

## **Appendix D: Case Studies**

### **Case Study 1 – Protecting Vulnerable Consumers from Scams**

In 2013, Surrey Trading Standards Service became one of the first to sign up to the work of the 'National Scams Hub' funded by the National Trading Standards Board.

It all started when the City of London Police intercepted a list of names and addresses of potentially vulnerable consumers who might be susceptible to invitations from scam companies to send money for 'free' gifts or to claim large cash prizes. About 1,000 of these lived in Surrey and Trading Standards Officers identified the most vulnerable through data already held and a new questionnaire.

A list of around 80 high priority Surrey residents was drawn up and officers visited each home personally. In most cases, these residents were sending off cash regularly to scam companies but receiving nothing in return. To help them resist these approaches Surrey Trading Standards used material from the national scam charity 'Think Jessica' combined with in-house publicity.

Our media breakthrough came in the form of an elderly Farnham resident, Sylvia Kneller, who, we discovered, had sent more than £200,000 over 50 years to scam companies. Sylvia agreed to let us highlight her case in the media to educate others in a similar position. The resulting full front page story in 'The Sun' generated a huge media response, which provided an opening to reach other potential victims with our key messages. As a result, Sylvia has been recognised with a Trading Standards Institute 'Hero Award', presented at the national TSI conference in Harrogate.

Surrey Trading Standards have also now produced an innovative 'Scam Sticker Pack' to help other vulnerable consumers and are sharing information with Buckinghamshire and other services where new victims are identified.

#### **How will a joint service help protect vulnerable residents from Scams such as this?**

We will share best practice from each existing authority, building on what works well.

We will have an enhanced intelligence capacity to help identify and respond to issues and protect and alert potential victims.

We will have an enhanced enforcement capacity, together with the specialist skills required to support vulnerable victims and to bring perpetrators to justice and to tackle serious frauds.

We will be better placed to seek additional funding from national bodies such as the National Trading Standards Board to tackle examples of serious cross border scams and frauds.

## **Case Study 2 – Supporting Local Businesses and the Local Economy**

In January 2013, Surrey Trading Standards had 5 Primary Authority partnerships, which are recognised partnerships with businesses to enable them to receive assured advice. Through a concerted campaign, by June 2014 we had established 33 partnerships, along with a co-ordinated partnership with the Association of convenience Stores.

We attribute our rapid growth to:

- Focusing on the needs of the businesses and demonstrating the benefits to them of a Primary Authority partnership.
- Creating flexibility in the offer – businesses can mix and match from range of options to obtain the services that most match their needs.

We initially offered a choice between Pay as You Go and Bespoke partnerships - all including trading standards, environmental health and fire safety elements via a multi-agency approach.

From listening to business feedback we added a Fixed Price package, including a set amount of advice for businesses that need to be able to quantify their commitment. And we'll be dividing Pay As You Go action plans into smaller projects with individual quotes.

One of the benefits of our Primary Authority partnerships is a Single Point of Contact option for regulatory services, and 11 of the 33 have chosen this option. Working with our Districts and Boroughs, not only is a single contact point easier and more appealing for businesses, but it enables us to manage overlaps of regulatory responsibilities and support for our fellow regulators. This saves time for all of us, and helps with promoting the scheme.

Closer working with other regulators has expanded to include a pilot with Surrey Fire and Rescue and we are currently rolling this out with 6 businesses seeking action plans for fire advice.

We also have a contract with our Public Analyst enabling us to submit samples on behalf of businesses and offer fixed prices for label checks for food and cosmetics.

### **How will a joint service help enhance services for businesses in Surrey and Buckinghamshire**

We will share these examples of best practice, using the skills and experience gained to date to offer enhanced services, on a cost recovery basis, to businesses.

### **Case Study 3 - Protecting Children from Death or Serious Injury**

In July 2012 Buckinghamshire Trading Standards became involved in the tragic investigation of a stone fire surround which had fallen and fatally crushed a 6 year old child. An experienced team were quickly assembled to work alongside the Police and HMRC to investigate what had occurred and to try to stop a similar event occurring in the future. The installer of the fire surround has pleaded guilty to failing to ensure the victim was not exposed to risks to her health and safety as he worked in her parent's home and has been sentenced to 8 months imprisonment.

The unique expertise and skills within Buckinghamshire Trading Standards enabled the team to focus on getting to the root cause of the event, which led to an investigation into understanding how safety measures could be improved. National Trading Standards Board funding enabled the commissioning of research with the Imperial College London to understand and recommend a safest installation method. As a result of this research and subsequent laboratory tests the National House Building Council (NHBC) have created new installation standards and the Stone Federation of Great Britain has updated their national guidance for installation of stone fireplaces.

Buckinghamshire Trading Standards drove a publicity campaign to raise awareness of potentially unsafe installations of stone fire surrounds to consumers throughout the County and further afield. Information on the safest installation method, reinforcement of the surrounds with mechanical fittings, was provided to consumers to ensure they were best informed.

#### **How will a joint service help protect children and reduce child deaths?**

We will have an enhanced intelligence capacity to help identify and respond to product safety issues.

The joint service will be in stronger position to secure additional funding from Government to identify and tackle child safety related issues.

The joint service will have a wider shared and enhanced expertise, together with and an enhanced investigative capacity to deal with product safety issues.

## **Case Study 4 - Tackling Food Fraud**

In April 2013, in the wake of the horsemeat scandal Buckinghamshire County Council provided Trading Standards with an additional £50,000 funding to ensure food sold in Buckinghamshire, to consumers, was genuine.

By analysing intelligence and information over 250 samples were taken from areas where issues were most likely to emerge. These samples included the authenticity of fish species, olive oil, durum wheat, kebab meat and basmati rice and the presence of aflatoxin contamination (fungal poisons). Levels of colours and preservatives in soft drinks and excess levels of water in fruit juice concentrate were also checked.

Issues were found with incorrect information about what type of meat was in kebabs, excessive levels of benzoic acid in soft drinks and unsatisfactory levels of aflatoxins, along with some minor incorrect labelling. Trading Standards Officers are working with businesses in Buckinghamshire to ensure they comply with labelling requirements so that food is properly described.

This work enables us to help maintain the integrity of the marketplace by supporting legitimate businesses, protecting consumers and gathering information and intelligence about potential areas of food fraud. We have presented our findings through numerous TV and radio appearances and local and national newspaper articles. The Government have also sent officials from the Elliott review to speak with us to gather evidence for recommendations about how we can protect the integrity of food nationwide.

### **How will a joint service help ensure the integrity of the food chain and hence protect residents?**

The joint service will be in stronger position to secure additional funding from the Food Standards Agency and others for projects tackling food fraud and ensuring the integrity of feed and animal feeding stuffs

The joint service will have an enhanced investigative capacity to tackle food fraud and related issues.

A larger service with shared expertise will help to further develop and enhance healthy eating initiatives such as Eat Out Eat Well, helping to tackle childhood obesity and other diet related health problems.