

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND SAFEGUARDING BUSINESSES

FOREWORD

It is seven years since National Trading Standards was established. In that time, our teams have successfully tackled £785 million in detriment, delivering a return on investment of almost £12 for every £1 spent. This year we've continued to disrupt criminal activity and put perpetrators behind bars. This leaflet outlines our key achievements in 2018/19.

Every year I am reminded of the enthusiasm, professionalism and desire of the Trading Standards community to do the right thing by consumers, particularly in the face of significant resource constraints.

Looking forward, my sense is that there is a growing understanding that proper and effective enforcement is needed. Issues like the appalling tragedy that was Grenfell, Brexit, the explosive growth of on-line markets, personalised marketing and the rise of Fulfilment Houses have all shone a spotlight on enforcement and consumer protection.

Thank you to all trading standards professionals and consumer protection partners for your support for National Trading Standards over the past seven years.

Toby Harris

Lord Toby Harris, Chair, National Trading Standards

HOW WE WORK

We allocate grants that come from Government 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 also act as a safety net by helping ensure that products entering the UK and the food chain are safe.

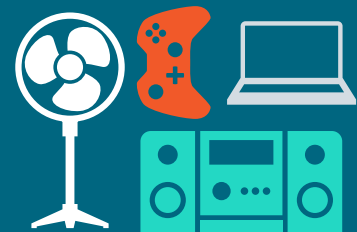
Between April 2014 (when all NTS Teams were fully functional) and March 2019, NTS has tackled **£785 million** in consumer and business detriment, delivering £11.84 impact for every £1 spent.

We do this by:

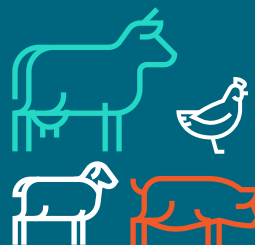
- Supporting specialist teams that cover a range of issues
- Funding local authorities to deliver specific work in priority areas

A snapshot of our work in 2018/19

Dealt with over
£131.1 million
in consumer and
business detriment



Took more than
£92.8 million unsafe
and non-compliant goods
out of the supply chain



Delivered **7,539**
Feed interventions

Prison sentences
totalling **64**
years and 11
months were
handed down



Had
47
people
convicted
of offences



Fines of
£30,000
were issued

2018/19 AT A GLANCE

THE SPECIALIST TEAMS WE SUPPORT COVER:



Scams



eCrime



Estate Agency



Intelligence



Safety at Ports & Borders



Regional Investigations

LIVE REGIONAL CASES:



We are investigating **97 cases** of serious consumer and business detriments.

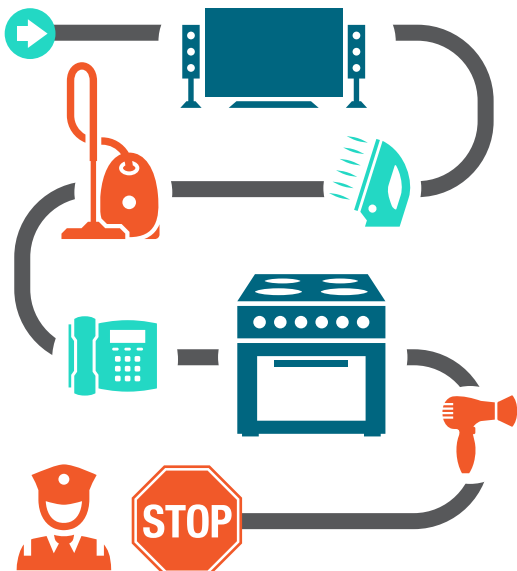
BUILDING CAPACITY:



The NTS eCrime Team delivered training to **150 enforcement officers** on how to spot a scam website and the Intelligence Team trained all regions in how to use the Management of Risk in Law Enforcement system to assess intelligence and prioritise work.

PRODUCT SAFETY:

We prohibited **600,000+ unsafe** and **2.2 million+ non-compliant** items entering the UK supply chain, saving more than £92 million in costs to society and prevented an estimated **2,002 serious injuries** and **1,716 fires**, and **6 lives** were saved.



SCAMS:



The NTS Scams Team has saved consumers **£13,574,763** this year through its disruption work and support for local authorities.



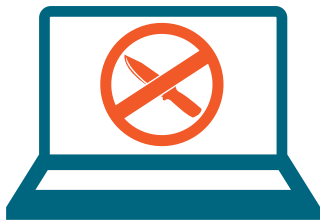
We also recruited **172,760 Friends Against Scams**, taking the total to more than **210,000**.

ESTATE AGENCY WORK:

13 prohibition orders were given to **estate agents** in the UK and we handled more than **807 complaints**.

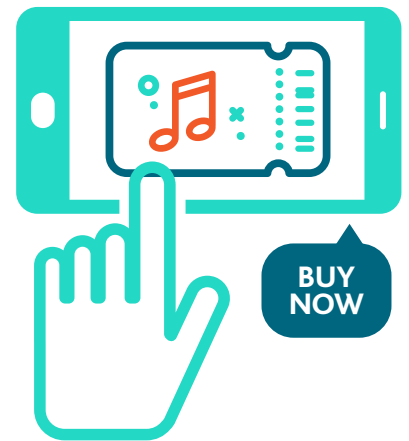


In 2018/19 we have also focused on key areas including:



KNIFE SALES TO UNDER 18s:

We delivered a project to tackle the underage sales of knives. **21 prosecutions** are ongoing and **40 warning letters** have been issued. **1,019 test purchases** were attempted on retail premises with **121 underage sales (13%)**. **100 test purchases** were made online, which resulted in **41 underage sales (41%)**.

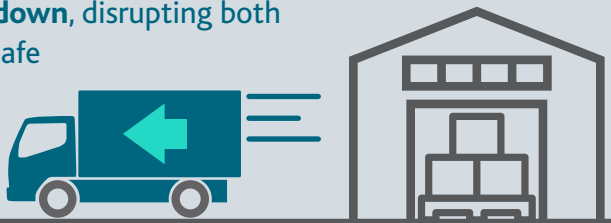


SECONDARY TICKETING:

We continue to work alongside the Competition and Markets Authority in tackling the online resale of event tickets. Three fraud investigations are ongoing and we have tested the fining powers for ticketing.

FULFILMENT HOUSES:

We helped local Trading Standards to gather intelligence, investigate and take enforcement action to protect consumers from dangerous products being sold via Fulfilment Houses. This secured multiple seizures of goods and resulted in **4 Fulfilment Houses closing down**, disrupting both the supply of unsafe goods and tax evasion.



USED CARS:

We are prioritising work to clamp down on mileage-adjusted cars and sales of unsafe vehicles. **6 investigations** were supported in local authorities and **2 disruption projects** have been undertaken.



DOORSTEP CRIME:

We provide ongoing support to multiple Doorstep Crime investigations being led primarily by the NTS Regional Investigation Teams and published an NTS Doorstep Crime eBook for local Trading Standards staff.



FEED HYGIENE:

We continue our work to ensure the integrity of the animal feed chain and to protect food safety and UK meat exports. We delivered **7,539 activities** including **ports checks, sampling, visits to farms** and **inland inspections**.



ENERGY:

We are supporting efforts to tackle **energy related scams**, mainly via our Regional Investigation Teams with plans to broaden this work significantly next year.



ASA BACKSTOP:

We provide the legal backstop for the Advertising Standards Authority. Our support has covered enforcement activity around homeopathy and other complementary and alternative therapies, secondary ticketing, scams, online trading, estate agency and 'copycat' websites.

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“National Trading Standards...provide a valuable means to share intelligence between authorities and to identify and prioritise cases for enforcement. Over the past three years, NTS has worked with local authorities to tackle £472 million in consumer and business detriment with a core budget of £40 million.”

Consumer Green Paper, Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2018

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NTS IN ACTION

Operation Slick

The perpetrator ran a tarmac repair business between February 2015 and August 2016 across England and Wales, trading under several names to avoid detection. He used a lorry specifically designed to resemble an 'official' vehicle to cold call customers to obtain driveway repair work. He would select secluded properties in remote areas with longer driveways to maximise profit and minimise the chances of being caught.

The work was consistently of an extremely poor standard, with just loose stone chippings applied to existing driveways with no solution used to hold it in place. Customers would later discover the work they had paid for with a 'five year guarantee' was worthless. Victims were charged between £500 to £7,000 usually in cash. Some customers were taken to local banks to withdraw money. The investigation uncovered £600,000 cash and card payments in just over a year.

The perpetrator was found guilty of breaches of the Fraud Act 2006 and sentenced to 5 years 6 months in prison. Anthony Rees, an investigator from the Team, received a Judge's commendation for his work on this case.

Operation Cassock

We provided support for an investigation instigated by The Premier League and the Federation Against Copyright Theft. Two criminals sold hundreds of devices that enabled their customers to view Premier League football via unauthorised access to channels, defrauding The Premier League, Sky and BT. Many devices did not work properly.

Their criminal activity led to the pair earning at least £1.5m through the sale of the devices and other equipment. This will be subject to confiscation proceedings. They were found guilty of conspiracy to defraud and each was sentenced to 4½ years.

**NATIONAL
TRADING
STANDARDS**

Protecting Consumers
Safeguarding Businesses

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