not be able to find the tobacco without the help of the dogs, and even when the dogs have indicated tobacco is present it can often take some time to work out how to reach it. Recently we have seen the use of electromagnets to provide a further way of preventing tobacco from being found.

Seven investigations into the supply of illicit tobacco during 21/22 have concluded. This led to the conviction and fine of one person, four written warnings being issued, one other case is awaiting time in court following a decision to prosecute two people and two more are in the legal process.

Below are some photos of illegal tobacco hides and tobacco seized this year:

Illegal tobacco found in a van parked near to a shop (left); and illegal tobacco being logged (right):



<sup>6</sup> [Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Strategy - Towards a Smokefree Generations 2019-2024 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/buckinghamshire-tobacco-control-strategy-towards-a-smokefree-generations-2019-2024)

Illegal tobacco found in the top of a walk in chiller unit (secured with an electromagnet):



An illegal tobacco hide found behind a shelving unit (also secured with an electromagnet):



**Age restricted test purchasing and advice:**

Age restricted vape test purchasing was carried out in Bucks in August. There were no sales from any of the 4 attempts. To follow up visits and advice given to retailers in Surrey in the last few months, age restricted vape test purchasing is planned for Surrey in October. Because of the importance of the correct messaging around the relative safety of vapes for adults trying to stop smoking tobacco vs the risks for children to start vaping when they didn't smoke, we are working closely with colleagues in Public Health to ensure an appropriate approach to this issue.

Age restricted test purchasing of knives (7 attempts, 1 sale) and alcohol (8 attempts, 1 sale) has been conducted in partnership with the Police in Bucks over the summer.

Firework test purchasing is also planned for late October to ensure that retailers remain vigilant to not sell to under 18's.

<b>Key Performance Indicator:</b> Market surveillance projects carried out, including in relation to food	<b>Status</b> <b>Green</b> 
<b>Comments:</b>  <p><b>Cost of Living:</b> In addition to previously planned and time critical work (e.g. fireworks) our non-food projects are now being shaped heavily by the cost of living crisis and how our work can best support residents and businesses in this context. There will be further cost of living focused work in the coming months, and at the end of this section there is a slide to summarise how the Services work and supports communities.</p> <p><b>Lettings Agents Compliance:</b> With private renters spending on average over 27% of their income on rent, it is important that renters get what they expect; that their deposit money is protected; and they aren't charged unfair fees on top. A nationally funded piece of regional work 18 months ago showed 84% of lettings agents across the Southeast region were non-compliant with these rules in some way. Our work to improve their compliance continues and as well as making direct visits, because of the extremely high numbers, in conjunction with our regional colleagues, 393 lettings agents in Buckinghamshire and Surrey were offered the opportunity to undertake (paid for) online training to understand what they need to do to comply with the law. Take up of this offer was low (around 5%) and so we continue to gradually work through contacting the non-compliant agents individually to bring them into compliance. This action will prevent their tenants being charged prohibited tenant fees and incurring detriment through unfair trading practices protecting members of the public on lower income.</p> <p>In August a lettings agent and a landlord were issued with fixed penalty notices for advertising a property for sale without it having an Energy Performance Certificate for prospective renters to understand how energy efficient the property was and therefore what they might expect their energy costs to be after they had moved in. A different recent intervention resulted in the refund to a tenant of over £800 as reimbursement of a fee for an unnecessary 'tenant rent guarantee scheme' and the incorrect retention of a portion of the security deposit at the end of the tenancy.</p> <p><b>Accuracy of measures:</b> With the price of petrol and fuel increasing so significantly this year and putting pressure of household finances, ensuring that buyers get what they pay for becomes more pressing. With this in mind and knowing that it is impossible for consumers to check for themselves, we have recently begun a project to test the accuracy of petrol dispensers and ensure that they are delivering what they say they are. We are starting this based on garages about whom short measure complaints have been received but we also plan to extend it to a range of high volume, high price and geographically isolated garages to ensure the whole market is operating correctly. We also intend shortly to check on the accuracy of bulk fuel providers in the Counties selling products like heating oil to homes who do not have piped in gas for heating.</p> <p><b><u>Other non-food projects and activity:</u></b></p> <p><b>Firework Safety:</b> With the main fireworks season shortly to be upon us the Service has started to receive queries from retailers and begun to licence sellers. When the retailers have live fireworks on their premises we will undertake targeted visits to the higher risk retailers and any whom we receive complaints about to ensure that the explosives are being stored safely. Many of these visits will be done alongside our colleagues in the local Fire Services. This year we also plan on undertaking underage test purchasing to ensure that sellers are keeping children safe from fireworks that can be so dangerous if not stored and used correctly.</p> <p><b>Nitrous Oxide:</b> Partnership working with Thames Valley and Surrey Police continues to identify sales of Nitrous Oxide which appear to be for psychoactive use. The Service has seen an increase in the use of large nitrous oxide canisters, which are increasingly concerning due to the increased amount nitrous oxide which can be inhaled. Whilst carrying out inspections, officers have found</p>	

these concealed in retail premises, which indicates that they believed they could not be legally sold. An example of one of these stores, where you can see the larger gas cannisters alongside the small one is below:



### **Animal Health & Welfare:**

**Avian flu** is an infectious type of influenza that spreads among birds. In rare cases it can infect humans if they are in very close contact with infected birds, and the Health Protection Agency are monitoring this aspect of the disease very closely. There were well over 100 reported cases in domestic and commercial flocks in England last season with the Chief Vet describing cases at a “phenomenal level”. Indications are that the country is likely to see significant levels in the coming season too, with numerous outbreaks already reported and additional biosecurity requirements in place for some areas of the Country from October 12th. We are working with colleagues nationally, locally in the Emergency Management/Resilience Teams and with the Animal Health and Plant Agency to ensure each Counties’ response plans are relevant and up to date. If outbreaks do occur in either area this will require a multi-service response from the Council, led by APHA. In the meantime, we will continue to provide up to date information on the level of risk and the latest biosecurity requirements to bird keepers in the Counties through our newsletters ([Animal health newsletter - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](mailto:Animal%20health%20newsletter%20-%20Surrey%20County%20Council%20(surreycc.gov.uk))) and social media feeds. The most up to date situation, including outbreaks and the latest risk level can be found here: [Avian influenza \(bird flu\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/avian-influenza-bird-flu)

**Bovine Tuberculosis:** In addition to preparing for Avian Flu, our activity to ensure the health and welfare of farmed animals and the security of the food chain has identified 52 businesses in breach of Animal Health and Welfare legislation including issues relating to failure to test in relation to Bovine Tuberculosis (Tb), not reporting animal movements and minor animal welfare matters. Bovine Tb is an infectious zoonotic chronic respiratory disease in cattle. It is one of the biggest challenges facing the UK cattle farming industry today. Cattle in the Edge area (Buckinghamshire) are required to test every 6 months to prevent the spread of the disease. Enforcement and intervention are concentrated on overdue TB tests, illegal movements of cattle from restricted holdings; cattle moved prior to the required pre or post movement tests and failure to cleanse and disinfect a holding after a TB Breakdown.

**Rabies:** Illegal landings of animals which have been brought into the country and haven’t followed the quarantine or vaccination requirements continue to occur increasing the risk of rabies being brought to Great Britain. Whilst the Council’s have plans in place if rabies is suspected, it is important to do everything we can to minimise the chance of using them as the risk to health and life of both humans and animals coming into contact with an infected animal would be significant.

However, it is worth noting that Central Government have provided guidance that special provisions are in place for small animals accompanying people travelling from Ukraine allowing careful quarantine in their host home.

### **Food Surveillance Projects:**

In a time where people are more concerned than ever about getting what they have paid for and expect, in the first half of the year we continued to carry out food market surveillance projects, with 61 samples taken. Approximately 50% of these samples were found to be unsatisfactory in relation to labelling and or composition. The non-compliances ranged from minor labelling irregularities in relation to nutritional information given to the wrong decimal point, to CBD products found to contain THC, and food found to contain undeclared allergens.

So far this year 48 businesses have been found to be selling misdescribed food, or not correctly declaring allergens, or selling food containing toxic or illegal components, or involved in food fraud. These non-compliances were found during Food Interventions and because of food sampling. These included projects to look at goat speciation (is what you are buying what you think it is?); whether bakery products contained harmful levels of acrylamide (a substance carcinogenic to humans and previously found in biscuits) or the allergen soya; whether CBD products contained the amount of CBD expected or the psychoactive (and banned) chemical THC; and whether milk contained the level of fat appropriate to its' labelling.

Recently we have received the results of testing for **goat speciation** to ensure that foods claiming to contain goat did. The results have been very delayed due to a lack of the necessary chemicals to run the tests. However, the results show a concerning lack of goat, with only 1 of the 12 samples containing goat, with the rest containing sheep, and 1 was substituted for beef, which would be of concern to those with certain religious beliefs. Follow up investigations will be undertaken with all the suppliers.

Another food project relates to foods claiming to contain **CBD (cannabinoids)**. This showed high failure rates with samples not containing the amount claimed, and all containing some level of THC (the psychoactive and banned part of the cannabis plant). In addition, there are issues with name of the food, nutrition claims, health claims, food information, food supplement regs and Weights & Measures. In relation to those containing THC follow up is being undertaken in conjunction with the Police.

We are pleased to report that there were no significant problems found with the **bakery products**.

The level of **fat in milk** can be important for many people, for example some people will actively choose skimmed milk because they are on a low fat diet or full fat milk because they are on a higher fat diet. This can be particularly important for the youngest and oldest in our society, but many others choose their milk based on its' perceived fat content. Samples were taken from local producers and one sample was found to contain 33% more fat than declared.

### **Following up the FSA Local Authority Delivery Scheme:**

The pilot Food Standards Agency (FSA) Local Authority Delivery Scheme followed over the last 2 years has now been adopted by the FSA board and will be rolled out across all Local Authorities within the next year. We have had a significant number of new food businesses registered and have agreed with the FSA how to prioritise these and will be carrying out targeted interventions in the coming months.

### **Responding to complaints about foods and food businesses:**

In addition to surveillance projects, invaluable information to help us target our activity comes from complaints. There have been a number of complaints in relation to allergens which, due to the potential risk to life caused by undeclared allergens, we follow up and provide advice to support businesses to comply. Where a business fails to comply after advice, further enforcement is

considered. In the summer an Improvement Notice was issued to a takeaway business for continuing to fail to provide accurate allergen information to its customers despite multiple attempts by the Service at giving the business advice both in person and in writing, and this remains an ongoing case. In another example the service tested for Gluten in a “Gluten free” samosa following a complaint. Gluten was found and an investigation is ongoing to identify the source of the gluten and work with businesses to ensure their allergen labelling correctly describes all the allergens present in their products.

Inflation on prices and the cost-of-living crisis is affecting all residents and businesses. The following slide illustrates some of our work which has a direct impact:

<b>Trading Standards</b>		<b>2022-23</b>
<b>Supporting Communities during Cost of Living Crisis</b>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Food</b></p> <p>Ensuring food is what it says it is and is safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market surveillance to look for substitution, managing recalls and response to complaints</li> <li>Work with businesses to manage supply chain issues without disadvantaging consumers or putting them at risk (e.g. allergens)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Illicit Goods, including tobacco, alcohol and other counterfeit goods</b></p> <p>Keeping people safe from the harmful impacts of illicit products</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop intelligence on places where illicit goods are being sold</li> <li>Work with partners (e.g. HMRC, IPO etc) to target and seize</li> <li>Publicise the work to deter others from getting involved</li> <li>Publicise the impacts of illicit tobacco, and how people can report it</li> <li>Enhance monitoring of and enforcement with online platforms</li> <li>Tackling under age sales of restricted products including vapes</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Product Safety</b></p> <p>Ensuring products are safe, regardless of their cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market surveillance, using intelligence, to monitor and ensure safety, especially of essential and high demand products</li> <li>Work with OPSS to monitor safety of products imported through Heathrow</li> <li>Wide publicity of product recalls to enable consumers in the re-use &amp; second-hand market to remain safe</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Animal Health and Welfare</b></p> <p>Maintaining the integrity of the food chain, ensuring welfare of livestock and limiting the spread of disease</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being aware of pressures on rural communities including the impact of fuel inflation and the inflation on animal feed</li> <li>Raise awareness of scams targeting farmers</li> </ul>	<p><b>High inflation puts households and businesses under immense strain, the most vulnerable and disadvantaged are affected the greatest</b></p> <p><b>Trading Standards helps protect residents from harm by ensuring honesty, fairness and safety across the marketplace</b></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fairness of the Trading Environment</b></p> <p>Helping honest businesses to not be put at a disadvantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackle fraudulent and non-compliant businesses, making use of proceeds of crime laws to ensure crime doesn't pay</li> <li>Provision of high quality 'at cost' advice for businesses to enable them to get compliance right first time, and assist in making it cheaper than non-compliance</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Increased vulnerability of Consumers</b></p> <p>Keeping people safe from financial loss and harm to wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raise general awareness of scams, among consumer and businesses, especially those related to cost of living</li> <li>Signpost vulnerable people to experts in the Customer Contact centre who know what welfare and financial support is likely to be available</li> <li>Provide enhanced support to vulnerable persons to help them exercise their consumer rights and not be further disadvantaged by attempts to defraud them</li> <li>Help tackle the harm from loan-sharks, raising awareness and working with the national illegal moneylending team</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weights and Measures</b></p> <p>Providing confidence buyers are getting what they paid for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Testing the accuracy of petrol pumps</li> <li>Checking that pre packed products contain the amount they claim</li> <li>Publicise results to inform and reassure</li> </ul>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Greener Future</b></p> <p>Helping consumers make informed choices to enhance confidence in green markets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting work to improve the energy efficiency of rented accommodation</li> <li>Supporting people to engage with the circular economy safely (e.g. reuse and recycle)</li> <li>Improving our understanding of green retro-fit issues to tackle mis selling</li> <li>Tackling greenwashing and green scams</li> </ul>