



**Wales Heads of
Trading Standards**
Improving Trading Standards in Wales



Penaethiaid Safonau Masnach Cymru Yn Gwellu Safonau Masnach Yng Nghymru

TRADING STANDARDS AT YOUR COUNCIL

A Member's Handbook
2018

www.tradingstandardswales.org.uk

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FOREWORD

This Handbook has been devised for you by the Wales Heads of Trading Standards (WHOTS). We act under the auspices of the Directors of Public Protection Wales (DPPW), and provide a strategic and leadership role for all the individual Welsh Trading Standards services. Our membership consists of each Senior Manager in the 22 Council Authorities.

The Handbook has been produced to help local Council Members understand the key role of their Trading Standards service. We are only too aware that, being a small service, it is easy to operate under the radar of Members – often inadvertently.

However, we would be delighted if Members do not accept our services at face value, as there are so many areas of everyday life where we are capable of making a difference. Operating under the radar belies an extremely important service which can have an influence in both council and Welsh Government policy areas.

We are only too aware that the make-up and political control of Welsh Councils has undergone some changes since the Council elections in May 2017. With this in mind, we hope that this Handbook will prove invaluable to both newer Members as well as those enjoying a longer term of office.

A previous version of this Handbook was last produced in 2012. Since then our services have been embroiled in challenges around how best to contribute to realising the local opportunities offered by the Wellbeing of Future generations (Wales) Act 2015, whilst grappling with the pressures of managing reorganisations and mergers.

As councils have been faced with sustained budget cuts, Welsh Trading Standards services have shrunk disproportionately and many have experienced a very significant loss of staff. We have responded by a greater use of intelligence to prioritise and focus our efforts where they will have the most impact, often in collaboration, to deal with issues of national or regional importance.

We hope this Handbook will provide you with the means to positively challenge what is happening in your own locality. We are sure that your Senior Trading Standards Manager will be only too willing to discuss any relevant matters with you.

Dave Riley

Current Chair of WHOTS



INTRODUCTION TO TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES

Trading Standards services are delivered by each of the councils across Wales. Having tackled the challenges of austerity over a protracted period, these services are now provided in various ways - from a combination of individual "in-house" teams, to delivering in partnership with other neighbours in shared services models. Nevertheless, however they are structured, most of these services deliver a broad range of common core matters.

Most form part of a larger Directorate, such as "Public Protection," or "Regulatory Services," alongside other disciplines such as Environmental Health, Licensing and Planning.

Whilst most Trading Standards duties are "reserved" matters coming under UK Government, some areas have been devolved to Welsh Government. These include Food, Agricultural and Animal Health matters.

TRADING STANDARDS CONTRIBUTION TO DELIVERING LOCAL COMMUNITY PLANS

Trading Standards routine work has always contributed to the key themes of Local Authority Strategic Plans (economic regeneration and health & well-being) through supporting reputable businesses and protecting consumers. The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires any public body to meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations, opens the door for even greater contribution. Sensitive regulation of businesses and consumer protection from fraudulent trading practices and doorstep crime will help achieve at least the first three of the Act's seven goals, namely "A prosperous Wales," "A resilient Wales," and "A healthier Wales."

The Act introduces governance principles through 5 ways of working - **integration**, **collaboration**, **long term** (balanced with short-term), **involvement** (of communities) & **prevention** (of further problems). Trading Standards Services, supported by Wales Heads of Trading Standards, have worked in this way for decades. It has mature and proven mechanisms for national coordination between Local Authorities and external partners to maximise its impact, and is well placed to help realise the Act's aspirations both locally and nationally.

Mention has been made of “core areas” of Trading Standards work. Briefly, these can be put into the broad headings of Fair Trading, Metrology (Weights & Measures), Food & Agricultural Standards, Product Safety, and Consumer Intervention. The following examples practically illustrate some of the work falling within those groups:-

- Under **Fair Trading**, officers advise businesses on compliance with consumer protection law and protect them against unfair competition from those who profit through illegal activity
- Under **Weights & Measures**, officers might test medical scales for accuracy at GP practices;
- Under **Food** etc., officers might take samples of foodstuffs to check they conform to their description, or to meet specified standards;
- Under **Product Safety**, officers might negotiate with businesses to undertake a recall of dangerous goods;
- Under **Consumer Intervention**, officers might seek legal undertakings to adopt better practice from businesses which are generating numerous consumer complaints;

These examples merely scratch the surface of a profession which has such diverse duties.

Although services are mainly delivered on a local basis, illegal trading transcends council boundaries, and it is sometimes essential to work across borders. This is done cooperatively and collaboratively. To supplement local delivery, some distinct welsh teams have been set up to tackle certain areas of specialist crime – notably illegal money lending, and widespread scams. These specialist teams are funded via central Government.

Business compliance with Trading Standards law is achieved through a variety of means. These include inspection visits, advice & education, surveys, sampling & testing. When a multi-agency approach is called for, it is common for Trading Standards to work alongside partners such as police, HMRC, other council services, and brand-protection agencies, to name but a few.

HOW TRADING STANDARDS PRIORITIES ARE DECIDED

Much of the work which Trading Standards does is because of a statutory legal duty of enforcement. However, this must be balanced with a need to direct resources at areas of greater threat. Therefore, on the whole, service delivery will be a compromise of satisfying statutory duties, whilst responding to areas of need in order to be as effective as possible.

WHOTS recognises that local services will always have local priorities, and these are expected to feature in any local service plans. Nothing WHOTS does will interfere with local delivery or priorities.

However, WHOTS looks at the national welsh picture and undertakes annual assessments of the landscape to identify where its' priorities should lie and what matters most. This assessment is an essential part of subscribing to an intelligence-led approach, and goes on to influence the development of an annual Control Strategy. This strategy identifies work which will be undertaken, and for 2018/19 has grouped the work into themed areas, as follows:-

- Health Improvement
- Safeguarding vulnerable consumers
- Protecting the integrity of the food chain
- Tackling fraudulent trading practices
- Supporting reputable businesses

Of course, the above are only broad themed headings, and there will be a variety of ways by which the themes will be tackled holistically. To illustrate this point, we have included real-life examples and case studies over the coming pages.

THEME 1: HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Health improvement is probably not the first thing members might associate with Trading Standards. However, this area of influence has been growing for years. And it's not really about proactively improving health, but removing threats to health, perhaps as a result of getting unsafe goods off the market – or prosecuting for contravention of safety laws.

Given that health encompasses mental as well as physical factors, Trading Standards also help people who may have experienced stress through being scammed, by removing any further threat or taking legal action. Below are some examples of Trading Standards in action on health-related interventions.



"LEGAL HIGHS" SHOPKEEPER EXPERIENCES THE LOWS

Swansea Trading Standards and South Wales Police carried out a number of operations against a seller of so-called "legal highs" leading to him being jailed.

Some of the products contained Class B drugs which, over time, resulted in anti-social behaviour and put the lives of people taking the drugs at risk. Whilst the seller admitted to considerable financial gain, he

was dealt a blow on release from prison by being ordered to pay back more than £120,000 under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

Legal highs are now covered by new regulations known as the Novel Psychoactive substances Regulations 2016.





COSMETIC DENTISTRY PRODUCTS NOT WHITER THAN WHITE

A company sold teeth whitening products at the Royal Welsh Show, which were found to have Hydrogen Peroxide present at 110 times the legal limit, representing a danger to health.

Again in **Powys**, officers monitoring online sales of teeth whitening products led to a man dealing in unsafe products. In 2016, a test purchase from his Ebay account was sent for analysis, and found to have Hydrogen peroxide present at 58 times the legal limit.



This matter led to a 3 year investigation by **Powys Trading Standards** into the criminality of a Cheshire family. The matter revealed fraudulent and unfair trading practices spanning a number of local authorities, exacerbated by the fact the seller operated under a range of different names. Officers were able to identify 30 victims across the UK. Prison sentences were handed out at the Crown Court trial in 2016 and 3 members of the family were also banned from being company directors.

A prosecution was taken and all seized items were ordered to be destroyed. The local seller was fined a total of £4000.



ARMY ENLISTED TO HELP LIFT DANGEROUS FIREWORKS

When Officers from **Shared Regulatory Services** inspected a Penarth business in 2016, they found a large quantity of explosive fireworks unsuitably stored on the shop floor. They were found to be damp, and not segregated from flammable materials – thus representing a danger.

Because of the quantity found, officers had to enlist the help of the Army to clear the premises safely! The owners were prosecuted and fined a total of £4000, including costs. Safe storage of explosives is a key role for Trading Standards.



As well as examples like the above, Trading Standards are well-placed to undertake roles relevant to Welsh Government strategies central to the health of the nation, most notably:-

- Tackling under-age sales of tobacco, alcohol and solvents;
- Ensuring compliance with laws on tobacco display, labelling & presentation;
- Working with Welsh Government as part of a recently constituted "Illegal tobacco Task & Finish group";

THEME 2: SAFEGUARDING VULNERABLE CONSUMERS

Welsh Government has created a statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of care and support for the vulnerable. Trading Standards plays a key role in the delivery of the Safeguarding responsibilities of Local Authorities, and the subject is a political hot topic across many council services. There are a number of factors to be considered when defining a person as "vulnerable," but there is no doubt that in everyday situations Trading Standards encounter such people who have, or may be liable to experience financial or other

forms of abuse as a result of being targeted by scams and doorstep crime, for example.

Therefore the work of Trading Standards is a combination of proactive, protective measures to reduce vulnerability, or reactive responses to help consumers who may have been victims. Such is the importance of this area of work that an officer's toolkit is under development to ensure a holistic approach is taken when dealing with safeguarding issues. The following are illustrations of such work.



HELPING SCAM VICTIMS FIGHT BACK AGAINST SCAMMERS IS NOW A KEY FEATURE OF TRADING STANDARDS WORK

*For a number of years there has been a **National Trading Standards scams team**, funded through central Government. This is a UK resource to act as a strategic lead agency on Trading Standards scams.*

Their efforts have uncovered access to thousands of known scam victims across the UK, and these identities have been referred to appropriate Trading Standards Authorities so

that they may take local action to educate the victims and strengthen their resistance to any further threats. All Welsh Trading Standards Authorities have committed to participate in this initiative and so far in Wales:

- *Over 1000 scam victims have been identified;*
- *The estimated detriment of the scams has been calculated as £1.05m*
- *The ages of victims ranged from 30 -98, with the average age being 78. This average age is in line with the national profile of a typical scam victim;*
- *The range of successful outcomes include a reduction in scam mail, referrals to adult social services, awareness raising of scam threats and confirmation that some people feel safer in their own homes.*





"WASP" INITIATIVE HELPING TO TAKE THE STING OUT OF WELSH SCAMS

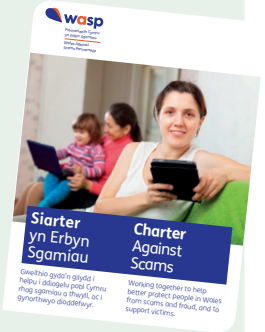
Welsh Trading Standards services are active partners in the **"Wales against scams partnership"** (WASP), which champions the needs of vulnerable people across Wales and aims to make Wales a more hostile place for those who would scam older and vulnerable people.



Partneriaeth Cymru
yn Erbyn Sgamiau

Wales Against
Scams Partnership

The partnership, driven by the Older Persons Commissioner for Wales brings together key agencies so that they can influence change in areas where scammers currently operate.



This includes on the doorstep, by phone, post and online. For its part, Trading Standards across Wales investigate and protect vulnerable people who fall victim to such fraud and the Welsh Regional Intelligence Analyst (Trading Standards) collates information on the top "offenders" across Wales.



A SNAPSHOT OF ACTIONS ACROSS WALES

In **Denbighshire**, officers are active in a multi-faceted approach involving:

- Signing up Councillors as Scam Champions ("Scambassadors");
- Engaging with Social Services to deliver awareness training for staff;
- Getting staff to receive "Dementia Friend" training;

Neath-Port Talbot has delivered safeguarding awareness sessions with PCSO's;

Pembrokeshire Trading Standards have a 100% response rate to scam victim referrals, and have even been involved in returning money to victims;

RCT have invested in 100 "Truecall" units for installation in the homes of vulnerable consumers. This system has caller-ID and call-blocking functionality to keep people safer from scammers.





BANKING PROTOCOL ROLLED-OUT ACROSS DYFED-POWYS POLICE AREA

*The four Trading Standards Authorities of **Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Carmarthenshire** have joined up with their Police force to roll out “**The Banking Protocol**,” a measure intended to engage High Street Banks in the battle against consumer fraud, whether on their doorstep or through mass marketing.*

It works on the basis that bank branches are educated to recognise the signs of unusual customer activity – such as unusually high withdrawals, signs of duress etc, which

might be attributable to paying a rogue trader. It has been acknowledged that some vulnerable people have engaged cold-callers to carry out work, only to receive very poor quality, be grossly overcharged, and then be escorted to their bank to withdraw payment. This protocol aims to nip this in the bud, by alerting Police in the first instance of recognising erratic customer behaviour.

Other Authorities across Wales are likely to be following a similar path to safeguard their vulnerable citizens.



We believe that efforts such as the above to combat scams will also contribute to the “Health Improvement” objectives for 2018/19.

Scams can cause a huge amount of distress for the victims, leading to ill-health in some cases. If this can be alleviated through better consumer education or successful intervention then this will deliver a health benefit.

THEME 3: PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE FOOD CHAIN

The Horse meat scandal truly struck at the heart of what we mean by “food chain integrity.” The deliberate and undeclared substitution of beef with horsemeat by unscrupulous suppliers to big name food manufacturers led to a widespread lack of trust in the food industry despite costly product withdrawals when the scandal became public. The aim of Trading Standards is to protect that integrity by ensuring food is described & labelled properly,

safe to eat, and meets any relevant standards – like minimum meat or fish content for certain foodstuffs. By doing this, it instils confidence in the market and the consumer. The following examples highlight the important role of Food Standards enforcement across Wales.



WALES IN NEW FLAGSHIP APPROACH TO DELIVER ANIMAL FEED CHECKS

A few years ago, the system of farm inspections for Animal Feed compliance was in danger of collapsing, exposing the industry to the risk of infectious disease, such as evidenced by the Foot & Mouth outbreak of 2001. This cost the UK economy £9bn and depressed the British meat export market for years to come.

The inconsistency of service delivered across Wales was recognised by WHOTS, who proposed a new approach to policing the animal feed sector by developing regional governance. This new approach

*has been made possible by taking money from the Revenue Support Grant and reallocating it via the **Food Standards Agency** to reach the point of delivery.*

Inspections of this nature underpin a “farm to fork” philosophy. For example, the safety of a consumers’ steak is influenced by the welfare of the animal prior to slaughter, and in particular by the safety and quality of the feed it has been given during its’ life. Any undesirable or deleterious ingredients in feed may manifest themselves in the eventual foodstuff bought by consumers.





TACKLING THE ALLERGEN PROBLEM IN SWANSEA

In late 2014, the **Food Standards Agency** introduced rules to ensure that restaurants must provide information about any allergenic ingredients used in any food they supplied.

This would ensure consumers would not be put at risk if they were sensitive to particular allergens. However, these rules weren't followed in the case of a Swansea restaurant who, despite being asked that their meal

was "gluten free," supplied one that had over 80 times the allowable levels of gluten. This followed an earlier consumer complaint, where the purchaser became ill as a result.

Swansea Trading Standards prosecuted the restaurant in 2017, and the owner was penalised to the tune of over £2000.

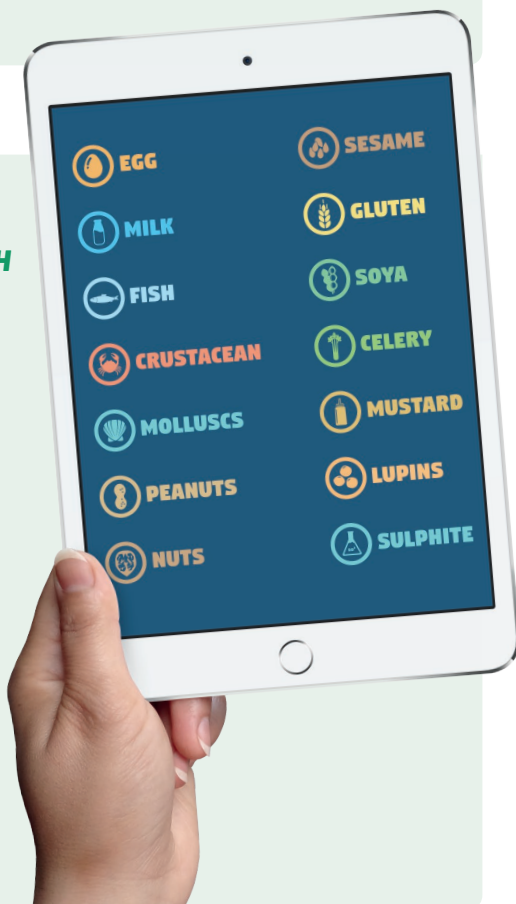


CAERPHILLY TACKLE THE LANGUAGE BARRIER WITH THEIR INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO BUSINESS ADVICE

Following introduction of the law on providing allergen information in 2014, **Caerphilly Trading Standards** have gone digital when it comes to helping businesses comply.

They have developed a multi-lingual resource on allergens which is pre-loaded onto tablets and used as an educational tool during food inspections. Many potential allergen issues arise at take-away outlets and restaurants, and a typical cross section of these will be operated by a range of nationalities.

This resource will address the majority of languages encountered.





PROACTIVE APPROACH PAYS DIVIDENDS IN SECURING ANIMAL HEALTH FUNDING

The enforcement of Animal Health & Welfare legislation is highly important in preventing and controlling disease.

Responsibility lies with individual councils, and is shared between Trading Standards and Environmental Health services across Wales. However, Trading Standards has traditionally taken the lead in delivering an outline strategy for Wales, and liaising with Welsh Government on the control framework. Several years ago, the framework delivery was under severe threat due to the cessation of Welsh Government funding.

To counteract this, **WHOTS** engaged with **Welsh Government** to explore a fresh approach to funding and service delivery. This culminated in the creation of a delivery plan by which Welsh councils would be able to undertake work over & above statutory responsibilities, and receive suitable funding.

This plan has been in existence since 2016, and the work programme is managed by WHOTS on behalf of all Welsh Authorities. Although early days, this plan has realised several benefits already, such as:

- A closer working relationship with Welsh Government;
- An increase in inspections of markets, slaughterhouses and collection centres;
- Better identification of smallholders, dog breeders and mobile animal exhibitors;

As this plan becomes embedded, we expect to realise even more benefits in coming years. This can only pay dividends in terms of overall food-chain integrity.



THEME 4: TACKLING FRAUDULENT TRADING PRACTICES

If you were asked to sum-up what Trading Standards do on a daily basis, you'd probably say that tackling fraudulent practices epitomises what we are all about, and you'd be right. Fair Trading underpins a healthy economy, and any practices which undermine that principle will affect not only consumers, but reputable businesses too.

Frankly, there are so many different ways that Trading Standards contribute to this theme. Indeed, success is not measured simply in terms of prosecuting offenders. Much can be achieved by other methods such as education, issuing warnings, seeking formal Assurances, simple disruption of fraudulent

practices, seizure of goods & assets, and smart use of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) to hit fraudsters where it hurts.

All this means that Trading Standards have to be at the forefront of innovations and trends, to know where money can be made by fraudsters. This is why we employ a Regional Intelligence Analyst and spend time monitoring social media channels. The following are examples of Trading Standards in action across Wales.



CLAMPDOWN ON ILLEGAL TV SET-TOP BOXES

These devices, sometimes known as “Kodi Boxes,” whilst legal in themselves, have been found to become illegal once pre-loaded with software, allowing users to stream subscription channels such as SKY, pirate films, and paid-for sports events for free. Legislation makes it a criminal offence to view material which people would not be entitled to.

In Carmarthenshire, warrants were executed as part of a clampdown, and one seller was found to have sold around £15000 worth of boxes over a 9 month period, demonstrating the lucrative nature of the crime.

In a separate twist, in Monmouthshire they discovered that some boxes might be affected by malware, allowing scammers to steal personal details to commit fraud. This is significant because consumers will normally use personal details when setting up the box.





POPULAR ARTISTS REMAIN A SOURCE OF ILLEGAL INCOME

Fraudsters have long realised the potential for illegal earnings on the back of the popularity of entertainers and artists.

Having a major music venue in a council area usually leads to demands for enforcement work by the local Trading Standards service. In **Cardiff** this is especially so, as worldwide artists perform at the Principality Stadium and Cardiff International Arena.

In June 2017, Officers from **Shared Regulatory Services** and **South Wales Police** seized fake Justin Bieber Hoodies & T-Shirts, expressing the practice as "callous exploitation

of fans," as the items will be of inferior quality. This followed earlier seizures at the Coldplay concert, and plans are ongoing to further police other high-profile gigs.





THE AGE-OLD PROBLEM OF COUNTERFEITING JUST DOESN'T GO AWAY

It's been a long war of attrition against counterfeiting for Trading Standards, and every Authority Service is affected in some way.

It must be emphasised that counterfeiting is not a "victimless" crime. People making money from it have few or no overheads, and represents unfair, illegal competition to genuine businesses. Consumers also get inferior, sometimes unsafe products.

Our website has a section on news items from across Wales, epitomising the common nature and spread of counterfeiting, such as:

"Fake jewellery seller prosecuted"

Merthyr Trading Standards

"Runcorn man sold counterfeit football kits from his Welsh holiday home"

Gwynedd Trading Standards

"Dangerous, fake cigarette seller sentenced to four months imprisonment"

Conwy Trading Standards

"Clothing and watch counterfeiter gets 12 months community order"

Powys Trading Standards

"Caerphilly counterfeit cigarette seller avoids jail"

Caerphilly Trading Standards

*For more information on these and other news items go to
www.tradingstandardswales.org.uk*

THEME 5: SUPPORTING REPUTABLE BUSINESSES

Trading Standards is not anti-business. We do not want businesses to fail to comply with the law so that we can take them to task and punish them. We are realistic about the needs of reputable businesses, and about giving them opportunities to put things right. We recognise the value of businesses to the local economy and we want to support economic prosperity and growth.

We are confident in our role of supporting businesses, but this has to be balanced with the need to take action where necessary, and also take a hard line with rogue traders. In early 2017, we issued a Position Statement on the subject of economic prosperity etc., to coincide with a Regulatory event at the Senedd. This can be found on our website at www.tradingstandardswales.org.uk. The position statement outlines our role in contributing to the aspirations of business support, which include the following:

- Providing active **business support** locally in person, supplemented by providing a web platform (at the above web address) to help guide businesses through the compliance maze. Much of the online advice consists of leaflets or guides which are bilingual and downloadable ;
- Most Welsh Councils have business advice on their corporate web pages. In the main, they have assimilated a National Product known as "**Business Companion**," and this has the added feature of video guides for businesses, in some cases;

- Promoting (and in some cases, policing) various **Trader Assurance schemes**. These help to raise standards amongst businesses, whilst also giving them a marketing advantage. They also take some of the risk out of choosing a reputable trader for consumers;
- Using regional intelligence to identify the **top offending businesses** across Wales, so that resources can be directed to those problem areas, and their ongoing threat tackled;
- Participation in a scheme known as "**Primary Authority**." This allows partnerships to be formed between businesses and local Authorities, so that there is a single source of advice & guidance available to them. This helps businesses manage their relationships with local authorities across the UK;

The case studies which follow, illustrate the different ways in which Trading Standards support welsh businesses.



AIM TO BOOST BUYER CONFIDENCE IN NORTH WALES

A "trusted trader" scheme originally launched in England is gradually being rolled-out across a larger area.

"Buy with Confidence" is not the only scheme of its' kind, but is the one which six North Wales Authorities have decided to jointly promote. The six Councils are **Wrexham, Anglesey, Flintshire, Conwy, Denbighshire and Gwynedd.**

They provide their local consumers with a list of local businesses which have undergone a series of detailed checks by Trading Standards, before being approved as members of the scheme.

This collaborative model has been devised in response to concerns around rogue traders, and providing a win/win situation for good businesses and discerning consumers.



DENBIGHSHIRE COUNCIL RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In July 2017, **Denbighshire's Planning & Public Protection Department** were rewarded for their innovative approach to cutting down on red tape for their businesses.

The Department, which includes Trading Standards, devised a "Better Business for all" project so that their regulatory delivery was better coordinated, and that a more holistic service could be provided during visits.

The Regulatory Delivery awards are run by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Denbighshire were the only Welsh applicant amongst 13 finalists. They achieved runner-up status, as well as being touted as "one to watch."



COUNCILS GETTING INCREASINGLY ADEPT AT DELIVERING MESSAGES TO HELP BUSINESSES



We recognise that our work is not solely about Consumer Protection, and that reputable local businesses can be victims of fraudsters too. Therefore, if we know about a scam being targeted at businesses, we will do our best to get the message out. Although this can take the form of traditional press releases, we are also familiar with the power of social media, and are able to use council Twitter feeds, for instance.

An example of recent PR in action was when **Anglesey Trading Standards** heard that their local B & B's and Hotels were receiving threatening visits purporting to be about outstanding debts – of which they had no knowledge. In fact, none of the information about the alleged debts was accurate.

Concerned that businesses might be bullied into paying, Anglesey issued advice and information and invited concerned businesses to contact them. It was important to emphasise that debts would not be collected in this way.



PRIMARY AUTHORITY

Nine Welsh Authorities have entered into Primary Authority relationships with local businesses. Between them, they support over 30 businesses, including local Health Boards.

Shared Regulatory Services gives assured advice to support several English Primary Authorities on Welsh Government Legislation.

The participating Authorities are: **Anglesey, Denbighshire, Monmouthshire, Neath-Port Talbot, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, SRS, and Wrexham.**

THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE AND PROVIDING ADDED VALUE

Trading Standards have known for a long time that fraudsters have no regard for geographic borders, and will ply their deceit across Wales. To be truly effective in addressing cross-border crime, we have set up an enforcement infrastructure, with

the help of central government funding. Dedicated teams exist to specialise in certain frauds or areas of consumer law, and these teams have a Wales-wide remit. More information on these teams is given below.

WALES ILLEGAL MONEY LENDING TEAM (WIMLU)

This Unit has been in existence since 2008, and is managed locally by **Shared Regulatory Services (Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend)**. Illegal money lenders, otherwise known as Loan Sharks, once operated with

impunity across the country. This is no longer the case since the advent of the specialist unit. They act on intelligence, and as well as tackling the illegal practice of the loan shark, they will also have a role in victim support.

WALES REGIONAL INVESTIGATION TEAM

This team was established in 2009, and was originally known as **Scambusters**. They are managed locally by **Newport City Council**, and have a Wales-wide remit. They act on intelligence, being responsible for cross-border crimes which tend to consist of wider scams and rogue trading. They are supplemented

by a Regional Intelligence Analyst, who will collate and interrogate all-Wales information which informs Trading Standards about threats and influence strategy. The team has been increasingly effective in bringing serial rogue traders to justice, and clawing back the proceeds of crime.

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS ESTATE AGENCY TEAM

When the UK's Consumer Landscape was restructured in 2011, the demise of the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) followed. This was a massive change, and the traditional work of the OFT had to be relocated elsewhere. One of its major responsibilities had been to regulate Estate Agency work across the UK, and this aspect was transferred to **Powys County Council** with support from **Anglesey County Council**. This is a big responsibility to assimilate, but it has been working efficiently and effectively, testament that Wales has the

ability to undertake national responsibilities.

It is fair to say that the above examples are representative of innovation in practice, although it could be argued that they were born out of necessity at a national level. Individual Authorities across Wales embrace the spirit of innovation in many different ways, and these provide added value to the everyday role of Trading Standards. The following are examples:



COUNCIL FINDS NEW HOME FOR ILLEGAL CLOTHING

Counterfeit goods seized as part of an investigation, cannot be legally re-supplied in the UK whilst bearing illegal trade marks. However, by removing brand names and labels, a new use can be considered for them.

Torfaen Trading Standards did exactly this, and via contact with the National Police aid convoy, donated over 300 items of counterfeit clothing to help aid projects in Africa. The consignment included boots, hoodies, trainers and jackets, which were destined for villages in Ghana.



PEMBROKESHIRE APPEAL TO BUSINESS CONSCIENCE AROUND E-CIGARETTES

For some people there are concerns around the lack of any restriction on the sale of e-cigarettes to children and young people.

In **Pembrokeshire**, they decided to take a different approach and introduce a "responsible retailer" scheme, asking traders to refuse to sell them to under-18.

Although the scheme is entirely voluntary, responsible businesses may wish to participate while concerns about e-cigarettes continue to circulate, and consideration is given to some forms of legal control. Restricting the availability of such goods is thought to stifle any process of normalising their use amongst the young.



CLOSING REMARKS

We are very grateful if you have taken time out to read the contents of our handbook. We believe it contains enough information for you to get to know your Trading Standards service better, and share that information with your communities.

We will continue to tackle the inequalities of unfair trading, and generally serve our councils and communities as we always have. In a note of caution, we always have one eye on the future, and it would be wrong to think that our profession has survived unscathed as a result of austerity. Indeed, being small services, we probably feel the strain more acutely than most. For this reason we would ask you to note some of the main challenges ahead, as we see them.

- **The uncertainties of BREXIT, and what it might mean for future consumer rights and the interests of reputable businesses. This is particularly relevant because so much consumer law has emanated from European Directives;**
- **Our continued capacity to deliver services, considering the loss of highly experienced staff and corresponding decline in new recruits to the profession;**
- **The lack of statutory Performance indicators in order to measure service contribution and effectiveness;**

For further information on the service, we invite you to contact your Senior Trading Standards Manager.

