

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (REIGATE & BANSTEAD)

DATE: 2 DECEMBER 2013

LEAD OFFICER: DAVID BULLEN
SENIOR TRADING STANDARDS OFFICERSUBJECT: SURREY TRADING STANDARDS WORK IN REIGATE AND
BANSTEAD DURING 2013

DIVISION: ALL REIGATE AND BANSTEAD DIVISIONS



SUMMARY OF ISSUE:
A report to provide an update on Surrey Trading Standards work affecting Reigate and Banstead Borough in 2013, including changes.
RECOMMENDATIONS:
The Local Committee (Reigate & Banstead) is asked to note the content of the report and provide feedback to help Surrey Trading Standards enhance their understanding of, and response to, local needs and issues.
REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:
This report is for information only and does not contain any recommendations.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 Surrey Trading Standards have responsibility for dealing with unsafe or unfair trading practices and applying regulations in relation to quality, quantity, safety, description and price. We also enforce regulations covering the composition, labelling and advertising of food and ensuring animal health and welfare on farms, minimising the risk of spread of animal disease.
- 1.2 We support and educate reputable businesses, providing information and advice on consumer and regulatory issues.
- 1.3 We tackle rogue traders and deceptive business practices, protecting all Surrey residents, particularly the most vulnerable, from anti social behaviour, doorstep deception, scams and other illegal practices

2. ANALYSIS:2.1 **Business Advice:**

Surrey Trading Standards operates a business advice line 5 days a week for businesses based in Surrey. We offer free initial advice on consumer

protection legislation and free signposting to other sources of information, including trader advice leaflets.

Between 1 November 2012 and 31 October 2013 we have dealt with 268 enquires from businesses based in Reigate and Banstead seeking advice on such things as civil rights when dealing with customers and how to label food. In Reigate and Banstead 48 businesses have registered for our chargeable business advice service.

We also promote the Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) Primary Authority scheme to businesses, which offers them more protection from prosecution. We have one business so far in Reigate and Banstead that has signed up for a Primary Authority partnership – Toyota Financial Services (UK) PLC.

2.2 **Buy With Confidence approved trader scheme:**

The Buy With Confidence (BWC) scheme is an approved register of businesses, which have been thoroughly vetted and approved by Trading Standards to ensure that they operate in a legal, honest and fair way.

Surrey membership presently stands at 446 members; 63 members are in Reigate and Banstead. There has been an increase in Reigate and Banstead membership of over 10% since 2012.

A new 'Buy with Confidence Directory' is now available through the SCC Contact Centre, Local District and Borough Councils, libraries & Citizens Advice Bureaus in Reigate and Banstead.

Surrey Trading Standards promoted the Buy with Confidence approved trader scheme by a pull up display in both Horley and Redhill libraries in August 2013.

BWC members, until recent legislative changes, could also join the 'Support With Confidence' (SWC) scheme. SWC provides a list of care and support services (including financial advisors, solicitors, disabled adaptations, plumbers and cleaning companies), who have undergone appropriate training and background checks and enables residents to select care using funding under the new national regime of Self Directed Support.

There are a total of 54 SWC Members in Surrey including 9 based in Reigate and Banstead.

2.3 **Eat Out Eat Well (EOEW):**

The Eat Out Eat Well Award has been developed to reward caterers throughout Surrey 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.

There are currently 160 active members of the healthy eating scheme in Surrey with 14 of these based in Reigate and Banstead. Members include

Three Arches Restaurant, East Surrey Hospital and Chapters Cafe, Donyngs Leisure Centre, Redhill.

Surrey Trading Standards work in partnership with Reigate and Banstead Environmental Health to identify possible EOEW members, carry out assessments and to help develop and publicise the scheme.

2.4 **Doorstep Crime/Rogue Trading:**

Surrey Trading Standards Rapid Action Team has recorded 407 incidents of cold calling within Surrey in the last 12 months, with 39 incidents being reported in Reigate and Banstead. One intervention was made in the last 12 months regarding doorstep conmen in Reigate and Banstead. Surrey Police are always in attendance when interventions are made as part of partnership working and to ensure consumer/officer safety.

2.5 **TV show (hunting the doorstep conmen):**

This two part series ran at 9pm, on ITV1 in July 2013 on national TV. Hunting the Doorstep Conmen (episode 2) featured Surrey County Council's Trading Standards Service Rapid Action Team challenging and confronting Doorstep Traders, executing warrants at two addresses where suspects were arrested for Rogue Trading incidents concerning fraudulent building work and money laundering. Viewers included consumers & businesses in the Reigate and Banstead area.

2.6 **Stop Cold Caller sticker packs:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards were one of the first authorities in the country to develop a stop cold callers sticker scheme. We work closely with Surrey Police and other agencies to help reduce incidents of distraction burglary and rogue trading. Our sticker initiative is designed to empower residents, giving them the confidence to deal with cold calling traders.

Since the launch of this initiative in October 2011 we have disseminated around 150,000 Stop Cold Caller leaflets and 'SuperStickers' throughout Surrey. Within Reigate and Banstead we have distributed approximately 15,000 sticker packs. These have been made available in the boroughs libraries, community centres, council offices and via residents associations, Neighbourhood Watch and Surrey Police. We have also distributed these to Raven Housing Trust, the East Surrey Reablement Team and the East Surrey Long Term Team.

2.7 **Vulnerable Person's Officer:**

Surrey Trading Standards Service has an officer who has additional responsibility as the 'vulnerable person's officer'. This officer has developed close links with adult social care and also tries to develop links with organisations involved in the care and support of vulnerable adults. We now routinely receive referrals from adult social care about vulnerable people who might have become victims to doorstep crime and scams and we refer people

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to Adult Social Care if we have a concern for their personal safety or their propensity to be targets of doorstep crime and/or scams.

We have recently provided a talk for the Pension Service based in Redhill about our work and alerting them to be vigilant for anyone who might be the victim of scams or doorstep crime.

2.8 **Scam Hub project:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service is taking part in a major project in the South East of England known as the "Scam Hub".

Recently the Metropolitan Police intercepted a large consignment of scam mail at Heathrow Airport. This was operation Sterling. Amongst the consignment was a list of scam victims. Surrey Trading Standards Service has received approximately 750 of these names located within the county. As part of the project, the service is making contact with all of these people to offer support to those identified to be at risk of financial abuse from scams.

A total of 72 possible victims within Reigate and Banstead have been contacted.

2.9 **Working with the Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT):**

The IMLT have been set up to tackle loan sharks who lend money without the appropriate licence issued by the Office of Fair Trading. Loan Sharks rarely, if ever, give any paperwork and if payments are missed they often use intimidation and violence to get money from their 'clients'. Surrey Trading Standards work in partnership with the IMLT including taking part in several targeted campaigns across Surrey using social and economic "mapping techniques".

The IMLT are training Surrey Police and are willing to run sessions for Council and Housing Association staff and local Benefit Fraud Investigation Teams.

In February 2013 Surrey Trading Standards worked with the Illegal Money Lending Team to raise awareness of loan sharks, seek intelligence and offer support. Two "high risk" areas were identified to focus on within the borough based on risk factors and these were Merstham Ward and Horley West Ward. During a week in February it is estimated that information reached about 10% of residents in both these areas.

2.10 **Social media:**

Surrey Trading Standards Service make full use of social media to promote our service and alert residents and businesses to scams, rogue traders, product recalls and current issues.

TS @lerts is an email news bulletin produced by Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service. TS @lerts are currently sent to 443 individuals and 293 business contacts. An evaluation has found that the alerts are then

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disseminated to over 8,000 people. A proportion of this information will have been received by people in the Reigate and Banstead area.

A recent TS Alert about a product recall on FlexPen products (insulin products for diabetics) that may contain the wrong amount of insulin and could have life threatening consequences was received by someone who had been feeling unwell after using one of the affected products. Until seeing this alert she was not aware of why she was unwell and without this information her condition could have become worse.

The latest bulletins can be found at <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/business-and-consumers/latest-news-for-business-and-consumers>. To sign up to TS @lerts contact trading_standards@surreycc.gov.uk

We have 231 people who “like” us on facebook but our liked pages then can reach 700-800 individuals.

We have 1387 “followers” on Twitter and one of our tweets during Social Media Week 2013 (September 21-27) reached 49,334 users of twitter.

2.11 **Animal Health:**

Animal health legislation exists to protect both human, through the food chain, and animal health. This prevents the introduction of serious, notifiable 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.

Using the intelligence we receive from various sources enables us to concentrate resources on non-compliant livestock keepers and address emerging issues. Although we do not currently undertake a programme of routine visits to livestock keepers across the County, new keepers are contacted to ensure that they are made aware of their obligations. We also respond to specific enquiries, complete planned projects and engage with the organisers of livestock shows. From 1st November 2012 to 31st October 2013 we have responded to 584 enquiries and carried out 98 inspections. During this period in Reigate and Banstead, 3 inspections were carried out and 32 enquiries were dealt with. Broken down this equates to 15 new keepers, 3 animal welfare and 14 other animal health matters.

2.12 **Petroleum:**

Surrey County Council Trading Standards Service has been involved with improvements to a number of Petrol Filling Stations in the Reigate and Banstead area, as well as our normal licensing activities. The licensing function includes the service having a role overseeing the ongoing methods, both physical and managerial, to reduce the risk of fire and explosion at any site in the Reigate and Banstead area. This can include having a role with any works on a site, from the re-branding (changing the advertising signage on the canopy, or the roadside display), of the site to a new petrol wholesaler, to the rebuilding of a larger shop, and major refurbishment of the petroleum installation on a current site. In the event that any new sites should be

proposed to the planning authorities, we would also have a role while these are being built.

2.13 **Underage sales:**

Trading Standards' resources to reduce sales of age-restricted products are primarily focused on advisory visits to businesses to check, and provide comprehensive guidance, on compliance with the law on age restricted products. Trading Standards carries out test purchases in accordance with the government's Code of Practice on Age Restricted Products at problem premises. Test purchase exercises with regard to alcohol are carried out in partnership with the Police. We welcome information in particular on premises that are believed to be selling alcohol, tobacco and other age-restricted products to children. Information can be provided via tsintelligence@surreycc.gov.uk or through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 08454 040506.

Between 1 November 2012 and 31 October 2013 there have been 18 advice visits carried out at premises in Reigate and Banstead.

At the end of October we participated in a regional E-Cigarette project involving informal test purchasing with a 16 year old volunteer at 4 premises in Reigate and Banstead. Currently E-Cigarettes are not regulated and there are no age restrictions. From 2015/16 the MHRA will take regulatory responsibility for E-Cigarettes. Findings from this informal project will be fed back to the industry and the MHRA.

2.14 **Food Standards:**

Surrey Trading Standards is responsible for enforcing food standards e.g. the labelling and quality of food, to ensure consumers are not misled.

We carry out this function in partnership with our colleagues at Reigate and Banstead 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.

Between 1 November 2012 and 31 October 2013, we have visited 138 food premises in Reigate and Banstead.

2.15 **Fireworks safety project 2013:**

Trading Standards has a duty to ensure that businesses who sell fireworks are licensed and that fireworks are stored safely and not sold to persons under the age of 18.

This year within Reigate and Banstead

- 23 'Registration Certificates' were issued (certificates run from 01.10.13 - 30.09.14). Registrations permit businesses to store up to 250kg Net Explosive Weight of explosives & can sell fireworks at permitted times of the year. In the case of R&B - all are storing fireworks [i.e. no ammunition]
- One business has an additional permit to sell fireworks all year round.

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- There are no 'Licensed stores' i.e. stores that can hold up to 2000kg Net Explosive Weight of explosives.
- Reigate and Banstead were issued 14% of the total number of registrations issued around the County this year.
- Four visits were conducted in Reigate and Banstead this year, in partnership with SCC Fire and Rescue Service and the premises were identified as follows: one premise was new; one had not been visited for a number of years and two were found to be not in compliance the previous year.
- All Issues were resolved through advice at the time of the visit, with prompt follow up inspections where appropriate.
- There have been no reports of anti-social behaviour involving fireworks and no complaints of any other nature in Reigate and Banstead.

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 Trading Standards is a relatively small service, serving all 11 Districts and Boroughs within Surrey from its office based in Redhill. Annual savings were identified in a Public Value Review carried out in 2011. This has been achieved through restructuring the service, reducing management costs, reducing the number of teams, and increasing income, which is vital to the service. At the same time we have managed to maintain the service and front line posts. The service has a current annual budget of just over £2.45m of which there is an income expectation of over £300,000.

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 There are no particular identified equalities and diversity implications that are raised by this report, however, Equalities Impact Assessments have been carried out in relation to key areas of the Service that are customer facing. Advice and education about doorstep crime is provided to vulnerable groups and we do talks for professional groups who can cascade our community safety messages to members of the public.

7. LOCALISM:

7.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Local Committee on the work taking place in Reigate and Banstead.

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	No significant implications arising from this report
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

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

9.1 The Local Committee is asked to note the report for information.

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Consulted: Officers of Surrey Trading Standards only

Annexes: None

Sources/background papers: None
