

# NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND SAFEGUARDING BUSINESSES

## At a glance

We prioritise and allocate grants that come from Government to tackle high priority national and regional trading standards issues.

Our vision is to protect consumers and safeguard businesses through cross-boundary, intelligence-led enforcement projects in England and Wales. We also act as a safety net for consumers by helping ensure that products entering the UK and the food chain are safe.

We fund teams that are hosted within local authorities. These are the eCrime, Illegal Money Lending, Safety at Ports & Borders, Feed, Regional Investigations, Estate Agency, Intelligence and Scams Teams.

In the last three years National Trading Standards has prevented £472 million in detriment. This equates to £11.64 of impact for every £1 spent.

In 2016/17 National Trading Standards Teams and workstreams:

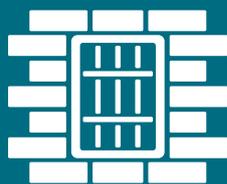


Dealt with over  
**£126.5 million**  
in consumer and  
business detriment



Had **104**  
people  
convicted  
of offences

Secured prison  
sentences **totalling**  
**174 years**



Took more than  
**£78.3 million**  
unsafe goods  
out of the  
supply chain



Made **11,317** feed  
interventions

## A message from our Chair

Every day, people fall victim to criminals who deliberately target, deceive and exploit them and it is through the work of dedicated trading standards officers that our neighbourhoods and communities are supported, protected and safeguarded.

I am proud of the contribution made by National Trading Standards to this consumer protection effort. The following pages outline some of the work our teams have delivered over the past year to tackle criminal activity, protect consumers and safeguard honest businesses. This includes our work to tackle mass marketing fraud, online fraud and illegal money lending and to protect our supply and food chains.

It has been another successful year – we're already approaching the milestone of saving £500 million in consumer and business detriment since we started our work and we continue to deliver exceptional value for money on every pound spent.

But we know our work is just the tip of the iceberg: many cases go unreported and criminals will continue to target innocent victims, often through more sophisticated methods. So we will continue to do everything we can to help protect consumers and honest businesses.

*Toby Harris*

Lord Toby Harris, Chair of National Trading Standards  
[www.nationaltradingstandards.uk](http://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk)

## SCAMS TEAM



Identified **3,268** confirmed scam victims



Delivered estimated savings of over **£23 million** in 2016/17 alone

Conducted more than **250** successful operations



**5,297** Friends Against Scams recruited



Worked with the Royal Mail to help return **600,000** pieces of scam mail to sender

## eCRIME TEAM



Uncovered more than **£1 million** of fraud last year



Disabled **500** scam Twitter accounts and nearly **200** websites



Supported **30** local authority cases

## SAFETY AT PORTS AND BORDERS TEAMS

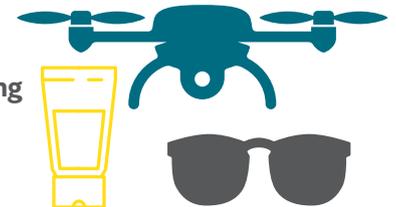


Delivered more than **£78 million** of savings to society



That's **£84** saved for every **£1** spent

Unsafe and non-compliant items included **teeth whitening kits, skin lightening creams, sunglasses, LED lights** and toys



## REGIONAL INVESTIGATIONS TEAMS



**8** Regional Investigations Teams in England and Wales have prevented **£15.3 million** of detriment

Investigations have led to:  
**67** convictions  
**135** years of custodial sentences



## NTS IN ACTION



### Operation Flip

Representatives of a mobility company misled elderly consumers into believing that they were carrying out market research. Consumers were persuaded to provide personal medical information that was later used by sales staff to mis-sell mobility-related products. Sales staff were trained to engage in aggressive commercial practices to take advantage of the frailty and vulnerability of their customers, even visiting consumers with dementia and Alzheimer's. Staff created the impression that the company had medical credentials. The products sold were unnecessary, unsuitable and expensive. Following an investigation by the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Investigation Team, the Court heard evidence about 44 victims. Both main defendants were found guilty and received prison sentences. The consumer detriment in this case was more than **£4 million**.

## ILLEGAL MONEY LENDING TEAMS

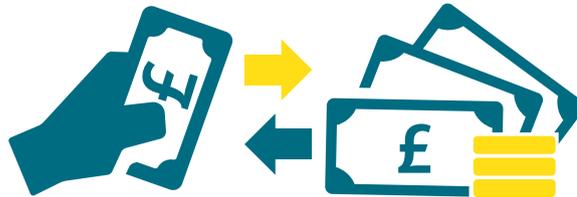


Have saved victims over **£8.5 million**



Arrested **73** suspects

Trained more than **10,400** frontline staff



Supported **2,091** loan shark victims

## ESTATE AGENCY TEAM



Handled more than **350** complaints and request for advice



Issued over **10** prohibition or warning orders

## INTELLIGENCE TEAM



produces the National Strategic Assessment to identify priorities for NTS



Developed organised crime group mapping

Assisted NTS teams and projects



## FEED HYGIENE DELIVERY PROGRAMME

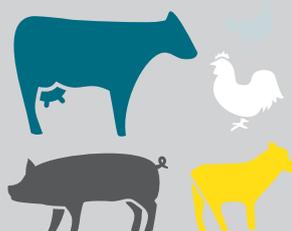


Improved compliance for inland businesses – the number of poor and varying businesses fell to **0.2%** (a fall of more than 50%)



Compliant businesses have increased from **16.5%** to **19.1%**

**11,317** feed interventions



## NTS IN ACTION



### Operation Genesis

A father and son posing as builders conned elderly and vulnerable people out of £71,000. The pair operated across south Wales from Monmouthshire to Carmarthenshire using aggressive sales tactics to intimidate victims.

- One 71-year-old man, with short term memory loss after suffering a brain injury in a cycling accident, was charged £64,500 for a three-course brick wall around his front lawn. Police were alerted after the victim withdrew £100,000 from his bank. A chartered surveyor described their work as "truly appalling", saying it should have cost £600, but recommended the wall be demolished.
- One 83-year-old woman was charged £1,450 to repair her roof, but they carried out no work on it at all.
- They applied "weed proof sand" to driveways, but merely sprayed them with "sealant" that was salt water.

Following an investigation by the Wales Regional Investigation Team, the defendants pleaded guilty to conspiracy to defraud at Cardiff Crown Court after conning 15 people, aged 50 to 97.

## REVIEWS OF NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS' WORK – AT A GLANCE

*“By setting up National Trading Standards the [Government] has... improved the coordination and case management of Trading Standards work and its integration into the overall system. There is now a system-wide framework for evaluating cases and to ensure they are managed at the most appropriate level”.*

National Audit Office report to BEIS, December 2016

*“The feed programme has been extremely successful in: delivering a planned national programme of risk based controls... Increasing local authority engagement in feed controls from 30 to 100%; ...demonstrating to the EC that the delivery of animal feed official controls is compliant with UK law”*

Review of feed programme by the Food Standards Agency, November 2016. The report recommended an extension of the programme for a further 3 years.

*“We welcome the strong assistance that Camden’s Trading Standards Team has been providing for us as our legal backstop... The spirit of collaboration and the efficiency with which work is now undertaken are to be warmly celebrated”.*

Lord Smith of Finsbury Chairman ASA.

For more information about the work of National Trading Standards, please visit: [www.nationaltradingstandards.uk](http://www.nationaltradingstandards.uk)

**NATIONAL  
TRADING  
STANDARDS**

Protecting Consumers  
Safeguarding Businesses