

POSITION STATEMENT

Trading Standards

Driving improvement in Public Health

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trading Standards Services sit within the Public Protection or Regulatory Services Departments of local authorities in Wales. The remit of the Services is wide and through the enforcement of EU, UK and Welsh Government legislation, they serve to ensure a fair trading environment for both consumers and reputable businesses.

As a public facing service, Trading Standards is ideally placed to influence the Public Health Agenda in Wales, and it does this through a variety of means including enforcement, advice to businesses, mediation and awareness-raising across a broad range of issues. As a result of its unique role, Trading Standards in Wales is a key player in the delivery of a number of Welsh Government strategies on health and of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015.

The key areas in which Trading Standards contributes to improved Public Health outcomes for Wales are as follows

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Healthy Diet
- Product Safety and accident prevention
- Enabling older residents to live independently for longer
- Financial Inclusion

GOVERNMENT AIMS, GOALS AND DRIVERS

One of the wellbeing goals contained in the *Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015* is for a **healthier Wales**; a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

A number of detailed Welsh Government Strategies set out the approach to be taken in Wales in respect of concerns that are central to the health of the nation, most notably: -

- The *Tobacco Control Action Plan for Wales* which aims to reduce the incidence of smoking among the adult population to less than 5%, thereby achieving smoke-free status.
- The *Substance Misuse Delivery Plan 2019 - 2022* which aims to reduce harm through a multi-agency approach to the problems of alcohol and drug misuse in Wales
- The *Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales* – which sets out the Welsh Government vision for everyone in Wales to have access to appropriate, affordable financial services, be supported by quality assured information and advice services and have the financial capability and motivation to benefit from the financial services available to them

In addition, legislation to regulate food labelling, most notably the The Food Information (Wales) Regulations 2014, and also food hygiene exists to safeguard the integrity and safety of the food chain for residents and visitors to Wales.

Each council in Wales sets out its **local corporate priorities** and produces **improvement plans**, and they inevitably provide a commitment to improving the health of citizens

CONTRIBUTION TO THE AGENDA

Through the enforcement of legislation outlawing **underage sales** of products such as tobacco, alcohol and solvents, Trading Standards plays a key role in preventing youngsters purchasing them and getting 'hooked'. In addition, advice and information is given to retailers to assist them in achieving compliance with the law.

Trading Standards also has responsibility for enforcement of the **tobacco display ban** and for **tobacco labelling and presentation** in the supply chain. While these controls are effective within the legitimate trade, **illegal tobacco** continues to cause a significant problem in Wales. WHOTS is becoming increasingly concerned about the health harms caused by illegal tobacco in that being half the price of genuine product, it eliminates the price incentive for smokers to quit. With smoking prevalence highest in our most deprived communities the continued availability of illegal tobacco linked to wider criminality, only serves to exacerbate health inequalities in Wales. Trading Standards Wales is proud to support the Welsh Government 'No Ifs – No Butts' campaign to encourage the reporting of illegal tobacco and this complements well the ongoing Operation CeCe illegal tobacco enforcement.

Trading Standards Wales has played a key role in the implementation of the Welsh Government's flagship legislation that has set a **minimum unit price for alcohol**. Designed to address the health concerns around the consumption of low cost, high alcohol products, the requirements of the legislation have been explained to retailers during in person visits to all alcohol retailers across Wales. More recently these initial visits have been followed up and high levels of compliance identified.

At a time of growing concern about obesity levels and generally poor diet, Trading Standards Services play a crucial role, from farm to fork, in ensuring **the quality and nutritional standards of our diet and the integrity of the food chain** itself. There are many examples of co-ordinated work across Wales in this regard, notable among them being the ground breaking surveys on nutritional standards in schools

and in residential homes, both of which led to better understanding and improvement in nutritional standards in those settings. In addition, sustained work in respect of animal feed requirements, allergen labelling and in the aftermath of the horsemeat scandal have brought lasting improvements in trade awareness and compliance.

In enforcing **product safety** law, Trading Standards has a clearly defined role in accident and injury prevention, working at all levels of the supply chain. Through market surveillance, non-conforming products can be identified and appropriate action taken to ensure that suppliers are fully aware of their responsibilities. Products may be well established or new to the marketplace, as in the case of the hover board craze of 2015, and the rapid expansion of the electronic nicotine delivery systems (e-cigarettes) market.

Co-ordination of product safety surveys enables sector specific interventions right across Wales, a recent example being during the coronavirus pandemic, when Trading Standards Services were involved in the testing of hand sanitisers, face masks and other PPE for compliance with safety specifications.

Enforcement responsibility for the safety of some of the most dangerous consumer products falls to Trading Standards, most notably petroleum and fireworks.

Through its work in **safeguarding vulnerable older adults**, Trading Standards Services play a hugely important role in scams prevention and in guarding against incidents of doorstep crime. As well as taking robust action against the rogues perpetrating these dreadful crimes, Trading Standards Services are able to empower residents to feel confident in avoiding the pitfalls of mass marketing scams and doorstep crime, often through simple initiatives such as Cold Calling Control Zones. This is a crucial element in enabling older residents in particular to feel safe in their own homes and able to continue living independently; with obvious benefits for the health and social care infrastructure.

Finally, the Trading Standards contribution to the **Financial Inclusion** agenda has a positive impact in respect of the mental health of some of the poorest and most vulnerable families in Wales. Through the work of the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit, five individuals have been jailed in the last year for their loan sharking activities. Victims are supported throughout the process and beyond to ensure that they are better equipped in the future to access affordable credit, and community engagement events across Wales promote awareness of the problems caused by loan sharking to a wider audience.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Welsh Government provides the funding that allows local authorities to support Trading Standards Services; Welsh Government is committed to the Public Health Agenda through its flagship legislative framework. As highlighted above, Trading Standards plays a key role in the delivery of the health and well-being responsibilities of local authorities and further contributes to the Welsh Government's overall Public Health objectives.

For further information please visit our website at: <https://tradingstandards.gov.wales/en/home/>