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Approved distribution list:

All local authorities in England and Wales, National Trading Standards Intelligence Team, Regional Intelligence Analysts and Regional Coordinators, Consumer Protection Partnership members, Government Departments and other public authorities with enforcement responsibilities

Understanding National Trading Standards Governance and Accountability

1. What is National Trading Standards (NTS)?

National Trading Standards (NTS) was established in 2012, by the Government, as part of its changes to the bodies responsible for consumer protection and advice. The primary role of NTS is to undertake those consumer protection activities, best done via Trading Standards, but which require a cross border, regional or national focus. With the exception of Estate Agency work (which operates UK wide) NTS's role is England and Wales. Separate arrangements are in place in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

NTS receives grants and funds from a range of Government Departments or Agencies to carry out this work which is then commissioned via NTS funded teams (hosted by local authorities), regional groups of local Trading Standards Services or individual local Trading Standards Services. The NTS Board sets priorities for this work and oversees performance and delivery of commissioned work alongside the provision of robust reporting and financial oversight.

Each local authority remains legally accountable for all the work carried out by their local Trading Standards Service, all enforcement decisions for specific matters, whether funded by NTS or not.

NTS is a member of the Consumer Protection Partnership (CPP). The Partnership comprises all the key national bodies involved in consumer protection, including the Competition and Markets Authority, the Financial Conduct Authority and Citizens Advice. The Partnership provides a mechanism through which members work together to maximise the use of resources across the Partnership to tackle concerns.

2. Governance arrangements for NTS

Government oversight

Regular meetings are held between the relevant senior officials and Ministers for the various Government Departments or Agencies who provide funding. Each department sets its own KPI's and reporting requirements which NTS fulfils.

Strategic oversight

The NTS Board is responsible for allocating funding received from Government to ensure that local authorities are effectively responding to national and regional threats. To enable them to carry out this role effectively, the Board also acts as the key decision-making body for the development and agreement of national strategic priorities for consumer protection work, agrees the most effective delivery mechanisms and carries out performance management against the agreed activities. An annual business plan and national control strategy is put in place to support this role.

The Board meets on a quarterly basis and contains Heads of Trading Standards representation from each English region and Wales. It operates to the NTS Board [Terms of Reference](#).

The Board is also responsible for nominating membership and overseeing the activities of specific governance groups.

Details of members and the current business plan are available on the [NTS website](#).

Delivery oversight

A number of governance groups operate to make decisions about specific areas of delivery and funding, which are –

- Estate and Letting Agency Teams' Governance Group
- Intelligence Governance Group
- E Crime and Investigations Governance Group
- Scams Governance Group
- National Tasking Group
- Tobacco and Vapes Governance Group

Each of these groups is responsible for setting the priorities and principles against which delivery is carried out and allocating grants for their workstreams. They are also responsible for overseeing financial and performance monitoring, maintaining awareness of capacity and competency, ensuring best value for money and promoting effective communications to secure successful delivery.

Each governance group provides regular updates to the Board and can put forward matters to the full Board where strategic input is required.

Full terms of reference are available for each governance group upon request.

Technical support

The NTS Programme Office also receives funds from some central government departments and agencies to operate specified national groups that provide technical support to local authorities on specific policy areas. Each of these groups contains representation from the relevant government body, each local authority region in England and relevant devolved administrations, alongside delivery partners where appropriate. Guidance produced by the groups is specifically for local authorities and is approved by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO).

3. Accountability

3.1 NTS decision making

The NTS Board and governance groups detailed above are responsible for making decisions about the allocation of funding and delivery for specific government grants in accordance with the grant or funding agreements issued by Government.

Decisions made by either the NTS Board or governance groups can be queried by local authorities through their regional NTS Board member.

Should individual businesses, members of the public or other bodies have queries or formal complaints about NTS work or decision making then they should contact nationaltradingstandards@actso.org.uk .

3.2 Local authority activities

All activities undertaken by local authority Trading Standards Services are governed through existing local policies and processes. As such, any queries about any activity carried out by individual Trading Standards Services should be raised directly with the relevant local authority.

Information about local Trading Standards Services can be found on the relevant local authority website, including their enforcement policy and contact details. If businesses or members of the public are unhappy with the response they have received and do want to raise a formal complaint, then this must be done via the relevant local authority corporate complaints procedure.

Ultimately, once these processes have been exhausted then complaints can be raised with the relevant Ombudsman..

For more details, see <http://www.log.org.uk- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman How to complain about Trading Standards>

For complaints about local authorities in Wales this is the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales <https://www.ombudsman.wales>

4. Understanding the role of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)¹ and Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO)² within NTS

¹ CTSI is a membership body that represents trading standards professionals across both the public and private sectors. Further information can be found at <http://www.tradingstandards.uk/home.cfm>

² ACTSO is a professional body specifically for Heads of Trading Standards in England and Wales.

As it is not a “public body”, in order for NTS to operate:-

- CTSI operates a “client account” to facilitate the receipt and onward allocation of funds and provide financial and auditing functions
- ACTSO Ltd employs staff to deliver the NTS Programme Office.

5. National Trading Standards (NTS) policies

NTS makes every effort to ensure that it operates in a transparent and fair manner in all circumstances, including the employment of staff, procurement, complaints and sharing information. We have policies in place to govern all these areas, which are available on request to nationaltradingstandards@actso.org.uk

6. How to contact National Trading Standards (NTS) for more information

Further information about National Trading Standards can be found on their website at www.nationaltradingstandards.uk. Should you have any queries about the information in this document please do not hesitate to contact us directly -

National Trading Standards
1 Sylvan Court
Sylvan Way
Southfields Business Park
Basildon
Essex SS15 6TH

Email: nationaltradingstandards@actso.org.uk