

Service Plan 2011 -12

Trading Standards Service



Foreword

This Service Plan sets out in detail the priorities of Devon County Council Trading Standards Service from April 2011 to March 2012 and includes the vision, aims and objectives that will drive our work over the next year

This plan

- includes clear links to DCC corporate and Local Strategic Partnership priorities,
- reinforces our commitment to partnership working and provides clear communication about the work of the Service including how the Service contributes to corporate priorities,
- provides a clear direction and focus for Trading Standards activities and for officers of the Service,
- reinforces our commitment to the concerns of the local communities in Devon, and
- includes a commitment to a rigorous approach to performance management in meeting the objectives of the plan and improving our service delivery.



There has been much discussion over the past few years about the changing regulatory environment but few would have anticipated the pace and scope of current developments. Generally, local authority regulatory services are finding themselves faced with large scale budget reductions at a time when there is increasing demand on their services. This increased pressure arises from:

- a) New responsibilities placed on local authority trading standards services by central government
- b) An increase in “rogue trader” activity (doorstep crime, counterfeiting, car-clocking, etc) as the economic situation impacts upon the wider community.
- c) A steady decline in general trading practices as regulatory intervention decreases and businesses feel economic pressure to seek unfair competitive advantages.

Nationally, there are significant changes in process which will dramatically affect the ways in which we tackle organised cross border criminal activities and the way in which consumer advice is provided.

Fortunately, in Devon we have built a Trading Standards Service which is robust and flexible enough to adapt to those changes in as effective and timely a manner as possible. However, this does not mean that service delivery will continue as before; the scale of the changes and reductions required will mean the cessation of certain activities. To mitigate the effect of these losses we will concentrate on evidence-based, intelligence-led interventions in those service delivery areas where we can have the greatest impact and where we can make a significant contribution to corporate priorities.

Devon Trading Standards service also recognises that local communities vary significantly, as do the issues and challenges they face. It is clear that we can only deliver results by involving local communities, building resilience and continuing to develop strong partnerships with all of those organisations that contribute to improving the quality of life in the County.

It is important that everyone who works for the Trading Standards Service uses this Service Plan to inform and guide their work and to ensure that they contribute to the delivery of our priorities and commitments to the people of Devon.

Paul Thomas,
Head of Trading Standards

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Our Vision

To contribute fully towards a high quality of life for everyone in Devon by driving the creation of a secure, sustainable and healthy trading environment.

Our Mission

To fulfil those statutory obligations of the local authority that form part of the national regulatory framework, to protect consumers and to maintain a fair and equitable trading environment in which local businesses can thrive. To do so in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders in a way that not only adds value to the services provided but also directly supports corporate priorities and benefits local communities.

Key External Partnerships:

In order to achieve its corporate, national and service goals the Trading Standards Service works in partnership with a variety of corporate services and external agencies. Certain partnerships are fundamental to the work of the Service. These include:

[Department of Business, Innovation and Skills](#)

[Consumer Direct](#)

[Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs](#)

[Devon and Cornwall Constabulary](#)

[Environment Agency](#)

[Environmental Health](#) Local District Council Environmental Health Services

[Food Standards Agency](#)

[Health & Safety Executive](#)

[Home Office](#)

[LGR](#) Local Government Regulation

[LBRO](#) Local Better Regulation Office

[Office of Fair Trading](#)

[SWERCOTS](#) Trading Standards Partnership (South West)

Devon County Council Trading Standards Service is currently in the process of reorganisation – the new structure will appear here once that process is complete.

About Us

Devon County Council Trading Standards Service helps to maintain an environment in which local businesses can compete on equal terms and ensures that the safety and economic interests of consumers are not compromised by unfair or illegal trading practices.

We use a range of techniques, including educating and advising both consumers and business on their rights and obligations, where necessary we intervene directly to ensure practices are improved.

In an agricultural community such as Devon, the enforcement of legislation designed to protect animal welfare, prevent or contain the spread of disease and maintain the integrity of the food chain becomes another key role for the Trading Standards Service.

The Service fulfils a number of the statutory obligations of the local authority and carries out certain enforcement responsibilities. In any issue relating to the enforcement of legislation our officers will always consider our [Enforcement Policy](#) when deciding what action to take. Devon Trading Standards Service also follows the [Regulator's Compliance Code](#) which sets out what business and others can expect from our enforcement staff. The Code commits us to good enforcement policies, procedures and practice.

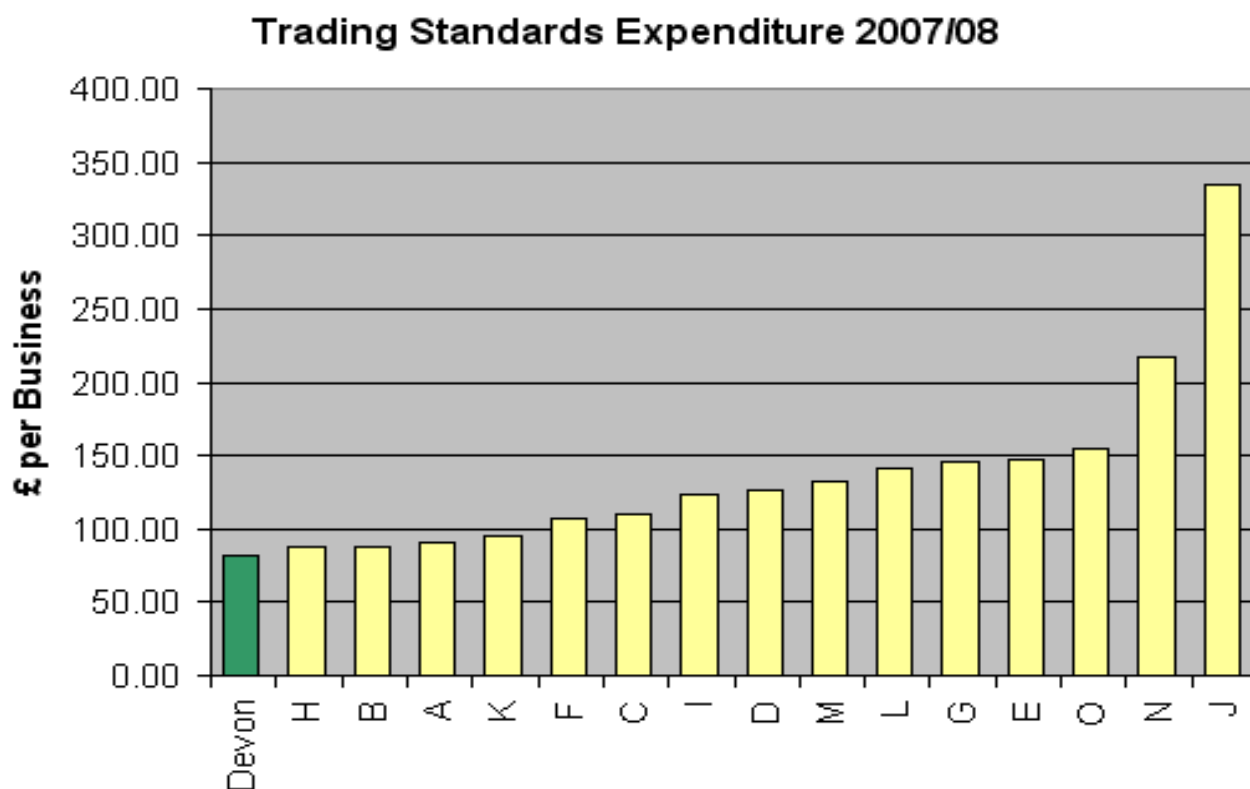
Cost of the Service

The total annual cost of our Service to the people of Devon in 2009/10 was £3.71 per head of population compared with an English Counties Trading Standards average cost per person of £3.47, (published CIPFA figures for 2009/10 - total net expenditure including capital charges).

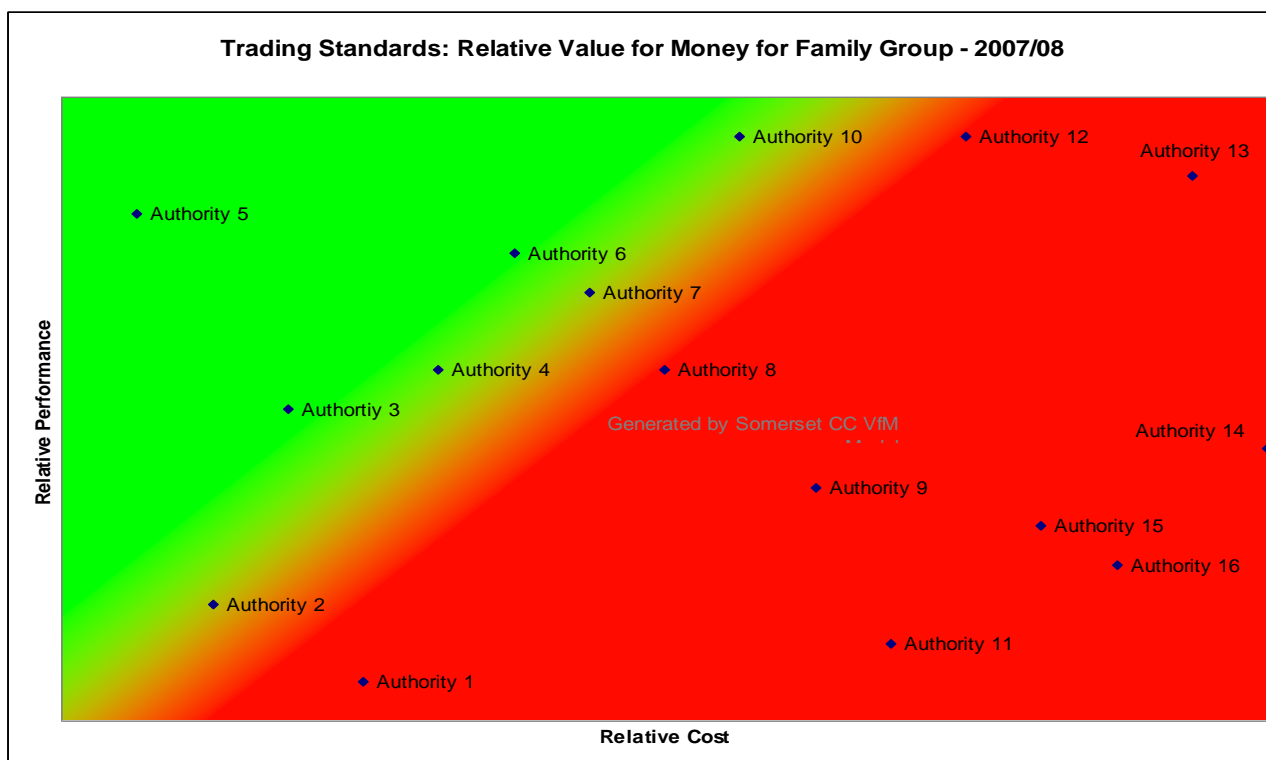
However, it is important to note that the Service has been successful in recent years in obtaining funding increases from central government for specific areas of work such as combating the sale of counterfeit goods and regulating the hygiene of food and feedings stuffs at the point of production. This extra money has led to not only improvements in service delivery but has also allowed Trading Standards to contribute more fully to corporate priorities.

The expenditure on Trading Standards per Devon business remains the lowest of all County authorities.

This cost analysis is based on the 2007/08 CIPFA Finance and General statistics, collected via the RA Revenue Estimates collection, with expenditure divided by Total Number of Businesses with a Trading Standards Risk within the county.



In terms of relative value for money, the graph below produced by independent consultants Price Waterhouse and Cooper shows Devon, referenced as *Authority 5* to be an extremely high performing authority.



Some Specific Duties

1. Weights and Measures

We ensure that (where required) goods are marked with and delivered to the correct quantity. We check the accuracy of weighing and measuring equipment – from pub to petrol station.

2. Product Safety

Goods that are sold or hired must be safe. There are detailed safety requirements for many products such as toys, furniture and electrical goods. We will advise businesses on their legal obligations to help them get things right first time. We make spot checks at manufacturing, wholesale and retail premises. We also sample and test products so that we can identify potential dangers and, where necessary, stop their supply.

3. Fair Trading

This covers a wide range of regulatory activity designed to protect consumers and create a fair and equitable trading environment for businesses. For example; we make sure that descriptions are true and accurate for all goods and services – from car mileage readings to holiday brochures; every year we seize large quantities of pirate goods including videos, audio-tapes, perfumes and sportswear; we ensure that (where required) goods and services have their prices clearly displayed and that special offers and reductions are genuine and we check consumer credit and hire advertisements and agreements for compliance with the legislation.

4. Age Restricted Products

We enforce the law relating to the sale of age restricted products including alcohol, knives, tobacco and solvents. In respect of alcohol we also act as a “responsible authority” under the Licencing Act 2003.

5. Food Standards

We keep a close watch on food throughout its production including sampling at various different stages – from farm to fork. We ensure that it is safe and of an acceptable quality, that it is correctly labelled and that any descriptions – for example "organic" or "GM Free" – are correctly applied.

6. Agriculture

We check the quality, safety and labelling of animal feeds and fertilisers. Farmers are also required to register with us if they mix or store animal feed for their own use and it includes vitamins and minerals.

7. Animal Health and Welfare

We are the enforcement authority for livestock health & welfare on farms, during transportation and at markets. We check most of the markets in Devon for this purpose and also undertake spot-checks on farms and livestock vehicles.

8. Animal Disease Control

We are responsible along with other agencies for enforcing the legal control measures

intended to prevent and eradicate farm animal disease including the licensing of livestock movements. We also have a shared responsibility for measures designed to prevent Rabies from entering the United Kingdom.

9. Other Licensing and Registration

Explosives (including fireworks)

Petroleum

Poisons

Our duties go much further than just the licensing or registration of businesses that keep these products, they also include safe storage and correct labelling.

10. Business Advice & Assistance

We adhere to the [Home Authority Principle](#) which gives priority to local businesses seeking our assistance. We give advice on legislation and on quality assurance procedures. We give talks to business groups and provide training opportunities for local businesses on specific aspects of consumer protection legislation.

11. Consumer Advice & Assistance

Consumer advice is provided in partnership with Consumer Direct South West. We analyse trends in Consumer complaints and use this intelligence to target our work. We also investigate any consumer complaint which alleges the breach of criminal legislation enforced by this service. We give talks to consumer organisations and organise displays at events such as Devon County Show.

12. Supporting Local Communities

The Service runs a number of projects designed to protect and promote the interests of local communities in Devon. Our approved trader scheme, [Buy With Confidence](#) is now part of a larger operation which extends across the South of England. Members can use the Scheme to promote themselves as a business which cares about customer service and are entitled to use the Scheme logo and the phrase 'Trading Standards Approved'.

We will continue to develop [TS Connect](#), our customer engagement project which allows us to consult and work more closely with both consumers and businesses from around Devon.

Contribution to the Devon County Council Strategic Plan

The Devon County Council Strategic Plan is currently being reviewed but at its heart are the six priorities listed below. Although Devon Trading Standards Service contributes to a wide range of targets across the Devon County Council Strategic Plan and the Devon Sustainable Community Strategy, this year the Service will need to strongly focus its resources and has identified the following priority areas as those where it can make a significant impact.

To see the wider contribution that Trading Standards can make towards strategic objectives and local community concerns, please visit our [Big Picture Pages](#)

Devon County Council Strategic Priority	Protect the most vulnerable
Trading Standards Service Priority	To protect the vulnerable from fraudulent and criminal activity.

Devon County Council Strategic Priority	Help provide the conditions for prosperity.
Trading Standards Service Priority	To provide support to local businesses by tailoring our advice and assistance to the most appropriate format for their individual needs.
Trading Standards Service Priority	To stimulate a sustainable local economy by creating a "level playing field" for reputable local business and by maintaining consumer confidence.

Devon County Council Strategic Priority	Help individuals and communities to help themselves.
Trading Standards Service Priority	To tackle anti-social behaviour, promote a healthier population and support local communities by participating in a comprehensive programme of work in relation to age restricted products.
Trading Standards	To build longer-lasting community resilience in order that identified

Service Priority	problems do not repeat themselves once the focus has shifted elsewhere.
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Devon County Council Strategic Priority	Promote a healthier environment and population.
Trading Standards Service Priority	To tackle anti-social behaviour, promote a healthier population and support local communities by participating in a comprehensive programme of work in relation to age restricted products.
Trading Standards Service Priority	To carry out a targeted programme of visits to animal disease critical control points and high risk farms to help minimise the risk of a major animal disease outbreak in Devon.



Strategic Priority: Protect The Most Vulnerable

The key priority activity for the Trading Standards Service is to protect the vulnerable from fraudulent and criminal activity; in particular doorstep crime and mass marketing scams.

During 2007/08 we launched a major initiative, 'ScamWise', aiming to educate and advise the elderly and vulnerable on how to avoid becoming the victim of bogus doorstep callers and telephone, postal, etc scams. However, there is also a strong enforcement element to this initiative; doorstep crime and rogue traders are a primary target for our investigation teams and we are building ever closer working relationships with the police and other partners to focus in on those criminals who make a living out of targeting Devon's more vulnerable population. During 2011 the tsconnect e-zine, circulated to over 3000 subscribers in Devon, will continue to provide useful information to consumers empowering vulnerable people and their carers by helping them to understand their rights and notify them of the latest scams.

This year we will continue to target those criminals who perpetrate deliberate fraud against Devon consumers and businesses. Our objective is to become more intelligence-led and evidence based; by creating an information analysis facility to inform and direct our activity. This will allow us to detect consumer problems at an early stage and to more accurately identify links to wider criminal activity.

The Office of Fair Trading reports that Scams are often targeted specifically at vulnerable or disadvantaged consumers, such as those already in debt. These consumers can suffer disproportionate levels of harm as a result of mass marketed and other scams.

OFT Scamnesty Campaign report 2010

The Office of Fair Trading estimate that consumers save £6 for every £1 spent on the Trading Standards Service

June 2009 OFT Trading Standards Impact Evaluation



Strategic Priority: Help provide the conditions for prosperity

The key priority activities for the Trading Standards Service are:

- **To provide support to local businesses by tailoring our advice and assistance to the most appropriate format for their individual needs, with particular emphasis on "home authority" businesses and new business start-ups, and by continuing to promote and develop our approved trader scheme, Buy With Confidence.**
- **To stimulate a sustainable local economy by creating a "level playing field" for reputable local business and by maintaining consumer confidence. This will include taking appropriate regulatory action against the minority of businesses that persistently or blatantly break the law and by intervening proactively in disrupting the "black economy", for example in respect of such activities as large-scale counterfeiting or car mileage fraud.**

-42 local authorities now operate the Buy With Confidence approved trader scheme.

-113 New Devon members joined the scheme during 2010/11



We carry out a focused programme of visits to local businesses and farms based upon a risk assessment of the activity. Advice and assistance are an integral part of any inspection visit and each year we plan to have direct interaction with 100% of our high priority premises.

We adhere to the "home authority" principle and pay special attention to supporting locally based businesses. We also act as a 'first port of call' for other trading standards authorities with respect to any enquiries they may have with regard to these businesses. 2011 will see further development of this relationship

and we hope to be able to tailor our contact with a particular home authority business to more fully meet their specific needs.

We continue to develop and promote our approved trader scheme, [Buy With Confidence](#). The scheme is designed to promote the highest standards of trading and now is operated extensively across the South of England. Members of the Scheme are allowed to display the distinctive logo and promote themselves as "Trading Standards Approved". Businesses who become members of the Scheme undertake to promote their business in a legal, honest and fair way. They will offer customer friendly service and respond to complaints in a constructive manner. Members are also offered free training on consumer law and a mediation facility in the event of any unresolved customer complaints.

We will continue to support local food manufacturers and caterers. Our “Recipe for Change” project supports them in reformulating their products to provide healthier choices. We also aim to offer advice and assistance, in the most appropriate format, to all new business start-ups which are brought to our attention.

Spotlight on Business Support:

- We have developed a Business Support Team which is allowing us to focus resources on the needs of Devon Businesses. We are developing closer relationships with our Home Authority Businesses, consulting with businesses on what we can do for them, and offering more meaningful interventions to new businesses to get them off to the right start.
- We will also be working closely with corporate and external partners to discover more opportunities to engage with local businesses in ways which suit them
- We will encourage use of the Made in Devon logo by offering this facility to appropriate members of our Buy With Confidence Scheme, giving consumers the reassurance that this claim has been thoroughly checked by Trading Standards
- We will be continuing our work looking at local food claims. Based on intelligence gathered during last year’s project, we intend to ensure that any claims made can be substantiated.

The advice we provide to businesses on their legal obligations aims to better equip them to trade competitively. As part of this role we operate a dedicated Business Advice Help-Line which also assists with business-to-business civil problems and, where necessary, signposts enquirers to other sources of advice. We have improved and developed our website to better assist businesses and the farming community through online advice. We have also created a dedicated area on our website allowing businesses to access resources such as off-the-peg contracts and quick reference sheets to aid the ease of legislative compliance.

We aim to reduce business to business crime through the legislation we directly enforce, and through our partnership with other regulatory agencies, such as the Police. We have also been active in the setting up of one of the country’s first regional regulatory forums, which will seek to co-ordinate the advice and assistance available to businesses from a wide range of regulatory agencies.

“Most Businesses in the South West do not feel that they are burdened by regulators and in general, small businesses welcome inspections as an opportunity to check compliance..”

Better Regulation in Food Project, South West
Regulators Forum 2010

By producing our bi-monthly tsconnect e-zine, maintaining extensive consumer advice resources on our website and through a weekly consumer affairs slot on Radio Devon, we help to create informed, educated consumers and contributes to the maintenance of a vibrant economy.

“The Foot and Mouth Crisis in 2001 cost the nation £8 billion pounds. The estimated loss of income for Devon over the next financial year was £316.4 million in conjunction with 7805 job losses. By ensuring we have plans and trained Officers specialising in this area in place, we can help to reduce the impact of a disease outbreak in future.

We maintain emergency contingency plans in respect of identified responsibilities, for example animal disease, which can have a devastating effect on local economies.

We will continue to take enforcement action against that minority of businesses that persistently or blatantly break the law in order to ensure that local businesses can compete fairly.

Our intelligence-led approach will enable us to develop problem profiles identifying those trade sectors and trading practices where there is the greatest risk of significant consumer detriment. We will continue to intervene proactively in disrupting the “black economy”, particularly in respect of such activities as counterfeiting and car mileage fraud. This year we will also be working closely with the police and HMRC to tackle the problem of illicit tobacco.

The second hand car trade is consistently the most complained about trade sector according to national complaint statistics from Consumer Direct and this Service’s own intelligence. The OFT estimates approximately 6 million cars are purchased every year, 3.6 million of which are second hand. Unsolved problems in this area cost purchasers an estimated average of £425. In 2010/11, Devon Trading Standards Service dealt with 639 complaints relating to the purchase of motor vehicles. This year we intend to provide extra support and guidance to local businesses, helping them to get it right first time.

Research shows that 23% of small to medium enterprises considered that their business was significantly affected by counterfeiting, with a large number feeling that the problem was likely to get worse in the next five years.

IP Crime Group, Supply Chain Toolkit. January 2009.

The decline in the use of traditional forecourts has resulted in an increased ability for dealers to masquerade as a private seller in an attempt to avoid their legal responsibilities and liabilities when selling vehicles. We estimate that the value of second-hand cars sold by traders disguised as private sellers is approximately £41.4 million a year

OFT Market Study report 'The second hand car market' March 2010



Strategic Priority: Help individuals and communities to help themselves.

The key priority activities for the Trading Standards Service are:

- **To tackle anti-social behaviour, promote a healthier population and support local communities by participating in a comprehensive programme of work in relation to age restricted products.**
- **To build longer-lasting community resilience in order that identified problems do not repeat themselves once the focus has shifted elsewhere.**

During 2011 through to 2012 we intend to carry out a comprehensive programme of activities in relation to the sale of age restricted products - many of which are addictive and/or contribute towards other social and community disorder problems. This programme will include:

In 2009/10 Devon Trading Standards carried out alcohol test purchases at 108 licensed premises. Sales were made in 22% of cases – representing a 12% drop in the rate from 2008/9

- test purchasing operations covering a range of products, such as alcohol and tobacco;
- advice to businesses, including one-to-one advice visits and continued distribution of our 'No proof of age, No Sale' training pack;
- continue to develop our Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) in Mid-Devon, which engages proactively with business representatives to tackle locally identified problems. Evaluate whether this partnership approach should be rolled out across the rest of Devon.

The recession is hitting people and businesses hard - Devon's economy is particularly vulnerable in times of downturn

DCC Strategic Plan, April 2011

- The exercise of our responsibilities as a 'responsible authority' under the Licensing Act 2003 to scrutinise and make representations in respect of provisions for the protection of children from harm and public nuisance.
- as a member of the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) contributing to initiatives such as the Devon Young Persons Alcohol Strategy
- developing a close working relationship with the police to tackle the problems caused by illicit tobacco. Research shows that there is a disproportionate use of illicit tobacco by the young and those on lower incomes.

The Trading Standards Service has a responsibility for the enforcement of a wide range of consumer protection legislation much of which will have an immediate impact upon the health, safety and welfare of those most in need, including children and young people and the elderly and vulnerable. The Service fulfils those responsibilities both proactively, by a targeted, intelligence-led inspection regime, and reactively, by responding to consumer complaints and other information which indicate breaches of legislation.

We will continue with the distribution of the Trading Standards produced 'Buy Wise Be Safe' DVD, designed to provide safety information to people who are about to become parents or for parents of babies and toddlers. The DVD is already being used as a training aid by midwives, health visitors and ante natal groups. The disk is available to all expectant mothers in Devon by distribution through maternity units at the first scan including RD&E and North Devon hospitals. It will also be made available at small local hospitals and children's centres as well as through Devon libraries and DCC events.

The Trading Standards Service will work closely with communities, using the principles of the tsconnect initiative, to build lasting resilience against consumer fraud and ensure that consumer protection problems do not continue to re-emerge.

We will continue to develop the resource areas of our website including more self help material. The tsconnect e-zine facilitates dialogue between Devon Trading Standards and the local communities it serves and we are maintaining our presence at the weekly consumer programme on BBC Radio Devon. Our work in this area aims to empower consumers by raising awareness of potential problems and informing them of their rights if things do go wrong. Communicating our Service's scope and existence to the public will help us gather intelligence and become more responsive to the local trading environment.

Our next step will be to try to bring about closer, more meaningful engagement with businesses and consumers, allowing us to tailor service delivery to local needs. In particular we will:

- Continue to develop the tsconnect e-zine as a modern and effective dissemination and engagement vehicle
- Consult with businesses and consumers on Service Planning and other key issues
- Increase membership of our Buy With Confidence Scheme and consult with members on key issues affecting the operation of the Scheme
- Increase consumer awareness and usage of Buy With Confidence, providing them with an easily accessible source of reputable, local businesses
- Tailor our work with major local businesses under the home authority principle to suit their individually identified needs
- Raise the profile of the Trading Standards within the community by increased promotion of the tsconnect brand and involvement in appropriate local issues
- Further develop the tsconnect website, with special emphasis on self-help material for businesses and consumers.

Strategic Priority: Promote a healthier environment and population

The key priority activities for the Trading Standards Service are:

- **To tackle anti-social behaviour, promote a healthier population and support local communities by participating in a comprehensive programme of work in relation to age restricted products.**
- **To carry out a targeted programme of visits to animal disease critical control points and high risk farms to help minimise the risk of a major animal disease outbreak in Devon.**

The work of Devon Trading Standards Service in respect of age restricted products has been outlined in the Section above. Some of these products such as alcohol and tobacco are key determinants of health inequalities between different sectors of the population and have huge financial implications for spending on health issues. Others, such as solvents, impact disproportionately on certain groups of individuals within the population but can have devastating consequences on those affected.

In the UK there are an estimated:

- 3.5 million children aged 11-17 who have consumed alcohol
- 1.5 million children aged 11-17 who drink alcohol weekly
- 630,000 children aged 11-17 who drink more than once a week

10,000 children aged 11-17 are admitted to hospital each year as a result of their alcohol consumption (6,000 aged 11-15 and 4,000 aged 16-17)

*Guidance on the consumption of alcohol by children and young people.
Chief Medical Officer - December 2009*

The Service will continue to play a leading role in the Community Alcohol Partnership in Mid Devon. Community alcohol partnerships bring together local retailers, trading standards, police, health, education and other local stakeholders to tackle the problem of underage drinking and associated anti-social behaviour.

In 2010/11 Trading Standards and Police undertook test purchasing operations asking young volunteers between the ages of 14-16 to attempt to purchase alcohol while under supervision. Within the CAP, we are determined to work with businesses, where possible, to try and find alternative, non-enforcement approaches that will yield sustainable results.

In addition, the CAP saw the introduction of an ID bailment pilot scheme to address the problem of fake IDs, an area of concern for the local retail trade and door staff. This scheme was “highly commended” at the 2010 Responsible Drink Retailing Annual awards in London.

Overall the illegal sales rate during test purchasing operations in the CAP area has dropped from 34% to 14%, and in respect of on-licences, from 48% to 13%, but we still believe there is a lot of work to be done in this area and will look to set up similar partnerships in other areas of Devon.

We will continue to inspect “critical control points”, such as livestock markets and slaughterhouses, for the purpose of animal disease prevention and to visit high risk farms. We will provide general advice to the farming community and signpost them to other sources of information such as Defra for guidance on farm animal movements. We will also work closely with the farming community to tailor the assistance we can offer and to develop further self-help material on our website.

We advise local businesses on minimising packaging waste and try to raise awareness amongst consumers about excessive packaging and the enforcement role we play in this area. We also want to enable the people of Devon to make an informed choice on energy matters; including a knowledge of legislative requirements to label new cars with fuel efficiency information and domestic “white goods” (such as washing machines and refrigerators) with energy ratings, and have again produced guidance for local consumers.

Improving our website and promoting the advice contained on it can reduce the need for officer travel to visit premises and postage costs in sending out advice sheets...

Visits to the Devon Trading Standards Buy With Confidence Page: 6331
09/10 Figure 3678 Increased by 72% (www.devon.gov.uk/approvedtraders)

Visits to the Devon Trading Standards Advice for Businesses Pages: 13048
09/10 Figure 5109 Increased by 155% (Various, Business Advice section)

Visits to the Devon Trading Standards Advice for Consumers Pages: 6742
09/10 Figure 2515 Increased by 168% (www.devon.gov.uk/tshelp/consumer)

Visits to the Devon Trading Standards Farming Standards Advice Pages: 5099
09/10 Figure 2162 Increased by 136% (Various, Farming Standards section)

Visits to the Devon Trading Standards Contact us Pages: 4053
09/10 Figure 2168 Increased by 87% (1594: Email form Completions)

Google Analytics Figures for 2010/11

We will also continue working closely with Devon Waste Management Team to ensure that goods supplied through the County’s waste recycling centres are safe, legal and fit for re-supply.

We have responsibility for legislation relating to the correct storage and labelling of petroleum, pesticides, poisons and other products potentially damaging to the environment. Our work within the petroleum retail sector also includes the responsibility for the removal of old or derelict storage tanks.

Work by our Business Support Team will include advice on how to reduce food miles and promote local food sources including collaborating with local businesses to endorse food made in Devon.

Trading Standards Service Supporting Strategies

Our aims are to provide better value for money by being more intelligence led and evidence based and to adopt a more business-like approach whilst remaining accessible to all who need our support and assistance.

The previous section highlights how the operational work of the Trading Standards Service contributes to both corporate and [Local Strategic Partnership priorities](#). This work is underpinned by a number of supporting strategies without which effective service delivery would be impossible.

Striving for excellent customer service

- To complete and maintain our new Information Management System and to improve quality monitoring procedures in order to streamline processes, support officers and provide consistency in service delivery
- To continue to monitor consumer and business satisfaction through quality surveys.
- To continue to work closely with Consumer Direct in order to provide targeted, intelligence-led interventions
- To provide business-to-business civil law advice on issues within our area of expertise.
- To further improve our business support function by tailoring service to individual requirements

Delivering through people

- To use our career progression scheme to provide a career path for officers from entry to full professional qualification and to continue our management skills programme to ensure that we retain and develop leaders for the future.
- To continue to support officers through the provision of formal professional training opportunities. The Service currently provides funding for 31 officers within the trading standards qualification framework.
- To continue to support continuous professional development and to support staff in becoming competent across the range of functions necessary to reflect the professional requirements of our evolving structure.
- To work closely within the directorate on cross service delivery improvement.
- To develop officer's technical specialisms and to recognise and use more effectively the contributions they can make in these areas.
- To maintain, develop and improve performance monitoring systems to ensure that best use is made of resources, problems are identified early and rectified and that additional support is provided where required.
- To provide opportunities for officers to give strategic input to the planning process of the Trading Standards Service and to represent the Service both corporately and externally.
- To provide opportunities for officers to manage projects and resources, developing management and leadership skills.

- To continue to develop our Health & Safety policies and procedures and, where necessary, to provide appropriate training in order to ensure the safety and well-being of our officers in all the working environments they are likely to encounter

Providing better value for money

- Developing the use of intelligence analysis to target our work more effectively.
- Measuring outcomes and impacts to demonstrate the value of our work to individuals and communities.
- To benchmark with other trading standards services, engage in appropriate peer review processes and continue to implement a robust continuous improvement plan.
- Training courses are being run in-house and offered to other Trading Standards Services nationally to provide a cost effective solution to training provision in times of reduced budgets.
- To continue to develop agile working solutions with an aim of reducing travel to and from work, improving service delivery and making more efficient use of resources.
- To continue to seek improvement and efficiency savings through the use of new technology, innovative methods of service delivery and economies of scale.
- To review and update our webpages in timely fashion to provide better access to current information, to include more self help material for those able to resolve issues without further intervention.
- To continue to develop our partnership working with an emphasis on delivering local outcomes in line with corporate objectives.
- To work more effectively with the media to identify and focus on agreed long term objectives which will be of benefit to local communities.



Key Operational Objectives for 2010/13

The way in which we contribute to corporate priorities and strategic partnership has been highlighted earlier; this section lists more specifically our key operational objectives, many of which cut across those more general thematic priorities. A full programme of work activities for 2011/12 can be viewed on our [Service Planning Pages](#).

By applying the National Intelligence Model, monthly meetings of our Tactical Assessment Group ensure that priorities are continuously reviewed and adapted to meet changing environmental needs.

Key Performance Targets

1. where appropriate to use inspection as a means of supporting businesses with advice and assistance and protecting consumers from unfair trading practices. Key inspection targets are:
 - A 100% intervention rate for all high priority premises.
 - A 100% intervention rate for 'home authority' premises. These visits will include a focus on any relevant aspects of our key intervention areas as listed below and will be tailored specifically to the business concerned to ensure maximum value is obtained by both parties.
 - A 75% high visibility presence at animal health, welfare and disease control premises.
 - To visit a minimum of 300 livestock and arable farms in relation to animal health & welfare, food and animal feed hygiene and the disposal of animal by-products on those premises. Premises will be targeted according to intelligence concerning potential non-compliance.
2. To maintain and exercise emergency contingency plans in respect of identified responsibilities, for example animal disease.
3. To ensure 100% of businesses visited are compliant with legislation at the end of the visit process.

Other High Priority Service Objectives

1. To carry out risk based inspections in certain trade sectors based on intelligence concerning potential non-compliance
2. To continue to carry out a range of initiatives (some in partnership), as detailed in our Implementation Plan, which will input in a beneficial way on local communities and contribute to strategic priorities. Particular focus will be given to our key intervention area:

Age Restricted Products: enforcement, advice and educational measures across a range of age restricted products such as alcohol, tobacco, solvents and knives.

Work in this area will be detailed by an annual Action Plan, which will set high level outcome targets and prioritise individual projects within those areas of work.

3. To continue to develop Buy With Confidence , our approved trader scheme designed to promote the highest standards of trading in Devon and throughout the South of England.
4. Intelligence led sampling of food and animal feed, including their ingredients, to ensure they are safe and to validate their nutritional profiles and any claims they make.
5. To take appropriate action in respect of consumer complaints and business and farming advice enquiries received by the Service.
6. To investigate criminal offences and take formal action where appropriate. To focus efforts on “rogue traders” and serious criminal activity
7. To further develop TS Connect as our new community engagement vehicle:
 - a. Developing the use of intelligence and analysis to target our work more effectively.
 - b. Measuring outcomes and impacts to demonstrate the value of our work to individuals and communities.
 - c. Maintaining our trading standards website pages to provide a user friendly, advice and information resource.
 - d. Disseminating our information e-zines; “TS Connect”, “Buy With

Green Target:

To ensure that staff have maximum opportunities for agile working and to provide the opportunity to work to/from and at home. To ensure that visits are planned to keep travel to work mileage to a minimum by providing agile working solutions and planning work around home locations of staff.

Equalities & Diversity Target:

- *To carry out three yearly Equality Impact Needs Assessments of service plans and bespoke assessments of major projects such as the Service re-structure to ensure the service promotes and embraces equality and diversity.*
- *To promote and support an environment which encourages opportunities for all staff through agile working policies*

Confidence newsletter” and “Farming Matters”.

- e. Involving businesses and consumers in setting and delivering objectives which are meaningful to local communities.
8. To develop a dedicated Business Support Team improving the service we offer to local Devon businesses in particular Home Authority businesses, BWC members and business start-ups.
9. To maintain and enhance the UKAS accreditation for our metrology laboratory and make full use of it as a business community resource.

Delivering Our Plan in 2010-2013

The Service operates through:

- Area Teams: which have the primary responsibility for all premises in their geographical areas. These teams are responsible for the range of core activities carried out by the Trading Standards Service;
- A Business Support Team: which delivers business and consumer support including Buy With Confidence.
- Tsconnect: responsible for database management, intelligence analysis and research, determining impact and outcomes, service publicity and public relations, quality assurance and for maintaining appropriate civil law expertise.
- Special Investigations Unit, responsible for our legal process expertise and tasked with investigating more complex instances of consumer fraud.

Potential areas of interest are identified through intelligence analysis and prioritised by our Tactical Assessment Group (TAG) which meets on a monthly basis. Task and Finish Groups are then responsible for the planning and monitoring of any major activities agreed by TAG. These Task and Finish Groups are multi-disciplinary groups, whose work cuts across team and hierarchical boundaries and often engages corporate and external partners.

Strategic Leads	
Safety and Fair Trading	Peter Greene
Food and Farming Standards	Dolores Riordan

Key Intervention Area	Lead Officer
Age Restricted Products	Jon Ellwood

Monitoring and Review of Service Activities

A Tactical Assessment Group shall meet monthly and monitor the progress of all operational activities, prioritise workloads, make adjustments to the timing of activities as necessary and make minor adjustments to operational plans. Project Plans shall be refreshed and reviewed quarterly, based on intelligence analysis reports and other research provided by the Tsconnect Team.

TAG will also make recommendations to TSMG in respect of any major adjustments to operational plans or any changes of strategic direction. TAG will consist of:

- All Operations Managers

- All Team Leaders

- Special Investigations Unit Manager

TSMG shall meet on a two weekly basis to consider general issues relating to the running of the Service. On a quarterly basis this will take the form of a Strategy Review Meeting for performance monitoring against the Service Plan and review of strategy. The chairperson of the Tactical Assessment Group will also attend the Strategic Review Meetings

Service Plan SWOT Analysis

Completed by managers and team leaders during the 2011-12 service planning process.

Strengths

- Work prioritised and regularly reviewed using available sources of intelligence. Focus on areas of greatest need.
- Evidenced based outcomes and impacts. Demonstrate value of work to local communities.
- More flexible and adaptable service delivery – responsive to local needs
- Improved planning and use of resources across the Service
- Enthusiasm and energy of officers maintained by work & development opportunities
- Resources to be channeled to priority work.
- Move to local high priority work in line with public and staff demand, national risk assessments will be a consideration but not the determining factor.
- Enhanced framework and team dedicated to business support with emphasis on:
 - Buy With Confidence which supports great local business particularly given economic climate
 - Change in emphasis of Home Authority visits to become more tailored to individual business needs and outcome focused
 - Early intervention and support for new businesses through enhanced start up support
 - Good balance between enforcement and advice/support.
- Metrology Laboratory is regional centre of excellence
- TS Connect brings community empowerment and resilience through increased awareness of Service work and rights/obligations

Weaknesses	Actions
Difficult to maintain service delivery levels with greatly reduced resource base	Intelligence led and evidence based approach to determining priorities. More flexible approach to resources and targets.
Service no longer able to contribute across the board to corporate priorities	Regular review of targets and resources. Can accommodate if corporate demand.
Reduction in consumer advice will lead to poorer service for Devon communities and loss of intelligence source for Trading Standards.	National move to transfer responsibility for consumer advice to Citizens Advice. Attempts to mitigate potential loss of intelligence at national, regional and local levels ongoing.
Continuation of Lead Officer system for KIA groups narrows involvement of other officers	Better delegation of discrete projects. Ensure opportunities provided for officers to development project management skills
Difficulty in adopting a “one service” approach to targets and resources	New dynamic to TAG under restructured Service

Opportunities

- tsconnect to utilize and develop social marketing tools
- tsconnect to develop self-help material for businesses and consumers
- Greater use of consultation mechanisms now in place will allow work to be targeted where community needs it most
- Move to Place Directorate should provide opportunities for more cross service partnership working
- Staff development opportunities will arise in new service structure
- New initiatives to enthuse and engage staff
- tsconnect to provide central core for intelligence and database management and for essential service delivery support
- Information Management System to provide a more coherent and streamlined information base for staff
- New service structure allows for better distribution of workloads across the service



Threats	Actions
Corporate service prioritisation exercise resulted in loss of healthier communities work	Corporate priorities have now changed renewed effort to seek corporate budget for these activities. Service also to seek external funding opportunities
Currently no meaningful outcome and impact indicators	Priority to be given to developing these useful indicators as part of new tsconnect initiative
Local Government Re-organization - outcome still unknown	Continue with restructure plans to make the Service as streamlined as it can be –review when final determination clear
Possibility of change to Consumer Direct which will impact directly on the service	Remain actively involved with process and represent Service interests
Foods Standards Agency visit target system abandoned - may lead to criticism by FSA	Key targets should still be achieved. New approach will be clearly justified
Intelligence led targets may result in teams not having clear picture of all Service activities.	Review of Communication Policy. Streamlined management team
Too narrow a work focus adopted.	Maintain dynamic capability through TAG, respond quickly to community needs and not be afraid to change or end a project if no longer serving a purpose
Loss of dedicated Farming Standards Advice Line	More information on our website and referral to DEFRA
Reduced Sampling Budget	Prioritise sampling for complaints and safety related incidents, seek to secure outside national funding for project based sampling

Finding out More

Supporting documents to this Service Plan are available on request from the Tsconnect team.

Contact 01392 381381 or e-mail tsadvice@devon.gov.uk

1. Annual Business Implementation Plan
2. Trading Standards Service Enforcement Policy
3. Trading Standards Service Consumer & Business Advice Policy
4. Regulator's Compliance Code
5. Equality Impact Needs Assessment and Plan

Devon County Council
Trading Standards Service
County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QH



For business advice

Please use the enquiry form on www.devon.gov.uk/tradingstandards to contact Devon's Trading Standards Service. We can only assist businesses from Devon.

Business Advice and Buy With Confidence: 01392 381381

For consumer advice



Web: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

Other

All other enquiries 01392 381381

Fax: 01392 382732

Service Opening Hours

09.00 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday and 09.00 - 16.30 Friday