

## **Trading Standards Service Promotion Protocol**

### **Introduction and overview**

Trading Standards and the wide range of activity it delivers has been identified as a key service area for promotion by the Corporate Media Officer.

This protocol aims to set out why the work of Trading Standards is so important and, as such, why it has been identified as a key area to be promoted and communicated.

The protocol will look at the wider benefits to Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and its reputation, which can be secured by the promotion of Trading Standards and its work.

In December 2009 the Office of Criminal Justice Reform published guidance entitled "Publicising Sentencing Outcomes" and we have taken this guidance into account in this document.

### **Aims and objectives of the Corporate Media Officer**

The Corporate Media Officer, working within the Council's Press Office, has a number of objectives. The below details those objectives and how, by promoting the work of Trading Standards, they are attained

Corporate Media Officer Objective	How promotion of Trading Standards work attains that objective
1. Effectively communicates and promotes, via the media and other communications channels available, the work the Council is carrying out to meet the needs and expectations of its communities.	The key to communicating and promoting services via the media is to secure as much coverage as possible with interesting, relevant copy. The very nature of the work of Trading Standards – from tackling underage and illegal alcohol sales to protecting consumer rights and ensuring public safety – means the content of releases sent to the media attracts attention and guaranteed coverage.
2. Reassures the community, using consistent, effective promotion and communication work that it is being listened to and the action it is calling for is being delivered.	All press releases relating to Trading Standards include the wording of this objective as a key message. This means the message that we are listening and acting is constantly being reinforced, not only via the tangible achievements of Trading Standards, but also via the coverage said achievements secure
3. Use the media and other communications channels to promote the overall key aims and messages of the Council and the other agencies it works in partnership with.	Demonstrating compliance with Council corporate priority relating to "Enforcement and Regulation"
	All requests for press releases or coverage

4. Ensure all communication and promotion activity is delivered via the most effective channel and has the correct "tone", "angle" and key messages.	from Trading Standards are considered first in terms of what angle to take and how to present the information so, when read by audiences, it is clear why the action was taken and what that means for the greater good of the community. An approvals process is in place (see below) to ensure all copy is cleared and that the intention of the Trading Standards activity is reflected in the copy.
5. Works with partner agencies to deliver.	Trading Standards works in partnership with many agencies, including the police, VOSA and so on. This offers the Corporate Media Officer a valuable opportunity to work with press officers from other agencies to deliver joint press releases and subsequent coverage that demonstrates partnership working.

### **Aims and Objectives of Trading Standards**

Trading Standards staff carry out a wide range of work that is aimed at protecting consumers and reputable businesses residing, working, visiting or operating within Rhondda Cynon Taff. The Service seeks to promote greater understanding of consumer rights and trader responsibilities. It is fundamental to this goal that local consumers and businesses should be aware of the Service and should be willing and able to access it. The government is of the opinion that the provision of information is a legitimate and integral part of increasing public confidence in the Criminal Justice Service and that there should be presumption in favour of publicising the outcomes of criminal cases. Government advice also states that in the great majority of cases the Data Protection Act should not act as a barrier to publicising basic personal information about a defendant. Consequently officers need to promote and publicise the service that is being provided and the work that is being carried for a number of reasons including the following:

- To raise the profile of Trading Standards by publicising the work that is being carried out to protect consumers and traders.
- To encourage consumers to contact Trading Standards if they experience consumer protection related problems and to provide information about persons or businesses that they believe are breaking the law.
- To encourage businesses to contact Trading Standards if they need advice on complying with the law relating to consumer protection.
- To make the public aware of the results of court cases that have affected local consumers and traders.
- To make traders aware of the results of court cases to try to deter them from committing similar offences or from re-offending.
- To make reputable traders aware of the results of court cases to reassure them that officers are trying to maintain a "level playing field" by taking action against traders who break the law;
- To advise consumers of their legal rights.
- To advise traders about their legal obligations.
- To advise consumers and traders about current scams or incidents that could affect them.

- To publicise promotional events that members of the public are invited to attend to receive targeted advice and/or to bring in for testing products such as electric blankets and pushchairs to maximise the take up and benefit of these types of events.

### **Working protocol**

The Corporate Media Officer enjoys a good working relationship with staff at all levels in the Trading Standards department.

This relationship, in turn, means the Corporate Media Officer receives news and information in an appropriate, timely manner that allows its potential to be communicated to be maximised.

The below details how the process works.

Trading Standards pass details of initiative, operation or enforcement to Corporate Media Officer



Press release drafted and other communications means, apart from media, that can be used also considered. These include:

- Council internet news site
- Council internal news site for staff
- Outlook residents newsletters
- Councillors/Cabinet Briefing
- Communities First and other voluntary/community newsletters
- Websites of involved partner agencies
- Home office briefing sheets



Press release content and proposed way forward with its dissemination/communication via list about – agreed with officer, manager and department head. Passed to Cabinet for political approval



Press release then sent, where applicable, to press officer/s of other involved agency/ies for contribution and final sign off



Press release sent to agreed communications channels, which are monitored by Corporate Media Officer with coverage secured fed back to Trading Standards

## **Considerations when promoting the work of Trading Standards**

In general the Corporate Media Officer and Trading Standards Officers will seek to publicise as much as possible of the work that is carried out by Trading Standards. However before doing so consideration will need to be given to various factors including the following:

- No press releases will be issued if reporting restrictions have been imposed on a case, but otherwise it is usually safe to assume that disclosure is permitted.
- Press releases will aim to provide an accurate description of the incident and will identify the legislation that is associated with the investigation.
- If possible press releases will encourage consumers affected by similar issues to contact Trading Standards or Consumer Direct Wales and for traders who are not fully aware of their legal responsibilities to contact Trading Standards.
- For press releases about surveys that have been carried out the traders involved will not be identified, but the number of samples taken and/or traders investigated will be included, as well as the information about the breaches that were found.
- Press releases will be produced prior to promotional events and will include locations, times and dates to encourage as many people as possible to attend these types of events.
- Generally press releases will not be issued at the time when warrants are executed or seizures are made, as it is preferable to publicise such incidents if and when they go to court. However if publicity is produced the names or addresses of the traders will not be identified.
- Press releases relating to court cases should include general details of any known mitigation that was put forward in court so as to provide a balanced report.
- Press releases relating to court cases should include relevant comments made by the judges and magistrates if these are available.
- Usually the names of officers or witnesses will not be included in the press release, but they will be referred to using appropriate descriptions such as officer, complainant etc. However in contested trials where a witnesses' evidence is subject to cross-examination it may be relevant to identify them by name.
- Particular care will be taken if disclosure of a sentencing outcome if it is likely to reveal personal information about a person other than the offender.
- In no circumstances will we identify the volunteers who carry out test purchasing of age-restricted goods.
- If a defendant later successfully appeals against a conviction, details of the original conviction will be removed from the website.

The Policy will be communicated to all staff, published on the Trading Standards web site and available to businesses on request.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trading Standards Management Team to reflect current arrangements, guidance, opinions and comments on this policy.

### **Comments on this Policy**

Organisations or individuals who may wish to comment on this policy are invited to send their comments, in writing, to the Trading Standards Manager, Public Health & Protection, Ty Elai, Dinas Isaf east, Williamstown, Tonypandy CF40 1NY  
Fax 01443 425301.  
E-mail [tradingstandards@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:tradingstandards@rctcbc.gov.uk)