

# Protecting the Public and Supporting Business During the Pandemic



Safonau Masnach Cymru  
Trading Standards Wales

The Impacts and Outcomes of Local  
Trading Standards Services 2020/21 in Wales



## FOREWORD

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Since the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) created the Impact and Outcomes Framework in 2018/19, it has reported annually on the work done by local authority Trading Standards Services across England and Wales. The purpose of this report is to highlight the collective impact of Trading Standards Services in Wales during 2020-21.

As previously, the results of the most recent collation are set out under the three themes of:

- Tackling Detriment and Preventing Harm
- Supporting the Local Economy, and
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing

However, an additional section is included in this report, dedicated to the work carried out by Trading Standards in Wales, alongside other local authority colleagues, in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

As you will see in the pages that follow, Trading Standards Officers in Wales though small in number, play a hugely significant role in protecting consumers, ensuring animal health and welfare, and supporting reputable businesses while at the same time taking firm action against rogue traders and those that flout the law. The key headlines for Wales in the current report are:

- Over £1 million detriment was prevented by Trading Standards' actions
- Prison sentences of 344 months (29 years) were handed down. This includes both immediate and suspended sentences
- The demand on the service measured by the number of referrals from Citizens Advice increased significantly - we believe this increase largely related to notifications about issues such as holidays and events cancellation and refund issues.
- Almost all non-Covid enforcement activity dropped, mainly due to many Courts closing and very large backlogs caused by Covid.
- The number of fixed monetary penalties increased but this is likely due to Covid restriction based Fixed Monetary Penalties.
- Linked to this, non-scams related redress dropped as Covid restrictions meant very limited Court compensation awards and no seizures of money from unscrupulous traders.
- The number of scams victims supported increased.
- Support for businesses, outside the formal primary authority scheme, increased, primarily, due to COVID restrictions

Turning to the Trading Standards role in the local authority COVID response, services in Wales supported councils with over 42,000 enquiries and carried out over 48,000 visits. At the same time, Trading Standards has continued to demonstrate its huge value in focusing support on protecting the most vulnerable in our communities; and supporting local businesses through very difficult times.

Trading Standards services continue to be crucial to the local authority response to COVID, and to delivering public health as well as government led controls protecting people and businesses from harm – always our core purpose. The impact of all of this work, alongside what is delivered via National Trading Standards, highlights the results that can be achieved using the Trading Standards system.

It is hoped that this report will help service managers to advocate for their services at a local level, as well as showing the national impact of Trading Standards to all partners and stakeholders and, in particular, to help inform both the Welsh and Westminster Governments when they are developing policy that will impact on Trading Standards.

We couldn't be prouder of the huge impact made by Trading Standards Services in Wales during 2020-21 - a year that was so challenging on many levels, both professional and personal. It is particularly rewarding to see their hard work quantified through the Impact and Outcomes framework and we are grateful to ACTSO for collating the data and for its support in presenting this report in a Wales-specific format.



**Helen Picton**

Chair Trading Standards Wales and Association of Chief Trading Standards officers Welsh Representative



**Steve Ruddy**

Chair of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers



## BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

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Local authorities in Wales were asked to submit data for the financial year 2020/21. The indicators measure demand and resourcing alongside key outputs and outcomes from Trading Standards' activity.

17 services contributed, covering 17 out of 20 (72%) of local authority Trading Standards services in Wales. The responses cover an area with a population of 2,704,896, or 85% of the population of Wales. To illustrate the estimated national impact of Trading Standards, figures have been adjusted to account for both population and the response rate for each question. The resultant figures estimate impact and activity levels for the whole of Wales.

## DEMAND AND RESOURCING

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It is estimated that the approximate revenue budget allocated to Trading Standards is just under £8 million. This year many local authorities received additional one-off grants for work relating to EU Exit and Covid, which will have been used to support various elements of regulatory delivery.

Other sources of income were National Trading Standards' grants for various activities, Welsh Government funding for visits relating to animal feed and minimum unit price of alcohol, funds to support investigations and Primary Authority work income. It is estimated that approximately 206 full time employees are employed on Trading Standards' work.

This has not changed from last year. Of those, 89% are "operational" staff. Trading Standards received almost 280,000 referrals and notifications to their services. The majority are from Citizens Advice. We have experienced an increase during 2020/21 which we believe is largely related to notifications about issues such as holidays and events cancellation and refund issues.



## SECTION ONE: TACKLING DETRIMENT AND PREVENTING HARM

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One of the key functions of Trading Standards is to prevent consumer and business detriment (financial and non-financial), tackle the criminal behaviour that leads to it and support victims.

The National Audit Office estimated in 2015 that the true value of consumer and business detriment across the United Kingdom was around £14.8 billion per year. The Government plans to publish an updated Consumer Detriment Survey in 2021.

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### 1.1 Stopping Fraudulent, Illegal and Unfair Trading

Where individuals deliberately break the law, repeatedly ignore advice, or cause significant harm, Trading Standards Services will prosecute. Trading Standards legislation carries a variety of penalties including: prison; fines; forfeiture of assets; fixed penalties; and undertakings to stop future noncompliance.

Many of the investigations tackling serious criminality are complex, time-consuming, and can take several years to bring to trial. In 2020/21, due to the pandemic, very few cases were taken through the Courts system as most Courts were closed for long periods and significant backlogs have built up. The use of Enterprise Act undertakings is relatively low with only 11 being implemented.

This year there was a breach rate of 0% on undertakings given. Undertakings can only be used for specified breaches rather than for all Trading Standards work. Also, as services increasingly focus scarce resources on the highest levels of detriment, this will often mean that the use of criminal proceedings is the most appropriate route for enforcement.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- **86 defendants** were taken through the prosecution process and convicted
- Prison sentences of **344 months (29 years)** were handed down. This includes both immediate and suspended sentences
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£196,000 in fines** and over £140,000 in costs
- Defendants were ordered to pay over **£435,000 in Proceeds of Crime**

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### 1.2 Detriment and Redress

Redress and compensation for victims of crime can be secured as part of the prosecution process or through a variety of other means. Rapid responses to reports of doorstep crime and other fraud in action can result in Trading Standards Officers persuading potential victims not to hand over cash or cheques. Prosecuting and disrupting criminal behaviour, and providing advice and support to the public on how to get a fair deal, prevents further harm and financial detriment.

Redress and compensation for victims of crime can be secured as part of the prosecution process or through a variety of other means. Again, these were much reduced from 2019/20 due to the closures and backlogs in the Courts as outlined above. In addition, activities such as in person rapid responses to reports of doorstep crime and other fraud, designed to prevent customers handing over money, were also limited due to Covid restrictions.

Prosecuting and disrupting criminal behaviour, and providing advice and support to the public on how to get a fair deal, prevents further harm and financial detriment.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that the actions of Trading Standards Services resulted in:

- Over **£10,000 compensation** awarded to victims by the courts
- **Over £167,000** prevented from being handed over to criminals
- **Over £54,000** gained for victims through advice and intervention
- **Over £1,000,000** of detriment prevented by Trading Standards' actions

### 1.3 Supporting Scam Victims

Fraud remains one of the most prevalent crimes in the UK. Through investigative and disruptive work, Trading Standards identify and support victims of scams. Officers will reach out to these victims, especially the most vulnerable and often elderly victims of fraud. Trading Standards usually visit them at home, but this year these visits have been very limited due to Covid restrictions. Trading Standards services across Wales have sought to use different ways of contacting victims, for example by phone. This demonstrates the commitment Trading Standards have to support the most vulnerable, even during the pandemic.

However, it is recognised that face to face contact provides the victim with support and gains a better intelligence picture in relation to their lifestyle e.g., piles of scam mail in the house or other signs of neglect. This is evident in the cases studies and Compass feedback received by the NTS Scams Team. Consumers that are visited at home made significant savings and fully understood the scale of the

victimisation. The aim is to ensure they get the support they need to stop them responding to scams; and this will help to improve their wellbeing. In some cases, Trading Standards install call blockers to prevent scam calls from reaching vulnerable individuals and work with other safeguarding agencies if required. The NTS Scams Team supports local authorities with this work.

In 2020/2021 it is estimated that across Wales:

- Local authority Trading Standards provided support to nearly **1,000 victims**,
- Work to disrupt mass marketing fraud mailings, stop outgoing payments, mail, etc. saved Welsh consumers over **£222,000**



#### Ceredigion County Council

For Ceredigion County Council, the sale of puppies, both from local licensed and unlicensed dog breeders is a primary concern. During the pandemic, puppies were being sold from various locally known licensed/unlicensed sources for a minimum of £2,500 each (some as much as £4,000). The service has come across consumers that have spent over £20,000 on veterinary bills having paid £3,500 for a sick puppy only to have to put the dog down. Unscrupulous breeders (licensed and unlicensed) are generating huge sums of money whilst showing little or no regard to animal welfare and consumer rights. As a result, a number of local breeders are currently being investigated with the assistance of Trading Standards Wales's Regional Investigations Team. This is a highly lucrative and low risk criminal activity for unscrupulous traders.

#### Isle of Anglesey County Council

As a result of efforts by the Trading Standards Team, a significant amount of PPE including sanitiser and "home-sewn" facemasks were stopped from being made available to the public, therefore avoiding any injuries or detriment.

Further testing on sanitisers resulted in 3 brands being removed from the market (advice provided to make them compliant). Work on jigsaws stopped at a port in Suffolk – potential safety issue & labelling (intervention from Trading Standards with labelling and testing resulted in compliance). Increase in "homemade" products such as wax melts and candles regarding product safety implications also created additional unplanned workload.

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### Neath Port Talbot Council

As with other local authorities, much of Trading Standards' resources were diverted to other enforcement work during 2020-2021, including Test, Trace & Protect and other Covid-19 related enforcement. When lockdown occurred, the service shifted to monitoring businesses remotely, online, etc. The service also took advantage to forge stronger links with other services within the Authority that have involvement in business support and also to attempt to raise awareness of the service in respect of its scams work, developing a call blocking scheme for launch in 2021-2022.

### Newport City Council

Officers carried out a considerable amount of 'contract compliance' work with travel agents and similar businesses who refused to refund to customers. 22 Newport consumers were advised and assisted when they experienced difficulty obtaining refunds for booked holidays following cancellations and closures during Covid-19.

The issues concerned package holidays, coach trips and caravan site fees. Business advice was provided on contract compliance and redress was negotiated for the consumers. Notable successes included one case highlighted in the media which resulted in a full refund and one case that was successfully referred to ABTA's arbitration scheme.

The total estimated detriment figure was £17,363.07 with £17,013.07 successfully recovered for local consumers.

### Pembrokeshire County Council

Pembrokeshire Trading Standards dealt with a doorstep trader who made numerous visits to a vulnerable adult who had learning difficulties. They demanded payments without carrying out work or doing very shoddy work. The person was intimidated and confused by a number of traders suspected of being linked. The trader tried to take photos of the victim and there were suggestions of 'cuckooing', whereby criminals use the vulnerable victim's home for nefarious purposes. An investigation by local police and the assistance of a local councillor led to the prosecution of the trader who received a restraining order preventing any further approach to the victim.

### Shared Regulatory Services

The challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 required the service to find innovative ways to raise awareness of scams, rogue trading and doorstep crime. Four training sessions were delivered to partners and front-line services in a mix of in-person and virtual formats.

GP surgeries and pharmacies across the SRS region were mailed new awareness raising material on scams and frauds, delivering key preventative advice. The covering letter to each, invited the premises to display the materials in practices and front windows, delivering key preventative advice. The new awareness raising packs were delivered to a total of 101 GP surgeries and 139 pharmacies, and have been well received. Also, during the course of the year, a total of 4 rapid responses were made to incidents of doorstep crime and 8 additional call blockers were installed in the homes of residents being bombarded by nuisance calls. Both of these services provided particular peace of mind for those affected and their families.

### Swansea Council

Swansea Council took two prosecutions, both food related, which have protected the public: A discount store company selling food which had undeclared allergens and also falsely described food was prosecuted. This case protected customers who had allergies and also protected consumers from falsely described food. This had a national impact rather than just a local one.

The second prosecution case was against a restaurant chain that was selling dishes purporting to contain lobster but on closer examination was found to be made up of a compound product that only contained 35% lobster. These products were being sold at a premium price across all its chains nationwide. Following this case, the chain removed all the products from across their outlets. This sent a clear message to other retailers that it is not acceptable to falsely describe food to consumers.

## SECTION TWO: SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

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Businesses need advice and support from Trading Standards to help them navigate the range of laws that ensure they trade fairly and their products are safe. This was particularly crucial this year when businesses needed to respond to Covid legislation and many needed to change their businesses to online or different market sectors to survive during the pandemic.

It is also important for an effective functioning market that legitimate businesses know that their competitors will comply with the law and there will be a level playing field and that those refusing to comply will be punished.

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### 2.1 Businesses Get the Help and Support they need to Thrive and Grow

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Economic growth is a key priority for all local authorities, providing advice and support to businesses is more important than ever. This has been especially important this year. Trading Standards Services provide advice to businesses on the legislation they cover.

Primary Authority Partnerships enable assured advice to be given to a business with multiple shops or sites via a single local authority. Trading Standards Services provided over 930 hours of this advice. During 2020/21, most Primary Authority businesses, which tend to be larger ones, were focused on issues relating to the pandemic such as Covid safe operations, grants and furlough and therefore demands for Trading Standards specific advice reduced.

Trading Standards provided a considerable amount of advice for new start-ups and those needing to change operations to click and collect or on-line delivery.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- Trading Standards responded to over **3,384 requests** for advice from businesses
- **68 Primary Authority Partnerships** are in operation covering 60 businesses and 8 trade associations, each having multiple members
- **Over 930 hours** were spent by Trading Standards advising Primary Authority businesses in Wales

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### 2.2 Creating and Maintaining a Level Playing Field for Safe and Fair Competition

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Trading Standards Services follow an intelligence-led model where action is taken against the highest risk businesses. This can include visits to provide advice and information, seizure of counterfeit or unsafe products, or starting an investigation in the most serious cases.

Trading Standards also support legitimate businesses through good trader schemes that help promote their businesses.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- **Over 2,500 visits** were carried out to businesses to ensure they comply with the law and to provide advice to help them fix any non-compliance. This does not include Covid compliance which is dealt with later in this report
- **Over 750 businesses** were subject to an intervention, such as advice, investigation or referral
- **53%** of Trading Standards services in Wales operate an assured trader scheme
- **Over 27,000** counterfeit products with a market value of **over £312,000**, which breach the intellectual property of legitimate businesses, were seized

Supplying counterfeit goods can be seen as a "victimless" crime but the reality is that counterfeiting is run by international organised criminal gangs. Profits from sales fund other criminal activity while hurting legitimate businesses who manufacture, distribute and buy licences to sell legitimate products.





### Isle of Anglesey County Council

During 2020-21, the majority of new businesses were pop-ups as a result of the pandemic or existing businesses diversifying. Support was provided in the form of advice and guidance concerning all relevant laws, regulations and trading practices. Support has been on-going and some referrals to Business Wales to aid more long-term start-ups. As a result of Covid related enquiries from businesses, mailshots and information packs were created on subject specific concerns and distributed to various business sectors to cover all potential enquiries as and when regulations were amended and guidance updated.

### Ceredigion County Council

The service has been actively advising local businesses on Covid-19 rules throughout 2020/21 and its officers have been conducting regular joint patrols with local Police. General information regarding Natasha's law has also been proactively provided to food businesses (new and existing ones). Covid enforcement has been primarily led and managed by the Trading Standards service. Different industry sectors have received tailored Covid advice and guidance regarding how to reopen safely as well as onsite inspections, monitoring visits, revisits, issuing of Premises Improvement Notices and Premises Closure Notices, regular press releases, advisory letters, etc.

### Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

During Covid, links have been made via the Economic Development, Tourism and Regeneration Teams within the local authority in order to disseminate Covid related information and guidance. Also, further links with Town Centre partnerships through Covid advice and guidance to disseminate to their members. The intention is that the links are maintained post-Covid in respect of other Trading Standards issues.

### Pembrokeshire County Council

Pembrokeshire County Council instigated a project to identify high-frequency sellers of motor vehicles (from laybys, carparks, social media selling groups, etc.) and provide compliance advice, including the requirement to declare trade status, in order to provide both consumer confidence and a level playing field with the established motor trade.



### Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the Trading Standards service during this timeframe. Links were made with the Council's Regeneration and Planning teams who have responsibility for the local town centres to disseminate COVID related information and guidance to local businesses. Further links were made with the Council's Street Care Enforcement Teams to visit premises to gauge compliance with the regulations and this information is fed back to the COVID Enforcement Teams to action and provide advice to businesses. Links have been made with the Council's Education Department and advice and guidance has been disseminated on all COVID issues.

This will hopefully result in the links being maintained post COVID for other Trading Standards issues. At the start of the pandemic numerous businesses diversified into making hand sanitisers, and facemasks, officers were available to provide advice and guidance for the businesses to manufacture and supply safe products. At the start of the pandemic a number of food businesses changed their operating model and diversified into providing take away services to customers, Officers have provided general food labelling and Weights and Measures advice.

### Shared Regulatory Services

Since SRS came into being in 2015, it has developed a range of services to support local businesses including bespoke guidance sessions and the provision of training courses. The challenges of 2020-21 resulted in a review of the way in which support for businesses has been delivered, to better suit the quickly changing needs of the different trade sectors.

Among its Primary Authority partnerships, SRS has three with major supermarkets for devolved matters only. Through regular dialogue, the service has been able to assist these companies to navigate the changes, made at pace, to the Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations in Wales. At the same time, this work assisted local authorities across Wales by SRS acting as a conduit for enquiries about the measures in place across the various stores, thereby aiding consistency and avoiding duplication. SRS was able to make available to other local authority regulatory services a summary of the arrangements they could expect to see put in place by the Primary Authority retailers at local store level with regard to COVID safety. These summary documents set out the means by which stores aimed to achieve compliance on such things as non-essential goods, the wearing of face coverings, cleaning arrangements and also in managing store capacities. These documents were updated as necessary, for example to reflect changes to the Coronavirus legislation and guidance.



## SECTION THREE: PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

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Trading Standards undertake a wide range of activities to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of local communities. This includes ensuring that products people buy are safe, that food is correctly and clearly labelled to help them to make healthy choices and avoid allergens. Trading Standards also ensure the health and welfare of animals which has an impact on the integrity of the food chain.

Age restricted products, including tobacco, alcohol, and knives, are also a significant area of focus for many authorities, helping to keep young people safe.

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### 3.1 Ensuring the Safety of Consumer Products

Legislation enforced by Trading Standards is designed to ensure that products are safe. There continue to be issues with the safety of consumer white goods and cheap imported goods such as electric lights, phone chargers and cosmetics that are unsafe. Officers use intelligence to direct sampling exercises and projects to detect and seize unsafe products at both ports of entry and on sale within Wales.

This year the number of items checked has increased eightfold. This is because Trading Standards were checking very large numbers of items of PPE to ensure they complied with safety standards. This was crucial during the pandemic to keep everyone, and especially key workers, safe when supply chains were under enormous pressure.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- **Over 34,250 unsafe or non-compliant products and PPE were seized or removed from the market place following Trading Standards' interventions.**
- **The savings to society, in terms of product value and injuries and fires prevented, is over £1 million**

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### 3.2 Protecting the food chain

Food fraud, substitution of sub-standard ingredients, undeclared allergens and misdescribed food can all cause damage to health and cause consumer detriment. In the most serious cases, there has been loss of life in relation to undeclared allergens.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- **215 businesses were identified as supplying food that was misdescribed, did not correctly declare allergens, contained toxic or illegal components or was involved in food fraud.**

Animal health and welfare legislation enforced by Trading Standards Services has a key role in protecting the integrity and quality of the food chain, supporting rural communities and preventing the spread of animal diseases which do pose a risk of mutating to cross-infect humans.

This year of all years, this risk should be better recognised than it has been in the past. In 2020/21 it is estimated that across Wales:

- **Nearly 500 businesses were found to be in breach of animal health and welfare legislation**

Whilst non-critical control point inspection work stopped, there was an increase in intelligence and complaints in relation to animal welfare concerns linked to the impacts of the pandemic as well as an avian influenza outbreak which required local authorities to carry out compliance checks in all relevant premises in the surrounding areas to any infected premises.



### 3.3 Reducing the risk of children accessing age restricted products

Rules that prevent children from buying age-restricted products, such as alcohol, tobacco, knives and fireworks, are designed to protect them and their local communities from both immediate and long-term harm. Trading Standards Services provide training and advice to businesses and conduct test purchases, using volunteers under 18, targeted at the highest risk premises. This year there was no additional funding provided by the Home Office, via NTS, for extra knife test purchasing. The levels of all test purchasing were hugely reduced due to Covid restrictions.

As from January 2021, local authorities were provided with additional funding via HMRC and NTS for extra work on illicit tobacco.

In 2020/21, it is estimated that across Wales:

- **Illicit tobacco was seized from 48 premises**
- **Over 536,000 illicit cigarettes** were seized, worth an estimated **£120,783**
- **Over 133.88 kilograms of illicit hand-rolling tobacco** were seized, worth **over £24,500**
- **35 niche tobacco products** (including shisha) were seized, worth **over £3,50**





## Caerphilly CBC

During 2020/21 with support from the Food Standards Agency and Trading Standards Wales, Caerphilly Trading Standards, working in partnership with the Greater Gwent Food Group, led on the production of a national multilingual allergen resource suitable for food businesses, food law enforcement officers and educational establishments.

The materials produced in English, Welsh, Bengali, Cantonese, Kurdish, Mandarin, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu are hosted on the Chartered Trading Standards Institute website [www.tradingstandards.uk/foodallergens/resources](http://www.tradingstandards.uk/foodallergens/resources).

The resource launched on 8th September 2021 and is freely available for use by all local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Included is:

- An allergen awareness presentation video;
- A handout covering the presentation key messages;
- Dubbed and subtitled versions of 'Day in the Life of Chloe' and 'Megan's Story' (short films originally produced by Lancashire County Council)
- 'Tell Us If You Have an Allergy' poster

It seeks to:

- Make allergen training material accessible to a wider audience
- Increase awareness of food allergies as a serious health issue and help educate about the potentially life-threatening nature of the condition
- Inform Food Business Operators of allergen labelling requirements including changes brought about as a result of 'Natasha's Law' which came into force on 1st October 21.
- Alert Food Business Operators to the potential consequences of getting it wrong
- Raise allergen legal compliance amongst Food Business Operators
- Promote the importance of a positive food safety culture and the supply of safe food that consumers can trust

## Monmouthshire County Council

Monmouthshire County Council's Animal Health Officers seized 128 cattle early in the first Covid lockdown that were subject to a successful S.20 Court Order under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 whilst officers were also supporting TTP and Covid enforcement.

## Neath Port Talbot Council

The movement to online trading of some businesses has meant that NPT's Trading Standards Team has increased its online presence, to combat potential food (inc. allergens) and safety breaches. Trading Standards has also generated a greater social media presence to promote the dangers of scams. The pandemic has meant a significant increase in hand sanitiser and PPE sales and Trading Standards will continue to sample and monitor these market areas during 2021-22.

As lockdown eases the service has also seen a growth in rogue trader activity as consumers look to improve their homes whilst been unable to go on holiday abroad. NPT's Trading Standards Team will be working with local schools in the near future on the new pre packed for sales provisions for food allergens.

## Newport City Council

The service used Anti-Social Behaviour powers to close 7 shops selling illegal tobacco. Following successful test purchases and/or seizures of illicit tobacco from the premises in question, applications were made to the Magistrates Court for Closure Orders. All were granted. The premises were closed for 3 months with an option to extend for a further 3 months. The long-term goal is to work with landlords to prevent similar businesses operating at their premises. If criminal activity persists once a Closure Order period has ended, then landlords could potentially find themselves subject to a money laundering investigation.

## Pembrokeshire County Council

Pembrokeshire County Council's Trading Standards Team prosecuted a motor trader for the supply of a dangerous car to a disabled consumer.

It also prosecuted a takeaway food outlet for the supply of food containing undeclared allergens as well as taking a high profile prosecution of a farmer for animal health breaches and illegal slaughter. Carcasses and animals were seized, thereby preventing entry into the food chain.

The team also conducted inspections and follow-up visits to ensure compliance with the new Wales Minimum Unit Price of Alcohol provisions. (By the end of March 2021 over 95 of relevant premises had been inspected, with 100% of those inspected brought into compliance during the period).



### Shared Regulatory Services

The scarcity of hand sanitiser, face masks and other PPE during the early part of the COVID 19 pandemic meant that local authorities faced difficulties in purchasing sufficient supplies for front line staff. For the three local authorities it serves, SRS provided guidance on technical requirements for the different types of products and created check sheets to assist Procurement colleagues in future purchasing decisions. For each batch of sanitiser purchased, SRS arranged for samples to be submitted to the Public Analyst and in a number of cases, the product supplied fell short of the required 60% alcohol required to be effective against viruses such as the coronavirus.

These cases were dealt with by means of investigation, resulting in two infringement cases being prepared as well as a number of Home Authority referrals. As a result of these interventions, thousands of units of sanitiser product were forfeited through the court process.

### Swansea Council

Joint working, undertaking warrants at shisha bars and retailers, looking for illegal tobacco and enforcing Covid restrictions at the same time. This led to closure of premises that were also linked into issues concerning the safeguarding of children.

## SECTION FOUR: TRADING STANDARDS SUPPORT FOR THE COVID RESPONSE

Trading Standards were a key part of the local authority Covid response, along with other colleagues in regulatory services. The information below reflects the local authority wide response to Covid not just the input from Trading Standards as, whilst they played a key part, their input cannot be separated from that of other colleagues, especially within Environmental Health.

In Wales, Trading Standards supported local authorities with:

- Providing **pro-active advice** to almost **53,000 business premises**
- Dealing with over **42,500 enquiries**
- Conducting over **48,000 business visits**
- Undertaking over **3,200 enforcement actions**



### Ceredigion County Council

Ceredigion has been one of the safest areas on the UK mainland insofar as Covid-19 risk is concerned and the commitment of the service to deliver and enforce the Covid-19 regulations has been a contributory factor to this as well as the general high level of compliance seen by local businesses. The service has been actively advising local businesses and has been conducting regular joint patrols with local police. The Covid Enforcement Team has been primarily led and managed by the Trading Standards service, and consequently, other TS functions/duties had to be temporarily suspended. Different industry sectors have received tailored Covid advice and guidance regarding how to reopen safely as well as onsite inspections, monitoring visits, revisits, issuing of Premises Improvement Notices and Premises Closure Notices, regular press releases, advisory letters, etc. The Trading Standards service has also been involved with supporting the out of hours Test, Trace, & Protect (TTP) Covid standby to tackle those individuals who wilfully refuse to self-isolate when asked to do so by TTP staff.

### Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Trading Standards staff portrayed their flexibility during the pandemic as they were redeployed in multiple areas where local authorities needed professional support. They acted as emergency death registrars and Track and Trace advisors. A Covid Enforcement Team was set up and managed by Trading Standards who advised internal council departments throughout. This included working with Procurement in respect of face masks and sanitisers; and advising on Covid-safe election.

### Gwynedd County Council

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on the provision of Trading Standards activity during 2020-21. However, what is clearly evident is the important role that Trading Standards plays in promoting health and wellbeing in all aspects of life. Playing its part in protecting the health and wellbeing of the public, Gwynedd Council has undertaken substantial work on advising businesses and organisations on the safety of products such as hand sanitisers, surface cleaners, face coverings and gloves to combat the threat posed by Coronavirus.