

OUR IMPACT IN 2020/2021

HOW WE WORK

This document provides a snapshot of the work of National Trading Standards in 2020/2021. We allocate Government funding to tackle high priority national and regional Trading Standards issues in England and Wales. This is separate to the bulk of day-to-day Trading Standards' activity delivered by local authorities across the country. Our vision is to protect consumers and safeguard businesses through cross-boundary, intelligence-led enforcement. We do this by:

- Supporting specialist teams that cover a range of issues
- Funding local authorities to deliver specific work in priority areas

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK IN 2020/21

Dealt with
£51,494,458
in consumer and
business detriment



Prison sentences totalling
57 years and 10 months
were handed down



In June 2020, the
number of "Friends
Against Scams" reached
500,000



30 people were convicted
of offences

5,470
feed interventions



2020/2021 AT A GLANCE

INTELLIGENCE



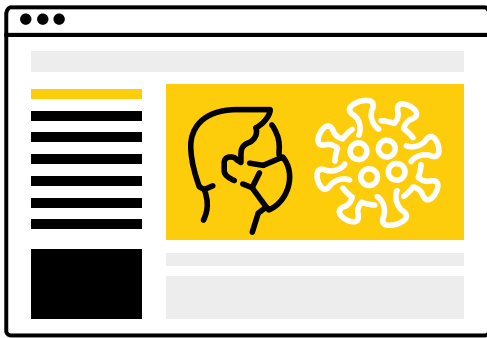
The Intelligence Team supported the Consumer Protection Partnership and Operation Etherin (a cross Government and Police forum) with intel and data relating to COVID-19 issues



43,405
intelligence logs recorded
by Trading Standards
Services in England and
Wales, a year-on-year
increase of 18.9%

Mapped 50
active organised
crime groups





855

takedowns or suspensions of websites/social media sites – many of which concerned COVID-19 scams

NTS IN ACTION



Copycat websites

- Operation Millie saw the eCrime team investigate a copycat European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) website following a referral from the Advertising Standards Authority.
- It was used by thousands of consumers who paid an 'application fee' for a card that is free through the official NHS website.
- Approximately £1,000,000 of assets have been restrained.
- The trial is listed for summer 2021.

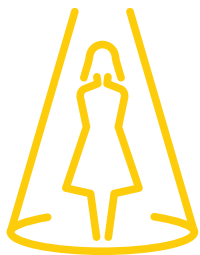
The Team has 12 current operations



The Digital Forensics Unit provided forensic support for **20 investigations**, examining 39 laptops, 76 mobile phones and 53 other devices, including iPads and memory sticks



SCAMS



Identified 1,396 victims and saved consumers £42,596,196



129,991 pieces of scam mail returned to sender or disrupted

NTS IN ACTION



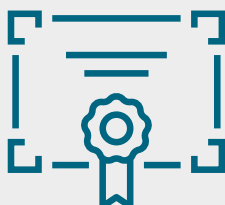
Call blocker project

The Scams Team supplied call blockers to consumers who receive scam or nuisance phone calls. On average, applicants were receiving 23 scam and nuisance calls per month and with a call blocker over 99% of scam and nuisance calls were blocked and 99% of applicants felt happier. The Team continues to use call blocking data to find scam telephone numbers, and works to develop an industry wide alert and intelligence sharing process.

A webinar shared the Team's work and encouraged local authorities and partners to secure their own call blocker projects.

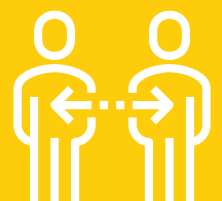


Installed 1,084 call blockers



The Scam Marshals scheme won the 'Outstanding Prevention Initiative' award, at the second Tackling Economic Crime Awards event.

The Scams Team worked with partners nationally and internationally including: Home Office, TV Licensing, Lloyds Bank, Bournemouth University, Citizens Advice, The Post Office and Legal and General.



ESTATE & LETTING AGENCY



58 warning orders, prohibition orders and penalty notices issued to estate and letting agents



637 enforcement officers signed up to the Team's e-learning course

The Team also took on an enhanced backstop role during the year to lead on enforcement to support local Trading Standards services during the COVID-19 pandemic

MAJOR INVESTIGATIONS

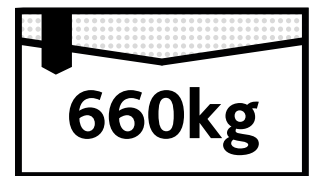
Our Regional Investigation Teams are investigating **103** live cases. Many of these are in the priority areas laid out in the following sections



ILLICIT TOBACCO



A new grant was provided to Trading Standards by HMRC to support local work concerning illicit tobacco

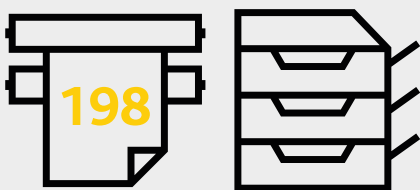


Work started at the beginning of 2021 and between January and March, over **2.3 million illicit cigarettes** and more than **660kg of hand rolling tobacco** were seized with a revenue value of **£1.2 million**

DOORSTEP CRIME



Provided funding to install **120 video doorbells** to some of the most vulnerable doorstep crime victims across London and the South East



Funded a programme to work with **198** printing businesses across the Yorkshire and Humber region to reduce the use of anonymous and untraceable leaflets and flyers by unscrupulous businesses

Secured **£304,965** as compensation for victims



NTS IN ACTION



Operation Mohawk

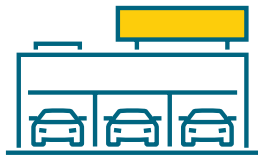
The Tri Region Investigation Team supported the London Borough of Croydon's investigation into a large-scale doorstep crime involving the pressurised selling of expensive roof repairs that were overcharged and completely unnecessary, done badly or not done at all.

Ten defendants were sentenced with four receiving custodial sentences totalling 14 years 3 months, in addition to five getting suspended sentences totalling 5 years 8 months.

Five community penalties were also issued totalling 740 hours of unpaid work, as well as one electronic tag and one 30 day rehabilitation order.

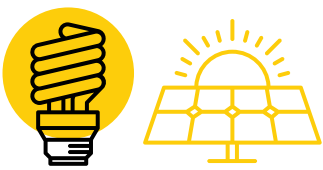
USED CAR MARKET

Six investigations were funded to tackle detriment in the used car market, covering issues from clocking and incorrect MOT dates to not declaring manufacturers' safety recalls



Tackled the eight most complained about used car traders in the south east region reducing complaints by 96% and consumer detriment to £0 for these traders

ENERGY RELATED FRAUD



Have

Six

ongoing investigations into the installation and maintenance of renewable energy systems, mis-selling of energy supply and large scale defrauding of government 'green' grants

In one case, three criminals were sentenced to a combined total of **9¼ years** after being found guilty of 34 offences for mis-selling roof and wall coatings



NTS IN ACTION



Operation Swarm

In August, three scammers were sentenced after being found guilty of 34 offences for mis-selling roof and wall coatings they alleged would help reduce bills by improving the thermal properties of houses, as well as batteries they claimed they would retro-fit to existing solar panels, providing consumers with reserves of free electricity to tap into. Often no products were ever supplied and fitted.

The Central England Regional Investigation Team obtained evidence from 53 victims, 18 of whom were over 70. This included one lady in her 90s who paid £1,200 for a wall coat which the workers spent less than 15 minutes applying.

SUPPLY CHAINS IN MARKETS



£5 million worth of counterfeit products seized

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Operation Beorma

In December, the Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CEntSA) Regional Investigation Team led a multi-agency exercise, supported by Birmingham Trading Standards and the Illegal Money Lending Team, in relation to a large-scale counterfeit clothing factory in Leicester.

Counterfeit products were seized, including 500,000 loose labels waiting to be attached to blank products. The seizure is believed to have been the largest of its kind for a decade.

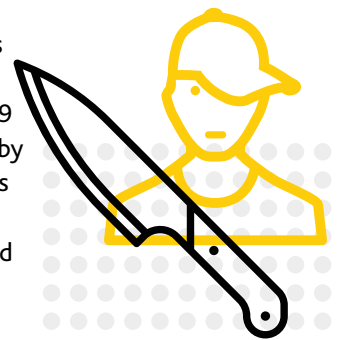
A significant amount of intelligence has been identified as a result of this year's activities and this will provide information to support further work.

For their work on Operation Beorma, the NTS Intelligence Team, Central England Regional Investigation Team and Birmingham Trading Standards won a national Anti-Counterfeiting Group award for this ongoing operation



UNDERAGE KNIFE SALES

Action to combat sales of knives sold by national retailers to children made a difference. 3,859 test purchases were carried out by local authority Trading Standards during this project. There was a 15% reduction in sales compared to previous years



Work carried out by Croydon Trading Standards between 2018 and 2021 also led to 17 successful prosecutions and **£179,755** in fines against businesses selling knives to children



**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Protecting Consumers
Safeguarding Businesses

For more information about the work of National Trading Standards, please visit: www.nationaltradingstandards.uk