

Public Protection Service Strategic Assessment 2024-2027

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) is a shared service delivering Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards functions on behalf of two authorities (Partners), Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council. It also delivers a range of commissioned services to other organisations including Wokingham Borough Council.

The PPP delivers services encompassing a wide range of areas of responsibility from environmental protection to fair trading, food safety to animal health, housing standards to taxi licensing, and much more.

Our vision is to protect and support residents and legitimate businesses through the successful use of information and intelligence, delivering safe and healthy neighbourhoods.

The nature of the shared service means that it has greater resilience and robustness to cope with unforeseen challenges such as disease outbreaks, large scale investigations etc. Our team of dedicated officers, external partners and elected Members work closely together to provide good quality services and value for money for our residents, businesses and the authorities it serves.

As part of the ongoing development of the Service officers have reflected on the current challenges facing it, local and national threats, changes to local and national policies and priority areas, local, regional and national data sets, emerging issues and changes in legislation to produce the updated Strategic Assessment for the Service.

The Service is managed using an approach which firmly links the development of local knowledge, professional risk management and the gathering of information to generate intelligence. This operating model, known as the 'National Intelligence Model' is considered very effective in explaining why officers follow a particular course of action.

Officers have used the MoRiLE (Management of Risk in Law Enforcement) scoring process to identify and assess the Service's key priority areas. MoRiLE is a risk prioritisation process, widely used by law enforcement agencies. It uses a structured methodology and matrix to consistently assess threats, risks, harm and organisational position (including resources, political factors, capacity and capability).

2. DATA SOURCES

The Strategic Assessment will be used to identify the key threats, emerging issues, and priority areas for the PPP and is an integral part of the PPP business planning process.

In line with the National Intelligence Model a number of intelligence sources have been considered in order to identify existing and emerging issues. This report has been compiled using both quantitative and qualitative data from the following sources:

- Local Database (Idox)
- National Databases (CAB, IDB)
- Health & Safety Executive (HSE)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- National Trading Standards Board / National Tasking Group (NTS)
- Trading Standards South-East (TSSE) Regional Assessment
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
- Air Quality Monitoring Programme

3. INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT (IAA) AND PRIORITY OUTCOMES

This Strategic Assessment is developed to address the following priority areas:

IAA Overarching Priorities

- Community Protection
- Protecting and Improving Health
- Protection of the Environment
- Supporting Prosperity and Economic Growth

Local Priority Outcomes

- Building Safer Communities
- Improved Living Environment
- Protecting Consumers from Fraud
- Reducing Harm in Young People
- Protection of the Environment
- Protecting & Informing Consumers
- Promoting Animal Welfare
- Safety in the Workplace
- Safer Food Chain

4. INTELLIGENCE REVIEW

There has been an 85% increase in the number of intelligence submissions made during this reporting period. The number of reports has increased from 463 in the previous reporting period to 858 reports during the current period.

Unless otherwise stated, data collection relates to Calendar year 2023 – 2024. The 2023 originating sub-organisation for matters appertaining to the PPP area include:

Bracknell Forest Borough Council (PPP)	171
Thames Valley Police	36
West Berkshire Council (PPP)	353
Wokingham Borough Council (Shared TS Service)	283
Hillingdon London Borough Council	1
Hampshire County Council	1
Animal Health - West Berkshire	1
Other	9
West Sussex County Council	2
Grand Total	857

The business areas with the highest number of submissions are Doorstep Crime and Rogue Trading, Age Restricted Sales, Tobacco and Cigarettes, Fair Trading, Landlords Housing, Fly Tipping Commercial Waste, Domestic Waste and Unlicensed Waste Carriers.

The main reasons for the reports were as follows:

- 43% of all intelligence submissions related to doorstep crime and related unfair trading and fraud matters (372 reports)
- 13% related to age restricted sales (114 reports)
- 7% related to illicit / illegal tobacco and cigarettes (58 reports)
- 6% related to unfair trading (52 reports)
- 6% related to private sector housing (49 reports)
- 5% related to fly tipping of commercial waste, domestic waste or unlicensed waste carriers (43 reports).

The business areas which saw the biggest increase were as follows:

- Private sector housing (2350% - 49 reports compared to 2)
- Illicit tobacco and cigarettes (867% - 58 reports compared to 6)
- Taxis and Private Hire (600% - 7 reports compared to 1)
- Unlawful age restricted sales (322% - 114 reports compared to 27)
- Food (175% - 11 reports compared to 4).

Reports for doorstep crime and rogue trading have increased by 95% (from 191 reports to 372).

National Trading Standards Board (NTS) Priorities

The [NTS Interim Strategic Assessment](#) was published in October 2023 and highlighted the following key priority areas for the NTS National Control Strategy for 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025:

- Doorstep and Cold Calling (including Energy Fraud),
- Lettings (England only),
- Mass Marketing Fraud/Scams,
- Illicit and Underage Sale of Vape (England only),
- Illicit Tobacco,
- Used Cars,
- Intellectual Property,
- Other Fair Trading issues,
- Estate Agency,
- Animal Feed Work.

NTS will 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.
- Cost of living crisis.

NTS will also undertake work on specific activities, where direct funding is provided for a programme of work to be delivered, such as the Animal Feed work that is funded by the Food Standards Agency.

5. CROSS CUTTING PRIORITIES

eCrime

The PPP will continue to look for opportunities to tackle consumer and business detriment caused by eCrime across all its themes, priorities and projects.

For the Trading Standards Service the highest number of service requests to the partnership relate to online purchases and have now clearly surpassed traditional purchase methods.

The coronavirus pandemic and resulting public health measures restricting the opening of all but essential trade premises resulted in a further substantial shift to e-commerce.

It is clearly identified that growth of online trading showed no sign of levelling off and the PPP must ensure that all teams have access to the skills necessary to operate within that environment. Social media platforms are increasingly used as a method of trading in wider fields including counterfeit and illegal goods and unlicensed waste services.

As such staff must continue to be developed to deal with the ongoing challenges of online trading, complex social media platforms and all the associated intelligence gathering required to successfully disrupt and prosecute such matters. For this reason, the Service has invested in training into open-source investigations.

Climate Change

Climate Change is one of the major issues of our time. All three Councils have clear and expansive climate change plans with targets around air quality, housing, environmental protection and carbon reduction.

The PPP has a significant role to play in relation to the local plans to tackle climate change. These include traditional areas such as air quality and environmental protection but also extend to other areas around the enforcement of climate change legislation relating to matters such as energy performance of buildings and goods and single use plastics to the links with the housing functions to cold homes, energy efficiency and environmental high standards in private rented accommodation.

There are also clear links to green energy product trading including unfair and fraudulent trading activities.

Protecting Vulnerable Adults and Children

Protecting vulnerable adults and children remains a key priority for the PPP.

A significant number of front-line officers operate in the community and play an essential role in the identification and protection of individuals at risk of abuse or neglect.

A whole range of issues have been identified that relate to this priority including poor housing standards, poor food quality, age restricted products and unfair trading practices, scams and fraud.

The PPP will continue to support officers and managers to develop their skills in communication, their knowledge of safeguarding and partnership working, and educate them in the key identifiers for vulnerability.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is an essential and crucial aspect of local authority work and the PPP are at the front line of the identification of safeguarding matters.

All members of our community have a right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. The PPP provides a range of services within the community and colleagues are trained to recognise a range of safeguarding issues and categories of abuse and also to understand their duty to safeguard vulnerable individuals using the appropriate referral routes.

To this end the service has nominated a cross-cutting Lead Officer for Safeguarding as well as a Fraud Victim Support Officer who work closely with other parts of the service, relevant agencies and local safeguarding teams. Our [Training and Development Plan](#) requires that all staff are trained in safeguarding matters and the Service has run a range of safeguarding training sessions on topics including young people, county lines, financial abuse and illegal money lending.

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It covers a wide range of abuse and exploitation including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced labour, criminal exploitation and organ harvesting.

The PPP may encounter modern slavery as part of any workstream and staff must remain vigilant to the indicators of modern slavery and remain abreast of those networks and referral pathways to support, report and feed in intelligence relating to modern servitude. Areas for heightened vigilance include the work that the PPP undertakes relating to rogue traders, poor housing conditions, visits to domestic premises, and trader and site premise inspections. A number of staff are specifically trained to identify modern slavery.

In addition to safeguarding training requirements for taxi, private hire and home to school transport drivers the PPP are considering the role of safeguarding training as part of the Safer Streets agenda including offering safeguarding training to persons working in some retail and hospitality settings.

Safer Streets

The PPP can play a key role in tackling neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour. There are clear links to the four licensing objectives¹ as well as to the role of trading standards and the community team. Working in partnership with other agencies, and through the use of targeted crime prevention measures and problem solving approaches the PPP can contribute to making the streets of West Berkshire, Bracknell Forest and Wokingham safer.

This will be done through the promotion of safeguarding, raising public awareness and encouraging reporting through education work with the general public, the licensed trade, taxis and private hire vehicles and retailers.

Officers will continue to:

- Promote retailer schemes such as Pubwatch and Shopsafe.
- Extend the Community Alcohol Partnership arrangements which play a key role in seeking to reduce alcohol harm in local communities from drinking by young people.
- Enforce legislation around age restricted products including for alcohol, knives, fireworks and corrosives.
- Develop the existing PPP alcohol programme in secondary schools to increase emphasis on Anti-Social Behaviour and personal risk.
- Tackle low level environmental crime that leads to a feeling of lawlessness including environmental crime e.g. abandoned vehicles.
- Work with staff in higher risk settings to develop an understanding of risk and safeguarding.

¹ the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance, the protection of children from harm.

6. TARGETED PRIORITY OUTCOMES

BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Licensing – OP 720 / Risk 180
- Tackling Fraud – OP 667.50 / Risk 333.75

Horizon Scanning

- **The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, known as Martyn’s Law** – The consultation of this bill concluded in March 2024, however it is still yet to be determined who the Regulator will be. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/martyns-law-standard-tier-consultation>. However, PPP officers have received update training as it is possible the responsibility to enforce will come to Local Authorities.

Licensing Act 2003

In 2023 the PPP received 131 applications relating to Premises Licences, 22% related to new licences (29) and the other 78% related to variations or transfers of existing licences. 82% of applications received in 2023 were granted, 11% were still being progressed at the time of writing, 4% were cancelled or invalid and 4% were withdrawn.

There were 33 reports relating to premises licenses in 2023. 21 relating to locations in Bracknell Forest, 11 relating to premises in West Berkshire and 1 relating to a premises in Wokingham. 24% were concerning complaints (8), the other 76% related to requests for information or advice.

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire

In 2023, the PPP received 697 applications that related to the licensing of taxi drivers and vehicles. 255 for Bracknell Forest and 442 for West Berkshire. This type of licensing accounted for 31% of all licensing applications received in 2023.

There were 181 reports relating to taxi drivers in 2023, 97 in Bracknell Forest and 84 in West Berkshire. 32% of reports related to complaints and 2% related to safeguarding concerns. The other 66% were regarding advice or information.

Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls

The PPP Licensing Service is part of a wider Thames Valley Police initiative looking at reducing incidence of harm affecting women and girls. Our specific area of input is with licensed premises and the management of risk within those premises. Beyond our work with PubWatch Schemes and individual licensees officers also conduct a number of other initiatives including:

- Presentations and information displays that officers undertake with students in the secondary schools across West Berkshire and Newbury College. Between January to December 2023, seven presentations relating to alcohol were undertaken across West Berkshire. Since the beginning of 2024, two presentations and one information session has been undertaken.
- Provision of advice and guidance on how to prevent drink spiking and what to do if you believe your drink has been spiked.
- Provision of 'spikeys' to sixth form and college age students. These are small plastic devices which go into the top of a bottle, through which you can put a straw and prevent drink spiking.
- Regular communications and warnings are distributed via the PPP social media platforms regarding staying safe whilst consuming alcohol.
- Provision of public information posters for display in licensed premises.

Offensive Weapons and Corrosives

The issue of access to offensive weapons and corrosives by young people has been a priority identified by the Home Office. There are also a range of controls on the types of knives that can be sold and these are due to be extended.

Trading Standards are the identified enforcement body for these areas. Some funding has been provided for offensive weapons enforcement and the Service is looking at all these areas from the point of view of prevention, intelligence and enforcement. This will include on-line and retail test purchasing. The Service will be working with colleagues from Thames Valley Police as part of the wider Safer Streets Strategy.

Event Safety

The Safety Advisory Group (SAG) meets to assist safety planning for large public events and meetings are held at least four times a year. The SAG is

coordinated, administered and 'chaired' by the PPP who invite the event organiser(s) plus organisations with responsibility for public safety including, Local Authority Highways, Police, Ambulance, Emergency Planning and Fire Safety services. The PPP attendees include officers with specialisms in Licensing, Environmental Protection, Food Safety and Health and Safety at Work.

Event Management Plans and risk assessments are reviewed and event visits carried out by virtue of the Council's role as the enforcing authority for the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.

For smaller public events a SAG is not appropriate, but event safety management plans are reviewed virtually and site visits undertaken where necessary.

Guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requires local authorities to plan their health and safety enforcement activities and it specifies which types of work activities are suitable for proactive safety inspections.

"Setting priorities and targeting interventions" HELA Local Authority Circular 67/2 (Rev 13 - 2024/25) guidance under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) - List of activities/sectors considered suitable for proactive inspection 2024/25 include those related to safety at public events including:

Crowd management & injuries/fatalities to the public - Large scale public gatherings e.g. cultural events, sports, festivals & live music Lack of suitable planning, management and monitoring of the risks arising from crowd movement and behaviour as they arrive, leave and move around a venue.

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, known as Martyn's Law will introduce new requirements for operators of public locations to take appropriate, reasonably practicable measures to protect their staff and the public from the impacts and effects of terrorism. The requirements are being developed in consideration of other regulatory regimes such as Health and Safety and with proportionality in mind.

This financial year (2023/2024) there have been 285 event management plans submitted which have been reviewed, consulted on and actioned as necessary.

This number excludes events held for the Kings Coronation. 90 have been submitted for events in Bracknell Forest and 195 for events in West Berkshire. 64 events were brought to full SAG meetings. There were:

- 5 Blue light visits facilitated.
- 10 Pre event site inspections carried out.
- 39 During Performance/event inspection visits.
- 34 Health and Safety Inspections.
- 17 Food Hygiene Inspections.
- 7 Formal Enforcement Interventions.
- 5 Accident investigations.
- 1 Desktop exercise facilitated.

Unfair Trading and Doorstep Crime (DSC)

There has been a 19% increase in home improvement / repairs trading related unfair trading and crime reporting across the service, from the previous year (496 reports).

The following parameters apply to these reports:

- Payment amounts total £6,728,058.
- 13% of all DSC complaints received related to roofing (63 reports)
- 11% related to major renovations (57 reports).

These were the two most complained about goods and services for DSC, amounting to 24% of all DSC complaints. These two areas are also the most complained about regionally.

In recent months the PPP have seen an increase in green energy complaints. The cost-of-living crisis has meant that people are looking to make their homes more energy efficient. However, it has been widely reported in the media that this type of work can invalidate mortgages.

Intelligence submissions relating to doorstep crime have increased by 95%, with 16% of DSC intelligence submissions relating to roofing. DSC related Intelligence Data Base (IDB) Submissions relate to 43% of all Intel submissions overall.

The reports of doorstep crime reports are split fairly evening across the 3 authorities.

30% of DSC reports (150) are for Bracknell Forest, with gardeners and roofers being the most complained about areas.

31% of DSC reports (153) were for West Berkshire, with major renovations and roofing being the most complained about.

39% of DSC complaints (193) were for the Wokingham area, with roofing and major renovations being the most complained about areas.

The Service currently has in excess of 20 investigations ongoing into unfair trading, fraud and money laundering with respect to doorstep crime.

Funeral Directors

Following the issues identified with a chain of funeral directors in East Yorkshire the Service is being asked to undertake visits to identify levels of compliance with industry standards and to identify any issues. It is likely these inspections will be conducted by Trading Standards Officers.

The Service is currently working with Registration colleagues to identify all funeral directors in the PPP area.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Street Collections

Street collections only cover the collections of cash. The regulation of other forms of collection such as direct debits is a matter for the Fundraising Regulator. All those that are issued permits to collect are required to file a return to the Council.

There were 69 applications received regarding street collections in 2023, 31 in Bracknell Forest and 38 in West Berkshire. All but one of the applications were granted.

Scrap Metal Dealers

There were 5 applications for scrap metal sites and collectors in 2023, 4 related to renewals and 1 was a new collector. There were 4 reports relating to scrap metal dealers in 2023, 2 in Bracknell Forest and 2 in West Berkshire.

This is a priority area for enforcement and joint visits take place with Thames Valley Police (TVP) to ensure the provisions of the legislation and licence conditions are being complied with, with particular focus on traceability, identification checks and cash payments.

Gambling

The local authority has responsibility for licensing all premises used for gambling with the exception of large casinos, of which there are none in either West Berkshire or Bracknell Forest. The licence conditions are designed to provide protections for young people and those at risk from problem gambling.

Each Council is also required to have a 'Statement on Gambling Policy'. In the case of West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest these are due for renewal in 2024.

In 2023, the PPP received six new licencing applications relating to gambling and betting. There were three for premises in Bracknell Forest and three for premises in West Berkshire.

House to House Collections

The majority of House-to-House collections relate to charity bags. There have been issues identified previously around unauthorised collections. The larger charities have national exemptions from the need for local permissions.

In 2023 the PPP received 44 licensing applications relating to House-to-House collections. There were 22 in Bracknell Forest and 22 in West Berkshire.

Small Society Lotteries

In 2023 the PPP received 57 licensing applications relating to small society lotteries. This is a 6% increase from the previous year. 20 applications were in Bracknell Forest and 37 applications were in West Berkshire.

All recipients of permissions are required to complete a return to the authority. A significant number of small society lotteries relate to schools / Parent Teacher Friends Associations (PTFAs).

Street Trading

Street trading consents are largely in place to ensure that the location is suitable and that controls are in place to manage a range of potential nuisance issues.

In 2023 the PPP received 50 street trading consent applications. Of these 23 related to street trading consents in Bracknell Forest and 27 related to street trading consents in West Berkshire.

There were 25 reports in relation to street trading in 2023. 36% of reports were complaints (9), the other 64% related to requests for information or advice (16).

Animal Warden Activities

In 2023 there were 150 reports made relating to the Dog Wardens activities. 41% of reports related to 'dangerous' or out of control dogs and 27% related to dog fouling.

There were also 102 stray dog collections in 2023. This amounted to 33 in Bracknell Forest and 69 in West Berkshire. Of these strays 65 collections were out of hours.

In total 58 dogs were rehomed and 38 were returned to their owners.

Following a concerning rise in attacks and fatalities caused by XL Bully dogs, the government has added this breed to the list of dogs banned under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. The restrictions were implemented in two phases:

Phase 1 – from 31 December 2023 it became against the law to:

- sell an XL Bully dog;
- abandon an XL Bully dog or let it stray;
- give away an XL Bully dog;
- breed from an XL Bully dog;
- have an XL Bully in public without a lead and muzzle.

Phase 2 – from 1 February 2024 it became a criminal offence to own an XL Bully dog in England and Wales unless your dog has a Certificate of Exemption.

The PPP, who have shared enforcement responsibility for dangerous dogs with the Police, continue to monitor enquires and reports relating to this breed along with all other dangerous dog allegations.

Pest Control Enforcement

In 2023 the PPP received 409 reports relating to pests. This has increased over the last 2 years (383 in 2021 and 282 in 2022). 11% related to enforcement and 89% reports related to advice.

The PPP received the most reports about rat infestations, which equated to 86% of reports received in 2023 (350).

Pest control checks are also carried out routinely as an integral part of mandatory food hygiene inspections at commercial food premises. Officers will also respond to complaints about pests at food businesses. Officers have an enforcement role to ensure waste food is properly contained and disposed of so that it does not attract pests and that food premises are kept free from pest activity. The Local authority's role is set out in the [Food Law Code of Practice \(England\)](#).

Empty Homes and Public Health Risks

In 2023 the PPP received 14 reports relating to empty properties: 9 in Bracknell Forest and 5 in West Berkshire.

Empty properties will be investigated where such properties are brought to the attention of the PPP in terms of complaints relating to the state of the property affecting the community in terms of nuisance for example those deemed to be verminous. Where possible officers will work with owners to bring the property back into use.

Where empty properties are assessed to be a public health and safety concern officers will use [The Local Government \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 1982 Section 29](#) which gives powers to serve a Notice of intended works for the prevention of unauthorised entry or danger to public health. This is usually by way of boarding up the premise \\to prevent unauthorised access.

On occasions matters are referred to and received from colleagues in Building Control. Going forward this is identified as a priority area for the Councils.

Responsible Authority Roles for Licencing

In 2023 there were 187 Licencing Consultations reviewed by PPP teams as statutory consultees. 60% were for West Berkshire (112), 34% were for Bracknell Forest (64) and 6% were for Wokingham Borough (11).

These are reviewed by Environmental Health, Trading Standards. Licencing and Health & Safety.

There were 766 Temporary Event Notices (TENs) received by PPP in 2023; 233 were for events in Bracknell Forest and 533 for events in West Berkshire.

The Environment Quality team has the role of Responsible Authority for the licensing objective of the Prevention of Public Nuisance. This includes noise, vibration, refuse, odour and lighting.

The Trading Standards Service have the role of Responsible Authority for the licensing objective of the Protection of Children from Harm.

The health and safety at work enforcing authority (PPP – C&P Commercial) is a statutory consultee for the issue and renewal of premises licences. The Commercial Team is also consulted on food safety compliance matters for the issue and renewal of street trading consents for food businesses.

IMPROVED LIVING ENVIRONMENT

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Housing Standards in the Private Rental Sector - OP 816.00 / Risk 408

Horizon Scanning

- **Complaint Handling Code** - On 1st April 2024, The Complaint Code became statutory, meaning that landlords are obliged by law to follow its requirements. The Code aims to achieve best practice in complaint handling and ultimately to provide a better service to residents. [The Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
- **Consultation on Timescales for repairs in the Social Housing Sector** - Awaab's Law, which was introduced in the landmark Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, requires landlords to investigate and fix reported health hazards within specified timeframes. A consultation period ended in March 2024 to set those timeframes. [Awaab's Law: Consultation on timescales for repairs in the social rented sector - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- **Bill to amend requirements for Caravan Licence applications** - There is currently a Bill at the 2nd reading stage in the House of Commons (this was 19th April 2024), to amend the requirements for caravan site licence applications made under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960; and for connected purposes,

[Caravan Sites Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

- **Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)** - After the Decent Homes Standard review has been concluded, new regulations (an 'affirmative Statutory Instrument') are required to bring the conclusions of the HHSRS review into force. [Summary report: outcomes and next steps for the review of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Right to Rent Penalty Increase** - The Maximum civil penalty for the Right to Rent scheme has been increased from £3000 to £20,000. - [Increasing the maximum civil penalty amount for the Right to Work and Right to Rent Schemes: equality impact assessment \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Higher-Risk Buildings (Keeping and Provision of Info etc.) (England) Regulations 2023** - This legislation has been published but is yet to be enacted, meaning 2024 will see the full implementation of these regulations. This in reference to our ongoing Commercial to Residential Conversion project. [The Higher-Risk Buildings \(Keeping and Provision of Information etc.\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Unlicensed Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)

Officers investigate reports made to PPP regarding unlicensed HMOs to ensure the safety and welfare of tenants in that sector.

In 2023 there were 31 reports received by PPP relating to potentially unlicensed HMO premises. These related to 21 addresses in Bracknell Forest and 10 in West Berkshire.

These reports were from members of the public, elected members, as well as other departments of Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council, Fire Service and Estate Agents and Housing Associations. Officers from the PPP will also report any suspected through to the relevant team.

There are currently 229 suspected unlicensed HMO's in Bracknell Forest and 38 in West Berkshire, which require further investigation. These will be continued to be look at in 2024 and beyond.

Unfit Private Rented Sector and Registered Social Landlords

There has been a 41% increase from last year in complaints relating to Private Rented Sector Landlords and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in the PPP area (239 in 2022, 337 in 2023).

In 2023, 216 (64%) were in relation to RSLs. 121 (36%) reports were in relation to private rented sector landlords. The team are working closely with the main RSLs in our area to ensure that their duties to their tenants are met.

There were 23 complaints in 2023 relating to HMO's, which include complaints about poor living conditions.

There were 62 enquiries which resulted in advice given to landlords in 2023, as well as 58 in relation to tenants.

Unfit Park Homes Operators

There have been 26 complaints relating to the condition of mobile homes and caravan sites across the PPP areas in 2023. 13 for sites in Bracknell Forest and 13 for sites in West Berkshire.

PPP Officers identify Relevant Protected Sites that provide permanent residential accommodation to tenants and those living in Park Homes. Sites identified as being licensable are assisted through the caravan site licensing process and ultimately licenced, with conditions, to ensure sites are suitable, sufficient, and safe. Those who operate without the benefit of a licence may be subject to formal action.

There were 18 caravan licensing enquiries in 2023: 12 in Bracknell Forest and 6 in West Berkshire.

The Mobile Homes (Requirement for Manager of Site to be Fit and Proper Person) (England) Regulations 2020 prohibit the use of land as a residential mobile home site unless the local authority is satisfied that the owner or manager of the site is a fit and proper person to manage the site. The purpose of the fit and proper person test is to improve the standards of park (mobile) home site management.

Housing Safety (HHSRS)

The current Environmental Health Housing Policy 2022 – 2025 applies specifically to each Council's Environmental Health housing enforcement functions and duties. Local Authorities are required to keep under review the

housing conditions in their areas with a view to identifying what courses of actions are necessary under the Housing Acts. This includes the following:

- Regulating standards of repair, amenity and safety in the private rented sector and dealing with housing hazards.
- Investigating service requests from Registered Social Landlord.

The Service remains engaged with the Governments Levelling Up agenda to ensure that it can contribute when needed (see Section 6 of the Private Sector Housing Policy for more detail).

The PPP will investigate complaints from tenants, for example, about overcrowded living conditions, from other parties where they are concerned about children or vulnerable adults living in overcrowded conditions or where overcrowded conditions are legitimately impacting on a neighbour's health, safety or welfare.

Private Sector House Condition Survey work has been commissioned with BRE Group to identify, understand and address the housing conditions/needs of tenants living in the area of West Berkshire Council.

Poor housing affects people's health, in particular cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. For every 1°C drop in temperature, the risk of death from respiratory conditions increases by about 10%. For every Excess Winter Death there are eight hospital admissions and 100 GP appointments. Local authorities work with the NHS to provide sources of support, in the form of advice, funding and enforcement to ensure people's homes are warm and safe. Officers work with Berkshire, Oxford, Buckinghamshire – NHS partnership (BOB). In addition, officers undertake seasonal specific projects aimed at areas such as damp houses and cold dwellings.

Energy Efficiency Non-Compliance

Operation Sapphire focusses on The Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations aiming to improve improving housing standards in the private rented sector.

The two projects will now be combined in a stage one and two process in a joint project between the PPP Housing and Trading Standards Teams.

Tenant's Rights and Letting Agents

Operation Willow is a desk top exercise funded by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and delivered by Trading Standards South-East revealed levels of non-compliance across the South-East by estate / letting agents with:

- Tenants Fees Act 2019.
- The Client Money Protection Schemes for Property Agents (Requirement to Belong to a Scheme etc.) Regulations 2019.
- Registration with either of the two official redress schemes.

Operation Sapphire and Operation Willow will now be combined in a stage one and two process in a joint project with the PPP Trading Standards and Housing Teams.

Landlord Forums

The Landlord Forum is run online and in person and is aimed at advising and updating landlords and tenants of their obligations and rights. These forums are run in partnership with the Local Authority Housing Departments and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS).

Commercial to Residential Conversion Compliance Programme

The conversion project looks to ensure commercial buildings that are converted into residential accommodation are safe and fit for purpose from the planning stage (as part of the consultation process) to responding and investigating complaints of potentially unsafe living conditions. The process started with an identification exercise and desktop risk rating so that officers could target highest risk properties first.

In 2023 there were six enquiries in relation to this project, relating to 3 locations in Bracknell Forest and 3 locations in West Berkshire.

To date there have been nine commercial to residential conversion buildings inspected by the PPP. Each property looked at can positively affect the lives of hundreds of residents.

West Berkshire Housing Condition Survey

The Survey was commissioned by the PPP to provide an accurate picture of local conditions. This includes but is not limited to energy performance, empty

homes, areas of likely HMO activity, and age and condition of the housing stock.

At the time of writing the report has only just been received and officers will work with colleagues across the partner Councils to establish how the data can be used to inform future work programmes and decision making.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Domestic Nuisance

In 2023 there were 880 reports of Domestic Nuisance in PPP areas (736 in 2022); 319 in Bracknell Forest and 561 in West Berkshire. Of these 77% of reports for domestic nuisance related to noise (679) and 42% of noise reports were related to animal/birds noise and dogs barking (284).

An increase in homes acquiring pets, during the pandemic, (Nationally 3.2 million more pets) lead to an increase in pet noise related nuisance calls.

Potentially residents became more sensitive and less tolerant of noise due to home working. There are potentially more people working at home than before the pandemic.

15% of domestic nuisance reports related to bonfires. This has dramatically decreased since the pandemic, where reports of bonfires significantly increased due to people being at home. Between 2021 and 2023, complaints relating to bonfires have decreased by 47%.

The PPP continued to advice residents to try to resolve issues informally. Anecdotal evidence suggests that complaint sources can become more defensive if they receive contact from the authorities, where a discussion between neighbours can resolve issues without upset.

The PPP Nuisance Policy is to be considered by JPPC at their meeting of 10th June. This policy takes an holistic approach to the issues of tackling nuisance.

Houses of Multiple Occupation

Regulating standards of management, repair, amenity and safety in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) through mandatory licensing of HMO meeting the legislative criteria. Once licenced officers maintain the Council's Houses in Multiple Occupation mandatory Licensing Scheme public register.

The PPP currently has 201 licenced HMO's across Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire. 157 Licenced HMOs in Bracknell Forest and 44 Licenced HMO's in West Berkshire. In 2023 there were 12 applications for HMO's, 4 were renewals and 4 were new applications. There were also 22 HMO licensing enquiries received by the PPP in 2023.

A separate programme is underway to identify unlicensed HMO's which includes desk top research and visits to a number of properties. It is anticipated that this is a growth area work wise.

Relevant Protected Caravan Sites

Caravan sites can vary significantly from very expensive park home sites to accommodation that may be the only affordable accommodation open to some. They can be home to some of the most vulnerable people in society. There are significant risks associated with poorly run sites.

Relevant Protected Sites are inspected annually by officers to ensure site safety for the tenants of park homes, and to check on compliance with the licences issued. This is a highly specialised area of work and the Service has been investing in training more staff.

In addition to the site licence, all licence holders are subject to a 'fit and proper' assessment by staff from the PPP. PPP currently have licensing responsibilities for 37 sites.

In 2023 one prosecution was taken for an unlicensed site in West Berkshire. This work often requires close working with planning colleagues. Trading Standards Officers have previously undertaken work on site conditions and rules with respect to unfair contract terms.

Homes for Ukraine

An additional activity from March 2022 was in relation to Homes for Ukraine, where officers carried out home safety checks on host homes, and welfare checks when guests arrived. This piece of work continues for Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council as requests are still being received although these are now on a very limited scale.

Flexible Home Improvement Loans

The flexible home improvement loans are available for Bracknell Forest residents only. There were 11 flexible home improvement loan enquiries in 2023. Of these two related to existing loans that have been taken out and the

others were either not appropriate for a loan or the customer decided to fund improvements another way. This work is only undertaken for Bracknell Forest.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM FRAUD

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:
Tackling Fraud – OP 667.50 / Risk 333.75

Horizon Scanning

- **Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill** - A Bill to provide for the regulation of competition in digital markets; to amend the Competition Act 1998 and the Enterprise Act 2002 and to make other provision about competition law; to make provision relating to the protection of consumer rights and to confer further such rights; and for connected purposes. [Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament.](#)

This legislation is expected to come into force towards the end of 2024, although the government has recently clarified that the additional rules on subscriptions will be delayed to at least Spring 2026, to give businesses more time to prepare for the changes. The Bill repeals and reinstates the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (SI 2008/1277) (CPRs). There are some changes: the Bill amends and supplements the list of commercial practices that are always considered unfair to reflect the fact that consumers and traders increasingly interact online.

<https://www.lewissilkin.com/en/insights/our-guide-digital-markets-competition-consumers-bill-focusing-consumer-law#:~:text=The%20Bill%20repeals%20and%20reinstates,and%20traders%20increasingly%20interact%20online.>

Scams and Victim Support

The PPP currently have three funded bids across the partnership to deliver scams related work. The main areas of activity cover:

- Investigation of fraud/scam complaints and provision of practical advice to residents.
- Installation of free phone 'call blockers' to those who are eligible.

- Deliver scams prevention presentations to local groups and Council staff.
- ‘Banking Protocol’ intervention - where officers attempt to recoup monies back from the bank for residents that have been scammed where the banks have allowed payments to go out and have been negligent in their duties under the protocol.
- Facilitate in the setting up of ‘No Cold Calling Zones’.
- Provision of scams leaflets and ‘door-stopper’ stickers.
- Dissemination of scams prevention communications through our social media platforms.
- Attendance at public events partnering with Thames Valley Police (TVP), Citizen’s Advice West Berkshire (CAWB) and other agencies to promote the work the Service does.
- Attend/contribute to multi-agency meetings to help combat fraud together with Thames Valley Police and other Local Authority teams.
- Network with Adult Social Care teams to promote awareness of the services the PPP can provide and to train staff on what financial abuse is and what to look out for.
- Support and Promote friends against scams
<https://www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/>

Referrals to the Trading Standards Scams Team can be made through any of the following pathways:

- National Trading Standards (NTS)
- Citizen’s Advice (CA)
- TVP via the Multi Agency Approach to Fraud (MAAF)
- TVP via PCSO’s or Neighbourhood Teams
- Adult Social Care (ASC)
- Self-referral via telephone or email

There were 140 Scam related reports received by the PPP in 2023. Of those 48% of reports related to West Berkshire residents (67), 26% related to Bracknell Forest residents (36) and 27% related to Wokingham residents (37).

The Fraud Victim Support Officer is very involved in proactive advice work as well as assisting residents with recovery of funds. In 2023/24 officers recovered over £190K for residents who were victims of largely online fraud.

Food Fraud

Food related fraud has been around as long as food. From the adulteration of alcoholic drinks to the 'horsemeat scandal' there are ongoing issues and new issues arising all the time. In some cases, they can not only present a financial risk but also a health risk e.g. alcoholic drinks made from methanol. It also presents risks to those that avoid certain foods for cultural and religious reasons.

Investigation and liaison with Food Standard Agency's (FSA) National Food Crime Unit in suspected cases of hygiene related organised food crime including meat placed on the market that doesn't meet hygiene requirements (e.g. production of "smokies").

Officers also regularly horizon scan along with Public Analyst colleagues and the FSA which can give us indications of which items may be subject to adulteration or wider fraudulent activity. The PPP participates in regular food sampling programmes where officers seek to identify unfair trading or fraudulent activity. These are conducted as either local programmes or wider regional and national programmes.

Metrology – Short Weight / Measure

A recent survey reported by the Chartered Institute of Trading Standards identified the 70% of beer and wine purchased was short measure. This area will be built into future metrology work plans. [Over Two Thirds of UK Beer and Wine is Short Measured \(tradingstandards.uk\)](https://www.tradingstandards.uk/over-two-thirds-of-uk-beer-and-wine-is-short-measured)

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property rights are the basis of a functioning economy. If anything can be copied it has no value and there would be little or no merit in innovation. Counterfeiting can also damage brands and in some cases present safety risks. From the point of view of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) counterfeiting is classed along with drug dealing as a lifestyle crime. It is often used by criminals to launder money from other activities such as people smuggling or drug offending.

Over 2023/24 the Service received 32 allegations relating to intellectual property breaches. The goods included: tobacco, alcohol, vapes, jewellery, clothing, perfume, printer cartridges and even boiler parts. There are a number of ongoing investigations and one matter is currently undergoing confiscation proceedings following the seizure of over 12,000 items of clothing.

Operation Linton - intelligence received suggested that there were sellers operating at a local car boot sale and selling counterfeit clothing & footwear. Two visits were made covertly resulting in a number of seizures of t-shirts and trainers.

Additionally, the PPP receive intelligence directly from Border Force where goods have been inspected at the airports and ports and are suspected to be counterfeit. These goods are detained and destroyed at the port or referred to the PPP for further investigation.

Illegal Money Lending

Illegal money lending is an issue that can affect the most vulnerable in society. The Trading Standards Service has a shared enforcement role with the national illegal money lending team based in Birmingham.

A grant was received from recovered asset to undertake awareness raising work in the PPP area and this is an ongoing project. Key staff are trained to identify potential victims and perpetrators. It is proposed that briefings are undertaken to colleagues in areas such as housing and social care / safeguarding. This is a priority area in 2024/25.

Proceeds of Crime / Asset Recovery

The Service currently has four Accredited Financial Investigators. They are authorised by the National Crime Agency and are accountable to it for competence and training. Two are authorised to undertake money laundering and confiscation matters and two are authorised as Senior Appropriate Officers to consider and authorise applications to the Crown Court for Production and Restrain Orders. The Service Lead is responsible for all officers operating in this area.

At the time of writing, officers have conducted ten investigations relating to money laundering and in some cases confiscation. The legislation is designed to ensure criminals do not benefit from crime. Recovery can take two forms i.e. compensation or confiscation.

Investigation work is conducted using a range of other powers working with the revenue and complimentary (but separate) to substantive investigation work. Officers work alongside partners in HMRC and the Police.

Although often linked to trading standards matters, officers have carried out investigations in other areas such as planning breaches which have led to recovery.

Illicit Products and Excise Breaches

Trade in illicit tobacco costs the exchequer over £2 billion in lost tax revenue each year. It also damages legitimate businesses, undermines public health and facilitates the supply of tobacco to young people.

The Tobacco Products (Traceability and Security Features) Regulations 2019 concerns the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products.

A unique identifier is now required to be applied to each unit packet of tobacco product by manufacturers and importers. Manufacturers and importers are also required: to provide equipment to other operators involved in the supply of tobacco products to facilitate tracking and tracing of tobacco products.

The PPP work with HMRC to report any non-compliant product found on sale through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) using the HMRC app which scans the products for the unique identifier.

Non-compliant tobacco products or items of aggregate packaging are liable to forfeiture. Regulation 22 provides that where an officer of HMRC is satisfied that the requirements of these Regulations or the CIR are not met they may issue a notice requiring compliance.

The PPP continue to receive intel from HMRC, other Trading Standards Services and members of the public regarding the sale of illicit tobacco and work to seize and remove illicit tobacco from the market place.

This work is complementary to our work on Illicit Product crime and product safety and officers do from time to time prosecute revenue offences with Director of Public Prosecution's consent.

Level 1-3 Fraud and Unfair Trading Investigations

Trading related fraud and unfair trading is a significant issue. The development of investigation techniques and the range of powers afforded to Trading Standards have improved detection rates. The impacts of fraud on householders cannot be underestimated and can leave people suicidal, unable to live alone or with long term mental health issues.

Currently there are 24 ongoing level 1 to 3 unfair trading and fraud investigations including those in the court process. These relate to over 45 suspects.

In 2023/24 convictions have seen 50 months of immediate custodial sentences and a further 30 months of suspended prison sentences. Compensation recovered totalled £62,000. Over the last five years custodial sentences have exceeded 20 years.

REDUCING HARM IN YOUNG PEOPLE

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Alcohol and Tobacco Harm Reduction - OP 767.00 / Risk 383.5
- Nutrition and Childhood Obesity - OP 36.00 / Risk 60

Horizon Scanning

- **Ban of Disposable Vapes** – In January 2024 the Government announced that disposable vapes will be banned in England. ([Disposable vapes banned to protect children's health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/disposable-vapes-banned-to-protect-childrens-health)). Defra's draft regulations for the statutory instrument to ban the sale and supply of single-use vapes have now been published in March 2024 ([The Environmental Protection \(Single-use Vapes\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 draft SI - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-environmental-protection-single-use-vapes-england-regulations-2024-draft-si)).

Underage Sales of Vapes (UAS)

Figures from the Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) charity suggest 7.6% of 11 to 17-year-olds now vape regularly or occasionally, up from 4.1% in 2020.

There has been and there continues to be a lot of enforcement work in this area. Regular test purchasing exercises have and continue to be undertaken to ensure that all retailers are abiding by The Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations 2015.

There has been an increase across the Service in reports of underage sales (UAS) of vapes in the last 2 years, with 37 reports in 2023. This was an increase of 57% from the previous year (16). 55% of overall UAS reports in 2023 related to the UAS of vapes.

In Bracknell Forest there were 10 Reports of UAS of vapes in 2023 (2 in 2022) which represents a 400% increase. In West Berkshire there were 18 Reports of UAS of vapes in 2023 (14 in 2022) an increase of 29% (4). In Wokingham there were 9 Reports of UAS of vapes in 2023 (0 in 2022).

In 2023 the Service conducted 35 test purchases for the UAS of vapes, across the 3 authorities. There was a 91% pass rate, with only 3 failures. 14 test purchases were conducted in Bracknell Forest, 8 in West Berkshire (1 failure) and 13 in Wokingham (2 failures).

There were 30 logs submitted on our intelligence database (IDB), for UAS of vapes in 2023. 3 logs relating to premises in Bracknell Forest, 15 logs relating to premises in West Berkshire and 7 logs relating to premises in Wokingham. The Service also received 5 logs from Thames Valley Police relating to UAS at premises in the PPP area.

In an ever-changing landscape a recent government announcement suggested that disposable vapes could be banned from sale as early as 2025. The latest changes would also introduce powers to stop refillable vapes being sold in flavours marketed at children and to require that they be produced in plainer, less appealing packaging.

The government will also be able to mandate that shops display refillable vapes out of sight of children and away from other products they might buy, like sweets ([Disposable vapes banned to protect children's health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/disposable-vapes-banned-to-protect-childrens-health)). Defra's draft regulations for the statutory instrument to ban the sale and supply of single-use vapes were published in March 2024 ([The Environmental Protection \(Single-use Vapes\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 draft SI - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/environmental-protection-single-use-vapes-england-regulations-2024-draft-si)).

The PPP delivered 2 projects on disposable vapes:

Operation Tanoak which was a project inspecting local retailers to ensure that the disposable vapes on sale met with the regulations. In total 53 premises were inspected and 11 were found to be selling non-compliant vapes which were then seized and were investigated.

Operation Joseph which is a (nationally funded) market surveillance project. 41 disposable vape samples that appear on the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved list were selected from a number of

retailers. They were overtly test purchased and sent off for testing to see if those approved were in fact compliant with the legislation. Results of this project to be confirmed.

WEST BERKSHIRE PROJECTS FUNDING BY PUBLIC HEALTH

Life Education

Funding was provided through the ringfenced Public Health Grant to commission Life Education Coram to deliver health harms provision focusing on vaping, smoking, and alcohol to year 5/6 pupils within twelve primary schools across West Berkshire. This project has now been completed.

Illegal Tobacco

This is an intelligence led project. In circumstances where the PPP receive intel that illegal tobacco is being sold within West Berkshire, test purchases and appropriate enforcement action is undertaken. During 2023, there were five logged reports of illicit tobacco, however only one report included the brand details. Further work in this area is being planned for the 2024/25 year.

Attitudinal Survey

The secondary schools attitudinal survey has taken place on an almost yearly basis for the past 17 years during the Spring/ Summer term. The survey is provided to all secondary schools across the West of Berkshire (West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham) for pupils to complete. The survey is used to assess the smoking and drinking habits of 11–17-year-olds. The data from the surveys is then cleansed, findings reported on and report sent to the participating schools. Schools use the findings to plan their health harms focus for the coming year. Owing to Reading and Wokingham no longer paying into the [Tobacco Control Alliance](#), 2024's attitudinal survey will include West Berkshire secondary schools only.

Smokefree Homes

Communication regarding the dangers of smoking, second hand smoke and where and how to get help to quit smoking regularly goes out via the PPP social media platforms. A meeting with Sovereign Housing took place in December to discuss the project. Campaign material is in the process of being developed and a scoping exercise of local authorities who have undertaken or are in the process of undertaking a similar initiative is being completed to share learning and best practice.

Smokefree Sidelines

Smokefree sidelines aims to abolish smoking and vaping at grass roots football. Currently there are seven clubs in West Berkshire signed up to the initiative and officers are currently in the process of signing up Newbury College's football academy. Moving forward with the project, during the remainder of the football season, officers are in the process of agreeing for Solutions 4 Health, West Berkshire's commissioned smoking cessation service to attend football tournaments in their promotional van and speak to spectators regarding quitting smoking and offering very brief advice. The PPP is also considering opening up the initiative to other grass roots sports.

Tobacco Control Alliance

The Tobacco Control Alliance includes West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham Local Authorities, BOB (Berkshire, Oxford, Buckinghamshire – NHS partnership), Integrated Care Board and the NHS. The PPP represent themselves and West Berkshire Public Health within the alliance. The purpose of the alliance is to work together to reduce smoking prevalence across the West of Berkshire. The alliance is currently drafting the Tobacco Control Plan for 2024-2026.

Berkshire West's commissioned smoking cessation service, Solutions 4 Health's contract is due for extension in September 2024. The alliance is currently agreeing contract terms. Public Health teams within local authorities across the country will be receiving a Section 31 grant fund on 1st April 2024 for the increased delivery of stop smoking services and initiatives. West Berkshire will be receiving £181,670 to be spent before 31st March 2025. The alliance is currently considering how best to spend each LA's grant, which differ in value, either through single or joined up initiatives.

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities have grant funding available for a Swap to Stop scheme. Our Local Stop Smoking Service has been allocated access to up to 150 rechargeable vapes and vape liquid to support a '4 week quit' programme until end of March 2025. The vapes offered through the Swap to Stop scheme will form part of the suite of Nicotine Replacement Therapies available to clients wishing to quit smoking through our local stop smoking service. The client will be informed of all NRT products before making the informed choice of which one they chose to use.

Vaping is becoming increasingly prevalent amongst children across West Berkshire. Schools and Newbury College are currently keen for the PPP to deliver presentations on this topic.

Community Alcohol Partnership (CAP) Activity

[CAP](#) was launched West Berkshire wide on 7th July 2023 and is part of the ringfenced Public Health Grant. The PPP are the co-ordinator of the CAP for West Berkshire. Since launching the CAP as a West Berkshire wide initiative, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Worked with the Building Communities Together (BCT) Team Manager to align CAP with the BCT and Mini Maps meeting to increase awareness of CAP across partner agencies and the funding opportunities available for diversionary projects for children.
- Multi agency workstream to consider the application of CAP funding alongside Safer Streets Funding for diversionary activities for children living in Greenham.
- Work with Berkshire Youth CEO to discuss CAP and joint working on CAP funded projects.
- Distribution of CAP parent's guide leaflet through all secondary schools across West Berkshire along with the Youth Offending Team to provide to parents of pupils and service users.
- Provision of a list of all breweries across West Berkshire to enable CAP Community interest Company to approach to request for additional funding for the West Berkshire CAP.
- Working with Newbury College regarding establishing a 'college CAP', this will include five projects across the remainder of the academic year and the development of 'Young Health Champions' within the college.
- Contact with all schools within West Berkshire advising of the alcohol presentations that can be undertaken to students by the team. Presentations are already booked in for the new year.
- Partnership working with colleagues in respect of setting up a Challenge 25 test purchasing operation.
- Seeking volunteers for the Challenge 25 test purchasing operation.

- Responsible Retailer training has been available to retailers on a monthly basis.
- The first of the five Newbury college projects took place on 17th January 2023. This was held in the 'marketplace' within the college and involved presentations, information points and workshops.

During 2024 it is anticipated that the Challenge 25 test purchasing operation will take place across West Berkshire. If the retailers fail, follow up work such as encouraging attendance on the Responsible Retailer training will be undertaken and advice given. Furthermore, the failed test purchasing will provide intelligence for future underage enforcement programmes.

CAP funding will be sought for small diversionary projects for groups of children or specific areas identified through the Mini Maps meeting or from Berkshire Youth. For example, officers are already planning a project for Pangbourne Meadows for the summer when it is known that children attend, misuse alcohol and render themselves vulnerable near the river. During early spring a CAP survey will be going out to residents, children, and licensees. The results of the survey will help shape the CAP moving forward.

A meeting was held with the CAP Southeast Regional Manager on 13th December, moving forward he is keen on West Berkshire CAP working with Newbury College on a virtual reality training package for retailer training, involving an underage sale scenario and a package for schools to use with pupils regarding for example peer pressure scenarios.

PROTECTING & INFORMING CONSUMERS

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Unsafe Consumer Goods - OP 450.00 / Risk 450
- Cost of Living - OP 288.00 / Risk 288

Horizon Scanning – none identified at present.

Underage Sales (UAS)

There were 67 reports of underage sales in 2023 across the 3 authorities (23 in 2022). 55% of reports related to the underage sales of vapes (37). There has

been a 131% increase in reports of the underage sales of vapes, since the last period (16 in 2022). In addition, 12% of reports related to UAS of alcohol.

There was an increase in reports of UAS of lottery tickets and scratch cards, with 16% of reports related to this (11). There were no reports of this type in 2022. Camelot are very pro-active and will conduct their own test purchases on retailers.

In Bracknell Forest there were 19 reports of UAS, 52% of reports related the sale of vapes and 26% to the sale of scratch cards or lotteries. In West Berkshire there were 28 reports of UAS, 64% related to the sale of vapes and 21% related to the sale of alcohol. In Wokingham there were 20 reports of UAS, 45% related to the sale of vapes and 30% related to the sale of scratch cards or lotteries.

The PPP carry out a monthly routine underage sales test purchasing programme to assess compliance with age restricted legalisation amongst local retailers.

There were 64 UAS test purchases in conducted in 2023 across the 3 authorities. These were for vapes, alcohol, fireworks and lottery. There was a 94% pass rate, with only 4 failures. Areas which did not have any test purchases in 2023 were for knives, tobacco, spray paint or solvents. There was no intelligence or complaints relating to these items in the PPP area.

Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers

Operation Banba was a PPP project to ensure compliance, from businesses across our area, with The Botulinum Toxin and Cosmetic Fillers (Children) Act 2021. 53 test purchases were made via a phone call to businesses across the 3 authorities, with an attempt to book an appointment for a child aged 16. 53 business were contacted, of which 43 answered the call and confirmed they undertook the procedure. There were with 3 failures. All businesses were written to with advice. Follow up work in this area is planned.

Unsafe Goods

In 2023 there was a 212% increase in reporting relating to unsafe goods and services from the previous year. Unsafe used cars have received the most reports for the last two years equating to 68% of reports for unsafe goods and services in 2023. The top four most complained about for unsafe goods, all relate to used cars, service and repairs, engines and used commercial vehicles.

The used car programme was conducted in 2021 and 2022, where premises that had received complaints were visited, along with a specialist from the RAC. As complaints about used cars have continued, Enterprise Act action has been instigated with one trader also is also now being considered as a route of action to tackle unfair trading and consistent civil breaches across all three authorities.

The PPP currently has a number of vehicles that officers have seized that are subject to ongoing legal proceedings.

Operation Tanoak was a PPP project to ensure that local retailers selling vaping products are compliant with the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. 55 premises were inspected across the 3 authorities and resulted in seizures from 11 premises for suspected non-compliant vapes.

In 2023 the PPP were awarded Lead Local Authority in the region for Market Surveillance as part of Operation Joseph. The Service has committed to 20 days of National Market Surveillance of “notified” vapes (i.e. published on the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA) notification system), for which the PPP receives National Trading Standards funding.

The Office for Product Safety & Standards (OPSS) regularly notifies local authorities regarding any products recalls and alerts. In 2023, local authorities were asked to collate intelligence on IDB relating to E-Scooters, E-Bikes and conversion kits, to build the overall picture, under Operation Birch.

The PPP has recently been asked by government to participate in an inspection programme of e-scooter repair premises. To date officers have identified 24 in the PPP trading standards administered area.

Officers contribute to sampling operations around product safety and also have product assessments undertaken from time to time where there are safety allegations or concerns or accidents and injuries. The social media platforms are also used to put out notifications about unsafe products.

Buy With Confidence

The PPP currently has twenty registered businesses on this scheme, with one new member in 2023. This scheme is for Bracknell Forest, although businesses can be based elsewhere and elect to be on our scheme if their user base is predominantly in our area. West Berkshire and Wokingham businesses are

looked after by Hampshire Trading Standards in their Buy with Confidence scheme.

Assured Care and Support

Assured Care and Support (formally Support with Confidence) is a directory and vetting scheme for Personal Assistants, designed to raise standards and provide assurance to people who need care. It is particularly for those solo providers who fall outside the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulatory framework. The scheme has several functions:

- A vetting scheme primarily aimed at Personal Assistants (PAs) who cannot register with CQC.
- Support and advice for PAs who are setting up a new business.
- Advice to agencies on their systems to ensure their staff are meeting our high standards and helping CQC registered agencies improve their ratings.
- A register of approved PAs and agencies - available on the Councils' Directories.
- A finding service for people needing care. The Service takes referrals from the public, Adult Social Care professionals and social prescribers and find PAs who are available to help.

The scheme has 80 members and has received requests for care and support for 130 vulnerable adults in West Berkshire and Wokingham since introduction.

The scheme is currently being rebranded and reviewed with a view to providing a Berkshire West Service. It currently is delivered in West Berkshire and Wokingham, and officers are in discussions with Reading Borough Council and are planning to approach the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to see if they would like to join this shared service.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Weights and Measure Inspections

There were 17 weights and measure reports across PPP in 2023. All qualified trading standards officers are authorised by the relevant Minister as Inspectors of Weights and Measures. A significant number of weights and measures inspections are undertaken by officers and are often combined with food standards inspections. These include shops, pubs and restaurants and weighbridges that are used by the Service and the police for road traffic overloading enforcement.

A total number of metrology inspections conducted in 2023/24 was 266.

Community Larder

The community larder was launched in Thatcham in June 2021. The larder is run by volunteers but was set up by the PPP Community Team to support residents access cheap food and reduce food waste.

Going forward officers are planning to combine this facility with other partnership grant funded projects such as electric blankets, heaters and portable appliance testing. Officers would also like to set up a rolling programme of services/ individuals who provide regular talks or a presence at the larder such as the local PCSO's, a nutritionist, scams talks, budgeting/ debt management talks etc.

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Improved Air Pollution - OP 67.50 / Risk 90
- Impact of Noise on Residents and Communities - OP 39.60 / Risk 66
- Environmental Protection - OP 23.10 / Risk 38.5

Horizon Scanning

- **Crematoria Process guidance Note** - There are possible changes to Crematoria Process guidance Note, which will require changes to abatement plant. This is awaiting consultation.

Air Quality

A significant amount of work has been conducted over the years to improve air quality. The Service manages local monitoring, data assessment and produces the [annual status reports to Defra](#). Officers have also previously successfully bid for grant funding to look at levels of particulates in addition to our routine monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide. The work is conducted across Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham.

The PPP is pleased to report that due to improvements the two Air Quality Management Areas in West Berkshire (Newbury A339 and Thatcham A4) have been revoked as has the Bracknell (A322) AQMA. Twyford and the M4 (Wokingham) AQMAs are also advised for revocation. The Wokingham Town

Centre Air Quality Action Plan is being reviewed. The Crowthorne AQAP was approved by DEFRA in May 2024.

Indicative Particulate Matter PM_{2.5} monitoring was undertaken for 3 months at 42 locations across the 3 LAs in 2022 – 2023. No locations where concentrations exceeded the UK guideline values (annual mean 25 µg/m³) were identified nor were any significant health risks associated with exposure. Officers did however recommended a number of steps to the schools to reduce PM levels.

The total number of air quality locations sampled in 2023 was 26 in Bracknell Forest, 35 sites in West Berkshire and 51 sites in Wokingham. Monitoring is conducted on a monthly basis.

Anti-Idling

As part of the DEFRA Air Quality Grant an anti-idling campaign was carried out in 2023, as a Behavioural Change project, with surveys and signage, and school education programme (education toolkit, visits to schools for assembly and workshop). The results of the assessment showed an overall reduction in idling

Officers have worked with Bracknell Forest's Civil Enforcement Team who are collecting location data and occurrences of idling vehicles when they are out on patrol carrying out their parking enforcement duties. The Service plans to role this out in West Berkshire.

Energy Efficiency (EPC)

[See section above.](#)

Single-use Plastics

The Environmental Protection (Plates, Cutlery, Balloon Sticks and Expanded and Extruded Polystyrene Food and Beverage Containers) (England) Regulations 2023 came into force last year and pro-active work was undertaken within the food sector to highlight the new rules. Going forward regular monitoring will be undertaken and all complaints made to the Service will be considered and responded to.

As of 1 October 2023, it is an offence to supply or offer to supply the following items in England:

- Single-use plastic cutlery.
- Single-use plastic balloon sticks.

- Single-use expanded and extruded polystyrene food and beverage containers, including single-use expanded and extruded polystyrene cups.

As of 1 October 2023, it is an offence to supply or offer to supply the following items to end-users in England:

- Single-use plastic plates.
- Single-use plastic trays.
- Single-use plastic bowls.

Communications were sent out to food operators in the form of a guidance note and complaints continue to be investigated as they come into the Service. The number of complaints have been limited possibly due to the low awareness of the new legislation.

Environmental Crime

Environmental Crime remains a priority area for PPP with respect to Bracknell Forest. In West Berkshire this is managed by the waste team. In 2023/24 a total of 101 fly tipping incidents were investigated resulting in 5 warnings, 23 fixed penalties and one prosecution. The Service also actively links this work to wider trading related fraud and also public awareness campaigns. This has resulted in wider fraud investigation work.

In addition, officers trained and manage the Consumer Safety Accreditation Scheme where Lexicon (Bracknell) Security Staff are authorised to deal with certain environmental matters such as graffiti and fly-posting on our behalf.

Officers also carry out co-ordinated operations with the Police and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA). During these operations 65 waste carrier licence checks were conducted.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Planning Consultations

Environmental Health are non-statutory consultees in the planning application process but are consulted on some applications as the PPP may have an interest in the proposed development. The types of application include full, variation, reserved matters, condition discharge, pre-application and prior approval.

In 2023 the PPP reviewed 514 Planning Consultations on behalf of Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire. Of these 61% were in relation to West Berkshire

(311) and 39% were in relation to Bracknell Forest (202). There was one for Wokingham relating to air quality.

In West Berkshire the applications to be consulted on are advised via the WBC Planning Portal, attendance at Planning Committee is by request for a specific application.

In Bracknell Forest consultations are sent directly from Planning where they consider Environmental Health's views are required. Attendance at every Planning Committee Chair's Briefing and Committee is required as per the arrangements of Bracknell Forest Environmental Health joining the PPP.

Statutory Nuisance (Commercial)

In 2023 there were 417 complaints relating to commercial nuisance. 137 in Bracknell Forest and 280 in West Berkshire. 78% of commercial nuisance reports were related to noise (327).

More recently officers have become involved in the issues relating to sewage discharges but onto land, water courses and as a result of flooding.

Proactive work in this area includes event monitoring and mitigation at planning stage.

COPA (Control of Pollution Act)

During 2023/24 nine notices were served to deal with noise from construction sites. This followed prior consent afforded to the developer/contractor which set out hours of construction work and noise conditions designed to reduce the impact on residential receptors nearby.

LAPPC Inspections (Local Authority Pollution Prevention & Control)

The requirements for these inspections are split between the Environment Agency and the Local Authority.

The inspection programme is based on a risk assessed score and type of industrial activity. These include dry cleaners, crematoria, cement batching plants and petrol filling stations. Following each inspection, the outcome score determines the inspection interval from two per year to one every three years. The Environmental Permit details specific conditions to be met. Non-compliance may result in the service of an Enforcement Notice. Over the last two years 40 inspections have been conducted.

A Public Register for all Permits is required to be published and is at: [Industrial pollution - PPP \(publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk\)](https://www.publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk).

Contaminated Land

The Bracknell Forest Strategy has been reviewed and updated and agreed in November 2022. The West Berkshire Contaminated Land Strategy has been reviewed and updated and agreed in June 2023. Current Strategies are valid for 5 years. Dealing with contaminated land is through the planning process. The EQ team frequently deal with planning applications for development on previously used land, often referred to as 'brownfield land'. In many cases these sites may be contaminated due to historical and/or industrial use. To ensure development is safe, planning applications are reviewed to check whether that land is potentially contaminated and if this is the case, recommendations will be made advising that the planning application approval should be subject to appropriate conditions.

In the case of enquiries relating to contaminated land and Environmental Information Requests (under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004), charges are made where the provision of information is substantial, based on a minimum of 2 hours, by environmental consultants only.

In 2023 there were 60 contaminated land and environmental information requests received by PPP. This is a 7% increase from the previous year (56). 26 related to locations in Bracknell Forest and 34 related to locations in West Berkshire.

Weight Restrictions and Overloaded Vehicles

There were 366 Weight Restriction and overloaded vehicle inspections undertaken in 2023 across the 3 authorities. There were 29 in relation to overloaded vehicles and 337 inspections relating to weight restrictions. 296 inspections took place in West Berkshire, 43 in Wokingham and 27 in Bracknell Forest.

Of the 296 operations 71% resulted in breaches (260) being identified. Of these there were 5 warnings issued and 83 prosecutions. A number of matters are still in the court system or at file review stage.

PROMOTING ANIMAL WELFARE

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Animal Welfare - OP 357.00 / Risk 476

Horizon Scanning

- **Bird Keepers Registration Requirement** - In England and Wales, keepers are encouraged to register their birds ahead of the legal deadline on 1 October 2024. Bird keepers will need to provide information, including their contact details, the location where birds are kept and details of the birds (species, number and what they are kept for). The government said the changes would help manage potential disease outbreaks, such as avian influenza and Newcastle disease, and limit any spread. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-help-protect-poultry-industry-from-bird-flu>)
- **New legislation introduces penalty notices for animal health and welfare offences** - Penalty notices of up to £5000 could be issued from 1 January 2024 for animal health and welfare offences. Offences includes keeping animals in a poor living environment, overdue TB testing or animal breeders operating without a licence. New legislation adds to existing enforcement measures to protect animals– including criminal prosecution for most serious offences
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/penalty-notice-introduced-for-animal-health-and-welfare-offences>

Licensable Activity (Breeding/Boarding etc)

There are a range of controls falling to the PPP around licensable activities involving the sale and keeping of animals. These include pet shops (sales normally conducted from home), regulated pet breeding, boarding and home boarding, kennels and catteries, riding establishments, zoos and animals involved in performance and display.

In 2023 there were 74 licensing applications in relation to animal boarding and day care facilities: 39 for Bracknell Forest and 35 for West Berkshire

There were 8 licensing applications in relation to breeding and selling animals as pets, 7 for Bracknell Forest and 1 in West Berkshire. There were also 6

licensing applications in relation to hiring and training animals for exhibitions: 4 in Bracknell Forest and 2 in West Berkshire.

There were 9 reports relating to animal breeding in 2023, 4 were complaints and 5 were in relation to Information or advice.

All premises have to be inspected at least twice during the licensing period with an initial inspection and mid-term inspection.

The total number of licensed animal establishments is 148.

Animal Welfare on Farms

In 2023 there were 48 on-farm animal health and welfare inspections conducted across the PPP. In addition to animal welfare checks the Service has responsibility for a range of health controls from illegal importation to diseases such as foot and mouth. The Service also monitors biosecurity measures at gatherings such as shows as well as inspecting traceability and movement records. The number of bluetongue cases in the UK has continued to rise in early 2024.

On an ongoing basis officers deal with seasonal matters relating to Avian Influenza including bio-security, checking reports and requiring safe disposal along with our other animal by-products regulatory duties.

There was a 38% decrease in animal health and welfare reports in 2023 (32) from the previous year (52). Of those 78% of reports in 2023 were relating to locations in West Berkshire. Half of the reports received in 2023 were relating to animal welfare and transport queries. In 2022 the majority of reports (54%) related to disease control.

From 1st January 2024, penalty notices of up to £5000 could be issued for animal health and welfare offences. Offences includes keeping animals in a poor living environment, overdue TB testing or animal breeders operating without a licence. New legislation adds to existing enforcement measures to protect animals– including criminal prosecution for most serious offences <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/penalty-notice-introduced-for-animal-health-and-welfare-offences>

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Health & Safety Enforcement - OP 198.00 / Risk 264

Horizon Scanning: (

The licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures in England – Under the proposed scheme, which will be operated by local authorities in England, practitioners will need to be licensed to perform specific non-surgical cosmetic procedures and the premises from which they operate will also need to be licensed. The licensing scheme will ensure that those who offer specified procedures; are suitably knowledgeable, trained and qualified, hold appropriate indemnity cover and operate from premises which meet the necessary standards of hygiene, infection control and cleanliness. This requirement will impact the demand on the Licensing Team, as well as the Environmental Health team as the enforcing authority for Health & Safety.

[The licensing of non-surgical cosmetic procedures in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Health and Safety

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishes a range of statistics relating to health and safety in Great Britain on an annual basis, each November.

The 2023 statistics highlight the scale of key health and safety risks in the UK.

- 1.8 million working people suffering from a work-related illness, of which:
 - 875,000 workers suffering work-related stress, depression or anxiety.
 - 473,000 workers suffering from a work-related musculoskeletal disorder.
- 2,268 mesothelioma deaths due to past asbestos exposures (2021).
- 135 workers killed in work-related accidents.
- 561,000 working people sustained an injury at work according to the Labour Force Survey.
- 60,645 injuries to employees reported under RIDDOR.
- 35.2 million working days lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury.
- £20.7 billion estimated cost of injuries and ill health from current working conditions (2021/22).

Topic Based Health and Safety Interventions

There is a requirement under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 for the local authority to plan health and safety at work interventions. The HSE produces guidance each year on which health and safety at work priorities are suitable for proactive health and safety inspections by local authorities. This is based on the intelligence collected Nationally by HSE and is normally available for LAs in March of each year. The guidance is “Setting priorities and targeting interventions” HELA Local Authority Circular 67/2 (Rev 13 - 2024/25) guidance.

Guidance issued by the HSE requires local authorities to plan their health and safety enforcement activities and it specifies which types of work activities are suitable for proactive safety inspections.

“Setting priorities and targeting interventions” HELA Local Authority Circular 67/2 (Rev 13 - 2024/25) guidance under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) - List of activities/sectors considered suitable for proactive inspection 2024/25 include, for example:

Crowd management & injuries/fatalities to the public - Large scale public gatherings e.g. cultural events, sports, festivals & live music Lack of suitable planning, management and monitoring of the risks arising from crowd movement and behaviour as they arrive, leave and move around a venue

Fires and explosions caused by the initiation of explosives, including fireworks Professional Firework Display Operators7 Poorly managed fusing of fireworks.

Open Farms/Animal Visitor Attractions - Lack of suitable micro-organism control measures

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Explosives Licensing

There were 40 explosives inspections conducted by Trading Standards in 2023. There were 11 in Bracknell Forest, 14 in West Berkshire and 15 in Wokingham. One prosecution took place for storage breaches resulting in a penalty of £30K plus costs demonstrating the seriousness of the risk.

Two other matters are ongoing including one very serious case where the file is with the legal team.

Petroleum Licensing

The PPP received 14 licensing applications in relation to petroleum certificates. 2 in Bracknell Forest and 12 in West Berkshire. All were granted. There are over sixty licenced premises across the PPP area including filling stations and private storage such as farms. All are subject to a risk based inspection programme.

There were 19 petroleum inspections conducted by Trading Standards in 2023. 17 in West Berkshire and 2 in Wokingham. There were no petroleum inspections conducted in Bracknell Forest.

Work Related Health and Safety SR/Outbreaks

It is a legal requirement for the local authority to investigate single cases and outbreaks of diseases, including Legionella and Cryptosporidiosis, that may be related to workplaces for which the PPP is the enforcing authority for health and safety at work.

In 2023 there were two reports of Legionella recorded on PPP systems, one in Bracknell Forest and one in West Berkshire.

Event Safety

[See Above](#)

Accident Investigations

The PPP is required to follow a protocol for workplace accident investigations. This relates to workplace accidents or dangerous occurrences that are reported to the local authority under RIDDOR Regulations 2013. The team may also investigate workplace accidents that have not been reported but have come to our attention as a service request or complaint.

There were 129 accidents reported to the PPP under RIDDOR in 2023. There were 50 in Bracknell Forest and 79 in West Berkshire. 73% of all accidents reported related to employees (94) and 27% related to accidents to members of the public (35). The most common type of accident reported was a slip, trip or fall on same level, accounting for 45% of reports (58). This was the same across both Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire.

8% of accidents reported to PPP under RIDDOR were investigated.

There were also 28 complaints made directly to the PPP, regarding accidents not reported to HSE under RIDDOR. There were 12 in Bracknell Forest and 16

in West Berkshire. 71% of these complaints related to accidents by employees, 29% of complaints related to accidents by members of the public.

SAFE AND HEALTHY FOOD CHAIN

MoRile Scoring

Previous priorities which relate and their scoring:

- Food & Safety Standards - OP 172.50 / Risk 230

Horizon Scanning

- **Animal Feed Storage Unit Risks** - A new Defra survey has highlighted the risks of disease in animal feed storage units, with farmers advised to regularly clean such facilities. [Reduce disease risk from animal feed storage units - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reduce-disease-risk-from-animal-feed-storage-units)
- **The Private Water Supplies (England) Regulations 2016 revised guidance** – This will increase the number of supplies and therefore there will be an increase in monitoring to be undertaken and risk assessments that will be required. [Information note on regulation 8 \(revised version\) - Drinking Water Inspectorate \(dwi.gov.uk\)](https://www.dwi.gov.uk/information-note-on-regulation-8-revised-version).

Food Premises Inspections

There are two areas of food inspections. Food hygiene inspections cover matters such as premise hygiene, food handling, infection control and hazard analysis. These are conducted by Environmental Health Officers.

Food standards inspections cover quality, out of date food, labelling, descriptions, contamination, adulteration, health claims, organic claims and allergens amongst many other matters. These are often conducted alongside weights and measures inspections.

In 2023/24 PPP conducted 488 food hygiene inspections and 687 food standards inspections. Both inspection regimes are risk based.

For 2024/25 there has been a new risk scheme introduced for food standards inspections and managers are working through data to understand the impact.

Food standards functions are conducted across Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Wokingham.

Primary Production and Animal Feed

The Service has responsibility for the production, sale and storage of animal feed. This is a high priority area nationally as it was failures in feed controls that led to both Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak in 2001 which ended up with a high cost.

Across the PPP area there are a total of 370 registered premises and we inspect these on a risk basis. This is a high specialist area and like food safety and standards we are required to comply with statutory codes and submit annual returns.

Trading Standards are also responsible for food safety at primary production. Work in this area has included issues relating to allegations on use of contaminated water on crops.

Foodborne / Waterborne Outbreaks

Certain cases of foodborne infectious diseases are required to be investigated by the local authority and this is done in conjunction with UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). Complaints about alleged food poisoning sources are also investigated. By definition an outbreak is two or more cases with a common source.

Labelling and Health Claims

In 2023 there were 66 complaints relating to food standards across the three authorities, which was a 53% increase on the previous year (43). In this number 22 related to Bracknell Forest, 15 related to West Berkshire and 29 related to Wokingham.

Target Food Sampling

The local authority is required to participate in coordinated national and local microbiological food sampling programmes in partnership with UKHSA. Officers also conduct regular sampling to identify undeclared allergens and look for adulteration or evidence of food fraud.

The sampling programme is agreed annually and officers work with UKHSA and our appointed Public Analysts (Hampshire and Kent County Councils) to deliver the programmes and identify emerging risks.

There is currently one prosecution case in the system which has arisen following a serious incident of non-compliance with allergen controls.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Programmed Inspections as per Food Standards Agency Code Of Practice

Local authorities are required to complete an annual programme of mandatory risk-based food hygiene inspections in accordance with the Food Law Code of Practice (England).

The Code of Practice also requires the food authority to investigate complaints related to the hygiene of foodstuffs and commercial hygiene practices.

In addition, there is a requirement to target poor performing food businesses and use appropriate enforcement and/or advisory interventions to secure compliance with food hygiene law.

Following a consultation in 2023, The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is to release details in 2024 of proposed changes to the food inspection programmes which are likely to result in implementation of major operational upheaval.

As the enforcing authority for food hygiene the Service is also required, by FSA, to complete an enforcement plan each year detailing the work of the team, this is [published on the PPP website](#).

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Food Hygiene Inspection Ratings are published online for consumer information. This is required by the Food Law Code of Practice (England) and is done in accordance with the Food Standards Agency's "Brand Standard". This is of critical importance to food businesses who rely on hygiene ratings to be up to date and accurate. New businesses are generally assessed within 28 days. All businesses in Bracknell Forest and West Berkshire that have been visited have a rating.

There is a separate project to improve standards in premises rated zero or one where officers work with the premise to improve standards.

In 2023/24 there were 3 improvement notices issued and 8 voluntary closures.

The issue of FHRS is commonly reported in the press – especially those premises with low or high ratings.

Infectious Diseases

Certain cases of foodborne infectious diseases are required to be investigated by the local authority and this is done in conjunction with UKHSA. Complaints about alleged food poisoning sources are also investigated.

There were 468 reports of food poisoning last year across Bracknell and West Berkshire. 180 in Bracknell Forest and 288 in West Berkshire.

Private Water Supplies Risk Assessments

PPP currently undertake risk assessments and sampling of 227 known Private Water Supply sites in West Berkshire. There are currently no known sites in Bracknell Forest. The number of risk assessments and sampling vary each year due to the requirement that these sites are reviewed every 5 years. For 2024 there are 20 risk assessments due.

Requirement for all new Regulation 8, 9 (part of commercial activity) and 10 supplies to be risk assessed and re-risk assessed every 5 years. This is for all supplies excluding single dwellings (unless they are rented). The PPP charges for the first RA and for the re-RA if changes are made. Reg 9 Large Supplies are deemed higher priority due to greater potential danger to health as typically larger number of supply users or use as part of food undertaking.

If a supply owner carries out their own RA they are required to submit it to PPP within the time period for checking.

Private Water Supply Sampling

Risk assessments determine the sampling parameters and frequency. Charges apply for taking the sample and delivery to laboratory based on the PPP hourly rate. The PPP also charges for investigation in event of test failure. Officers carrying out sampling must have accredited training.

Once officers are aware of a new supply and the supply type is known they send out a questionnaire to all properties reportedly served by the supply. If the supply is already in use then officers carry out a risk assessment and sampling takes place as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The total number of different locations sampled in 2023/24 was 93.

Allergens

Controls for prevention of cross contamination by allergens during food preparation at catering premises are reviewed by officers at inspections in addition to hygiene control measures.

In 2023 there were 22 reports relating to allergens across PPP authorities. There were 10 regarding locations in Bracknell Forest, 8 regarding locations in West Berkshire and 4 regarding locations in Wokingham. There was one repeat location reported for allergens that received 3 reports during an event at Christmas.

Routine Labelling & Health Claims

There were 95 reports relating to Food labelling, composition and out of date food in 2023 across all 3 authority areas. Food labelling reports (61) have increased 41% from last year (43).

Routine Food Sampling

There were samples taken at 24 locations across the 3 authorities in 2023 in relation to food standards.