

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Protecting Consumers
Supporting Business

**ANNUAL
BUSINESS PLAN
2026-2027**

Foreword

I am very pleased to present the National Trading Standards' (NTS) Business Plan for 2026-27 which builds on another successful year.

NTS uses Government funds to help Trading Standards Services to prosecute, disrupt and prevent criminals from defrauding vulnerable consumers and undermining legitimate business by breaking consumer protection laws. This work supports local economies and limits the presence of illegal businesses on the high street. It includes work to tackle the supply of illicit tobacco and vapes. We also help to maintain standards in the estate agents' and letting agents' markets and protect food supplies and farmers' export markets by ensuring that animal feed is safe.

Our priorities for 2026/27 are set using our strategic intelligence assessment. They include: doorstep crime, lettings and estate agency, scams, illicit vapes and tobacco, used cars, counterfeiting and animal feed.

This year NTS will receive £12.68 million from the Department for Business and Trade, £2.4 million from the Food Standards Agency to deliver our feed programme, £1.3 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support work relating to estate and letting agencies, £1.23 million from DHSC to tackle illegal vapes and £2.73 million from HMRC to disrupt the supply of illicit tobacco. This business plan aligns those priorities and the available funding into four strategic objectives and key activities to be undertaken in 2026/27.

Work is overseen, and priorities determined, by the NTS Board, which I chair. The Board comprises ten senior Heads of Trading Standards from England and Wales. We work with many other partners, including the Police, the Home Office, the Intellectual Property Office, the Advertising Standards Authority, the Competition and Markets Authority and the Office for Students.

The Trading Standards system is unique in having an integrated system that operates locally, regionally, and nationally to make all these various achievements possible. We are grateful for the invaluable support we receive from local authority Trading Standards Services, Regional Coordinators and our other partners without whom our success would not be possible.



Lord Michael Bichard, Chair National Trading Standards

Strategic Objectives

Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4
Provide a framework for the effective sharing of intelligence to identify and tackle emerging threats and support Trading Standards across England and Wales.	Ensure effective delivery and co-ordination of enforcement of serious consumer protection crime, including mass marketing scams and the disruption of illicit tobacco and vape markets.	Deliver a programme of animal feed and food hygiene enforcement in England to ensure the safety of the food chain and protect the UK export market.	Deliver a programme of national enforcement, advice and support for local authorities in the property market, in particular the activities of Estate Agents and Letting Agents.

A national Strategic Assessment was undertaken and, using this information and the work specifically commissioned by Government, the Board agreed that the key priorities for 2026-27 will be:

- Doorstep crime and cold calling.
- Lettings (England only).
- Mass marketing fraud/scams.
- The importation of illicit vapes (England only).
- Used cars.
- Illicit tobacco.
- Other fair-trading issues.
- Intellectual property.
- Estate agency.
- Animal feed work.

NTS will also have the following cross cutting themes and enablers, as they impact on each priority area:

- eCrime and the use of social media/online platforms.
- Serious and organised crime.
- The cost-of-living crisis.

NTS has developed a series of activities that underpin these objectives. Detailed actions to address the priorities are contained in our National Control Strategy.

The NTS Board may also agree to deliver other Trading Standards related activities where requested to do so by Government, during the year.

Objective 1 - Provide a framework for the effective sharing of intelligence to identify and tackle emerging threats and support Trading Standards across England and Wales.

- Using all available intelligence and information to make informed decisions and encouraging national, regional and local use of the NTS Intelligence Operating Model
- Enhancing collaboration by sharing relevant intelligence with enforcement partners.
- Producing intelligence products to help inform tasking and intelligence led prevention and enforcement.
- Horizon scanning to identify emerging threats and any gaps in consumer protection and working with partners to tackle issues.
- Providing a NTS' intelligence network that includes our National Intelligence Team and a network of Regional Intelligence Teams/Units.
- Enabling all local authority Trading Standards Services in England and Wales to have direct access to the Sanctions Information Database and a national Intelligence database.
- Collaborating with the Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council and host local authorities to secure access to the Law Enforcement Data Service which is replacing the Police National Computer.
- Providing relevant NTS Teams and regions with access to various databases such as the Police National Computer and undertaking appropriate Police National Database searches via the NTS Intelligence Team.
- Using Organised Crime Group mapping and national flagging to target and tackle criminals engaged in consumer protection crime.
- Using Serious and Organised Crime System Tasking to assess regional and national threats consistently and to prioritise tasking.
- Working with HMRC to share and develop intelligence relating to illicit tobacco activities.

Objective 2 - Ensure effective delivery and co-ordination of enforcement in relation to serious consumer protection crime, including mass marketing scams and the disruption of illicit tobacco and vapes markets.

We will do this by:

- Providing a network of NTS Regional Investigation Teams and supporting other enforcement activities to tackle regional and national consumer and business detriment and ensuring those engaged in criminal activities are punished and/or their activities disrupted.

- Providing support for a coordinated programme of enforcement activities addressing matters of regional and/or national significance in the following areas of concern: used cars, fair trading, doorstep crime, scams, mass marketing fraud and the distribution of counterfeit goods in specific identified markets.
- Providing a NTS eCrime Team to tackle consumer and business detriment caused by eCrime, taking down unlawful websites and digital content for scams, consumer fraud and illicit tobacco.
- Establishing a programme of enhanced support to local authority investigations by the NTS eCrime Team.
- Supporting a national Doorstep Crime Working Group of Trading Standards' experts from across the UK.
- Providing national expertise in the investigation and prevention of eCrime and a national digital forensic capability to support Trading Standards' related cybercrime enforcement.
- Providing a NTS Scams Team to tackle consumer detriment caused by mass-marketing scams by disrupting the mechanisms scammers use and to work with local authorities and other partners to support safeguarding of victims.
- Deliver a programme of work, via the NTS Scams Team, to disrupt the criminal activities of fraudulent call centres.
- Coordinating a programme of work to disrupt the supply of illicit tobacco in local communities by seizing illicit tobacco and raising awareness of the work and associated criminality in local areas.
- Supporting the system to enable local authorities to make referrals for civil sanctions, for the supply of illicit tobacco, to HMRC.
- Coordinating a programme of work to tackle the supply of illicit vapes at ports of entry in England.
- Explore illegal on-line sales of vapes and tobacco and develop strategies to better tackle these markets.
- Maintaining a relationship with the IPO and supporting regional IPO officer work with trading standards to challenge intellectual property crime.
- Establish an Intellectual Property Investigation Unit to help tackle IP crime using civil and criminal enforcement.
- Participating in the Government's cross-cutting fraud and illicit trade initiatives to help reduce high street criminality.
- Providing the Advertising Standards Authority and Office for Students with a backstop enforcement regime to ensure the continued success of their self-regulation model.
- Supporting the regional Trading Standards' infrastructure to enable them to co-ordinate Trading Standards' activities at a regional level.

Objective 3 - Deliver a programme of animal feed and food hygiene enforcement in England¹ to ensure the safety of the food chain and protect the UK export market.

We will do this by:

- Overseeing a programme of Local Authority inspections and sampling of the animal feed sector to ensure compliance with standards and protect animal health.
- Overseeing a programme of food hygiene at primary production (farms) inspections, at the start of the food supply chain, to ensure compliance with standards and protect health.
- Ensure the integrity of the food chain, and the UK export market, by undertaking official controls on imported animal feed at points of entry in England.
- Supporting local authority expert panels on feed to help ensure consistency of feed enforcement and publish guidance and best practice.

Objective 4 - Deliver a programme of national enforcement, advice and support for local authorities in the property market, in particular the activities of Estate Agents and Letting Agents².

We will do this by:

- Providing a NTS Estate Agency Team and an NTS Letting Agency Team to fulfil the statutory functions as lead authorities under the Estate Agents Act 1979, Tenant Fees Act 2019 and relevant lettings legislation.
- Issuing guidance and providing advice for Local Authorities as Lead Enforcement Authority and encouraging best practice through the provision of training courses and webinars.
- Providing the Property Agent Checker for Local Authority partners to check the membership status of property businesses with mandatory member organisations.
- Act as a back stop to for tackling consumer and business detriment caused by unacceptable practices in the sector and taking enforcement action where required.
- Support Local Authorities on the implementation of parts of the Renters Reform legislation which implement changes to the Tenant Fees Act and its enforcement.

¹ A similar programme of enforcement by Local Authorities in Wales delivers similar work but this is not delivered by NTS.

² Work in relation to estate agents is UK wide. Work in relation to letting agents is delivered for England only. Similar work is undertaken in Wales but not delivered via NTS.

Partnership working

NTS will continue to demonstrate its importance and effectiveness to our partners and to Government. This will include:

- Continuing to work with Trading Standards colleagues in Northern Ireland and Scotland and with other enforcement partners across the UK to ensure that the consumer protection regime is as successful as it can be.
- Working closely with regional Trading Standards groups, who are crucial to the success of NTS' work.
- Engaging with Government to influence them in relation to Trading Standards' matters.
- Offering the NTS' model for the commissioning of relevant elements of Trading Standards' work.
- Creating a comprehensive national picture of the achievements of NTS.
- Supporting the Consumer Protection Partnership.
- Working with all relevant enforcement agencies and partners.

Published 23rd April 2026. For any enquiries about the content of this plan, please email nationaltradingstandards@actso.org.uk or call 0345 608 9515. Alternatively, you can write to National Trading Standards, 1 Sylvan Court, Sylvan Way, Southfields Business Park, Basildon, Essex SS15 6TH.