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## **Briefing on contribution of WSCC Trading Standards Service to strategic aims of the Health and Wellbeing Board**

### **Introduction**

The aim of this short paper is twofold:

1. To highlight to the Health and Wellbeing Board members the areas of work that are carried out by WSCC Trading Standards Service and how they contribute to the strategic aims of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
2. To raise awareness of our work to the members of the Health and Wellbeing Co-operative, thereby assisting the development of joint working relationships to further add value to our work.

### **Strategic Area - Early Intervention and Prevention**

#### **Issue 1 - Reducing Harm Caused by Underage Consumption of Alcohol and Tobacco**

Trading Standards enforces a wide range of age restricted sales legislation – from lottery tickets to knife sales. At the forefront of our work in this area is preventing alcohol and tobacco harm. National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has made recommendations to local authorities on strategies for reducing the harm caused by both alcohol and tobacco, extracts of which appear below:

- sufficient resources are available to prevent under-age sales (including proxy sales), sales to those who are intoxicated, non-compliance with any other alcohol licence condition, irresponsible drinks promotions and illegal imports of alcohol.

- ensuring environmental health and trading standards services prioritise tobacco control.
- enforcing legislation on tobacco and alcohol in accordance with their statutory role and best practice. This includes conducting and auditing test purchases, providing training for retailers and prosecuting those who break the law.

(local govt public health briefing Oct 2012)

Trading Standards currently conduct ongoing test purchasing work in order to ensure that, wherever else children may obtain tobacco and alcohol, retail supply is not one that is easily available within West Sussex.

We also work with retailers on compliance with the legislation and how to avoid supplying children with age restricted products.

### Issue 2 - Healthy Eating Claims

Trading Standards is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the food chain in West Sussex. As part of that work Trading Standards carries out work to ensure that nutritional claims made on foods are accurate.

Trading Standards are currently investigating two local businesses for making misleading claims. In one case a meat product had been described as being "low fat" when it was not, and the amount of fat declared on the nutritional label was also inaccurate. In the other case confectionary had a nutritional label applied to it in which almost every value was inaccurate.

## **Strategic Areas – Older People /Independence and Early Intervention and Prevention**

### Issue 3 - Financial Wellbeing – Mass marketing scams

Mass marketing scams include letters that, for example, suggest a valuable prize has been won but to receive it a registration fee of up to £100 has to be sent, or letters stating that purchasing a particular product will result in entry to a non-existent prize draw. Once a response is made by a victim, the perpetrator will not only send many more scam letters but also sell the victim's details to others to do the same. Vulnerable victims can find themselves parting with thousands of pounds over a period of months in the hope of a winning a major prize.

The long term effects of being bombarded by ever increasing amounts of scam mail are difficult to quantify. One victim – whose family have founded the "[Think Jessica](#)" campaign – was seen to decline over a period of years from an independent lady to an exhausted frail woman due to the

effort of sending her life's savings to a succession of what can only be described as unscrupulous criminals.

Trading Standards are currently expanding our work in relation to intervening with victims of mass marketing scam letters – ie those who have sent money in response to the letters. A national intelligence project, being led by East Sussex Trading Standards, is identifying vulnerable households who are receiving large amounts of unsolicited scam mail, and may therefore be possible victims.

West Sussex Trading Standards Service is currently leading on behalf of WSCC and working with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Adult Safeguarding and Sussex Police (Arun) to develop the best way of using this data to intervene and support victims and remove them from the threat of financial exploitation. Early indications are that this list contains details of around 500 West Sussex households.

#### Issue 4 - Financial Wellbeing - Victims of Doorstep Crime

Vulnerable members of the community will find themselves subjected to unsolicited pressure selling of goods and services on their own doorstep.

In the most extreme cases, residents have fallen victim to unscrupulous 'traders' who undertake unnecessary and overpriced home improvement work, resulting in victims being transported to their bank to make large cash withdrawals. Some victims have endured a recurring pattern of abuse over many years leading to significant economic detriment and emotional harm. The victim profile tends to be vulnerable elderly adults.

In view of the seriousness of this type of incident West Sussex Trading Standards will send out officers to intervene in any 'live' reported incidents to prevent abuse of the vulnerable, and hold those responsible to account.

Although Trading Standards work in this area must be reactive to reported incidents, an on-going preventative message is also clearly desirable to avoid people being drawn in to such scams in the first place. This approach is being further developed as part of the mass marketing scam initiative above, as it is the same vulnerable households we need to protect.

Any questions resulting from this paper, or for discussions as to how joint working may assist in moving forward any of these areas of work, can be addressed to the author – Rob Scovell – by email at [rob.scovell@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:rob.scovell@westsussex.gov.uk) or phone on 03302227667.

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