

Regional Strategy 2024-2026

Scope and Responsibilities

- The North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA) continues to take a key partnership role across the 12 local authorities in the region and delivers on various core projects on behalf of national partners, which include the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB), HMRC and the Food Standards Agency (FSA); together with regional partners.

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What is the North East Trading Standards Association (NETSA)?

NETSA is a partnership body which brings together the twelve Local Authority Trading Standards Services (LATSS's) in the North East of England, in order to enhance services and contribute to meeting local, regional, and national priorities.

What are our objectives?

- Work in partnership to enhance local service delivery.
- Create informed confident consumers and protect the vulnerable
- Support legitimate businesses by ensuring a fair and safe trading environment.
- Co-ordinate local, regional, and national priorities to enhance service provision.

Key Priorities for Action 2024-2026

1. Attract and strive to maintain resources to enhance the provision for Trading Standards Services in the North East region.
2. Ensure consistency of interpretation and sharing best practice
3. Working collaboratively to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money.
4. Use evidence/intelligence gathered locally, regionally, and nationally to target resources.
5. To carefully consider the implications of and respond effectively to the devolutionary process within the region. Based on the political process.
6. To carefully consider the implications of and respond effectively to the UK having now left the EU.
7. To carefully consider the implications of and respond effectively to the setting up of the Office for Product Safety and Standards.
8. To carefully consider the implications of the Government's response to the Hackitt Report – the Building Safety Act 2022. Including the announcement on construction products.
9. To evaluate and respond fully to the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 upon all consumer protection legislation.
10. To deliver upon the outcomes of the regional training scheme for apprentices.
11. To deliver upon the requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.
12. To deliver upon the requirements of Operation Joseph in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in Vaping Products and the Underage sale of Vaping Products.
13. To carefully consider the implications of the Government Policy Document: "Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation".

Impact and Outcomes

- Achievement of best practice through shared learning and expertise, relevant and timely information exchange, and development of new and innovative approaches
- Consistent and intelligence led action with all partners.
- Maximise the delivery of initiatives within the limitations of reducing resources.
- Contribute to public health and wellbeing.
- Contribute to building safer and stronger local communities.
- Protect the vulnerable

Governance Arrangements

NETSA consists of the Heads of Service from the 12 LATSS's within the region. A Regional Coordinator, who is retained through grant funding received from the NTSB, supports our work. NETSA will continue to provide the strategic leadership for all sub regional groups and promote effective partnership working throughout the region in order to protect and improve the health, wellbeing and safety of local communities whilst supporting local businesses to achieve better regulatory outcomes.

Governance Arrangements (Continued)

All finances received through NETSA will be subject to independent scrutiny and audit. NETSA, and its subordinate groups, will take actions that are customer-focussed and will be subject to a robust performance and financial management framework.

No decisions will be actioned unless they provide value for money for our constituent Authorities, communities, businesses, or partners.

NETSA is committed to effective, strategic planning and developing policies through dynamic and successful leadership. This will be informed utilising data from the Annual Strategic Assessment.

Challenges

In developing its policies and plans NETSA will recognise the challenges presented by:

- a) Reducing resources in the public sector particularly those prevalent in the regulatory field and will maximise potential to secure additional resources for the regional LATSS's.
- b) To continue to support legitimate business and protect our local communities. This agenda has developed through the implementation of the "Regulators Code" and having regard to the policies outlined in the Local Government Association's "Open for Business" document.
- c) The continuing implementation of new consumer protection legislation. This includes abolition of letting fees (May 2018); prohibition of F & G energy rated domestic properties under EPC legislation and the prohibition of F&G energy rated non-domestic properties (April 2023); the banning of sales of offensive and dangerous substances to under 18's (Offensive Weapons Act 2019) (April 2022); animal licensing provisions (October 2018), the Tenant Fees Act 2019 (June 2019), the amendment to Pet shop licensing (Lucy's Law) (April 2020), the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022.
- d) The need to carefully consider the implications of and respond effectively to the devolutionary process within the region. Based on the political process.
- e) To carefully consider the implications of the "Levelling Up" agenda.
- f) To carefully consider the implications of and respond effectively to the Office for Product Safety and Standards.
- g) To carefully consider the implications of the Government's response to the Hackitt Report – the Building Safety Act 2022. Including the announcement on construction products.
- h) To evaluate and respond fully to the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 upon all consumer protection legislation.
- i) To deliver upon the outcomes of the regional training scheme for apprentices.
- j) To deliver upon the requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.
- k) To deliver upon the requirements of Operation Joseph in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in Vaping Products and the Underage sale of Vaping Products.
- l) To carefully consider the implications of the Government Policy Document: "Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation".

Partnership Working

NETSA continues to work with a range of national and regional partners including the Department for Business & Trade (DBT), the Home Office and the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the three regional police services, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and other enforcement agencies as well as Balance and Fresh.

National



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero



Department for
Business & Trade



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



Regional




North East
Local Enterprise
Partnership





Local




Key Priorities for Action 2024-2026			
1. Attract resources to enhance the provision for Trading Standards Services in the North East region			
	Action	Timescale	Current Status
1.1	<p>Support the NTSB in exercising all of its functions devolved from the Department for Business, and Trade (DBT). Each English region plus Wales is allocated a seat on the NTSB. Observers from DBT, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI), the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are also present at these meetings.</p> <p>The governance of the NTSB is delivered on behalf of local government by a political oversight group. The grant funding is delivered on behalf of DBT.</p> <p>Office for Product Safety and Standards.</p>	January 2024 – March 2026	<p>Regional representation delivered by NETSA Chair, and the local/regional governance of activities and decisions carried out by NETSA Executive. All the meetings of the NTSB & Governance groups 2024/2026 to be supported.</p> <p>NETSA Executive. Meetings programmed in. Last meeting 14 December 2023. NTSB. Last meeting 19 December 2023.</p> <p>Announcement on 19 January 2021 that OPSS to lead on the enforcement of construction products legislation.</p> <p>31 August 2022 “OPSS Product Regulation Strategy 2022-2025. How we will deliver protection and confidence in a strong, green economy”. Published.</p>

			 opss-strategy-2022-2025.pdf Funding for safety testing of selected products manufactured or imported into the region through the Metrology Laboratory at Gateshead.
1.2	Ensure that the scheduled Animal Feed Inspection programme (grant funded by the FSA via the NTSB) is delivered upon.	January 2024 – March 2026	Animal Health and Feed Group delivering inspection programme agreed with the NTSB. Co-ordinated through Northumberland CC. Funding granted.
1.3	<p>Maintain Regional Investigations Team (RIT) (funded by NTSB) in order to act against level 2/3 criminality in accordance with the Intelligence Operating Model (IOM).</p> <p>Tasking effected from both local and regional intelligence through the Regional Tasking Group (RTG) and in line with referral processes agreed by the National Tasking Group (NTG).</p>	<p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p>RIT Manager and host authority have taken actions in accordance with the IOM and governance procedures.</p> <p>Governance group carrying out ongoing monitoring of delivery programme.</p>



	Action	Timescale	Current Status
1.4	Maintain a Regional Intelligence Analyst (RIA) (funded by NTSB) in line with nationally agreed strategy.	January 2024 – March 2026	RIT Manager and host authority has maintained the RIA in compliance with the terms of a funding agreement in line with the IOM.


1.5	Carefully consider regional bidding in order to host projects/functions devolved from the delivery of the strategy as and when appropriate.	January 2024 – March 2026	Successful funding bid on Operation Arwen (Oak). Successful bid from Northumberland on a business of concern. Successful bids on Operation Quattro & Operation Piccolo.
1.6	To co-ordinate joint arrangements in respect of enforcement provisions of Energy Performance Certificates in local authorities.  uksi_20151681_en.pdf	January 2024 – March 2026	9 October 2015 legislation implemented. Response required by all LA's. Annual reporting regime to Secretary of State. Several LA's organising partnership arrangements. April 2023 F&G energy rated non-domestic properties now banned.
1.7	To monitor implementation of the Tenant Fees, Act 2019.	January 2024 – March 2026	Effects of legislation on regulatory services and marketplace.
1.8	To monitor the Final Report: "Regulation of Property Agents Working Group."  Regulation_of_Property_Agents_final_report	January 2024 – March 2026	Potential effects on the property business sector.
1.9	To monitor implementation of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 related to bladed implements and corrosive substances.	January 2024 – March 2026	April 2022 provisions brought into force.
1.10	To carefully consider and respond to the CTSI consultation on the Qualifications Review.	January 2024 – March 2026	Officers provided a full response.

Key Priorities for Action 2024 -2026			
2. Ensure consistency of interpretation and sharing best practice			
	Action	Timescale	Current Status
2.1	Respond to all consultations affecting Regulatory Services	January 2024 – March 2026	As and when relevant consultations emerge. December 2023 submission made on vaping consultation.
2.2	METROLOGY GROUP a) Project Work to be determined.	January 2022 – March 2024	Agreement to deliver projects on packaged goods.
2.3	FAIR TRADING Responsibility on delivery rests with RTG. a) Engage with Police led Operation Bombay in combating doorstep crime. b) Participate in Scams Awareness campaign with key task of increasing reporting of scams. c) Partnership working with the Anti-Counterfeiting Group (ACG) & the Intellectual Property Office. d) Participation and involvement with National Consumer Week. e) To co-ordinate joint arrangements in respect of enforcement provisions of Energy Performance Certificates in local authorities.  uksi_20151681_en.pdf	January 2024 – March 2026 January 2024 – March 2026 January 2024 – March 2026 January 2024 – March 2026 January 2024 – March 2026	Lead Officer Fair Trading Group and RIA have established links and fully engaged with these operations. Regional LATSS's to participate. RIA co-ordinated regional activity around illegal trade through social media sites on the internet. Regional LATSS's to be involved with National Consumer Week 2024, Legislation implemented. Response required by all LA's. Also, annual reporting regime to Secretary of State. Several LA's organised partnership

	<p>f) Second-hand car market.</p> <p>g) Doorstep crime.</p> <p>h) Multi Agency Safety project on Doorstep crime.</p>	<p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p>arrangements. April 2023 F&G energy rated non-domestic properties banned.</p> <p>Operation Quattro ongoing</p> <p>Operation Piccolo</p> <p>Development through national Scams team. SPOC's now operational for 3 regional police areas. Call blockers resourced and distributed.</p>
2.4	<p>CONSUMER AND PRODUCT SAFETY GROUP</p> <p>a) Respond to all localised enquiries and respond to requests as made for intelligence from DBT and the national Product Safety Focus group. Business plan developed.</p> <p>b) Undertake intelligence led product safety projects in respect of consumer products i.e., sun beds, fancy dress costumes and electric chargers.</p> <p>c) Participation with Child Safety Week.</p> <p>d) Monitor national/regional developments in respect of underage sales and take appropriate action.</p>	<p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p>Lead officer Consumer and Product Safety Group. Meeting of national Product Safety Group. 30 November 2023.</p> <p>All regional LATSS's now fully engaged with assessments around sunbeds.</p> <p>As and when required.</p> <p>April 2022 Offensive Weapons Act 2019 in force. Retailers introduced voluntary bans on energy drinks to those under 16.</p>

	e) Monitor the development of the Office for Product Safety and Standards.	January 2024 – March 2026	The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) enabling the UK to meet the evolving challenges of product safety by responding to expanding international trade, the growth in online shopping and the increasing rate of product innovation. In addition to providing support and advice for local authority Trading Standards teams, the office will co-ordinate work across local authorities where action is needed on a national scale and will ensure the UK continues to carry out appropriate border checks on imported products following exit from the European Union. Announcement on Product Safety Sampling Protocol 2022. Funding for safety testing of selected products including ladders and cosmetics through regional test houses.
	f) Monitor the proposals to replace the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.	January 2024 – March 2026	Government response to consultation published.

	<p>g) Monitor the reaction of Government to the publication of the Report from the House of Commons Report on Fireworks.</p> <p>h) Response to concerns with non-compliant Vaping Products and underage sales of such products.</p> <p>TOBACCO CONTROL</p> <p>a) Policy Document published</p> <p>b) Undertake intelligence led action utilising sniffer dogs in the detection of illegal tobacco in the North East</p> <p>c) Operation CeCe National enforcement project to be delivered for HMRC by NTS. Full regional reporting regime in place.</p>	<p>January 2024 - 2026</p> <p>January 2024- March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p> furniture-fire-regulations-2016-consultation</p> <p>House of Commons Report published.</p> <p> Fireworks Petition Committee 2019.pdf</p> <p>Significant seizures of non-compliant products. Operation Joseph now fully implemented.</p> <p>Government published new Policy Document October 2023. <i>Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation.</i></p> <p>LATSS utilising tobacco dog teams. Very good response on local intelligence.</p> <p>Ongoing enforcement actions. Projected funding for 3 years.</p>
2.5	<p>ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE GROUP</p> <p>a) To respond to all localised enquiries and respond to requests as made for assistance from Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the FSA and the national Animal Health Focus group.</p> <p>b) To ensure the delivery of the national Feed Hygiene</p>	<p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p>Meetings attended, and updates disseminated.</p> <p>Effective regional delivery of feed</p>


	programme on behalf of the NTSB for the FSA.		hygiene project through co-ordinator. (Northumberland CC).
	c) Tasked to evaluate and update contingency plans in respect of notifiable diseases including rabies and avian flu.	January 2024 – March 2026	Work ongoing.
	d) National Farming Policy.	January 2024 – March 2026	December 2019 Stacey Report on Farm Inspection Review published.  Farm Inspection and Regulation Revi
	e) Notifiable Disease Outbreaks	January 2022 – March 2026	LATSS's responded to avian flu outbreaks. May 2022. Seminar on lessons learnt. Ongoing monitoring with APHA. All LATSS's monitoring developments with Blue Tongue.
	f) Development of legislation to introduce the option to issue FPN's for a range of animal health and welfare related offences.	January 2024 – March 2026	Group monitoring developments.

Key priorities For Action 2024-2026


3. Working collaboratively to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and value for money

	Action	Timescale	Current Status
3.1	To identify skills gaps in current regional workforce and make appropriate provision for training/resource funding		Regional Coordinator and the Training and Competency task and finish group identified various skills gaps.

			Training to be delivered on IDB system use.
3.2	To identify appropriate opportunities for regional joint purchasing initiatives to reduce costs.	January 2024 – March 2026	NETSA developed a collective purchasing initiative for the purchase on a regional basis at a reduced rate of the Chartered. Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) interlink for the 12 LATSS's. 5% coordination fee paid to NETSA which has been utilised to provide training opportunities.
3.3	Support the England Illegal Moneylending Team (IMLT) funded by Treasury and delivered by NTS in its activities in the region.	January 2024 – March 2026	LATSS's currently authorise IMLT to take actions in the North East. Complaints and intelligence are referred and shared with the IMLT as appropriate. All regional LATSS's have participated in special events to promote awareness of the work of the IMLT in our local communities. Levy on finance industry now funds IMLT.
3.4	Support the national Safety at Ports Project managed by OPSS by engagement via RIA ensuring all referrals of dangerous goods inland are investigated.	January 2024 – March 2026	Referral now arriving from LATSS's and OPSS at border points. Actions on dangerous and illegal consumer products now been actioned.

			<p>Optimity Report published.</p>  <p>NTSFINALREPORTM arch1pdf.pdf</p>
3.5	Support the partner organisations Balance and Fresh by supporting campaigns in respect of underage sales, illegal and counterfeit alcohol, and tobacco products.	January 2024 – March 2026	<p>NETSA Executive through the Tobacco Control project continues to fully support the work of the regional partners: Balance and Fresh. Representatives from NETSA attend meetings which facilitate the sharing of best practice across a range of activities.</p>
3.6	<p>COMPETENCY AND TRAINING</p> <p>Identify all training opportunities in conjunction with partners, including barristers and the private sector to maintain competency.</p>	January 2024 – March 2026	<p>NETSA continues to be very successful in providing a number of training events with partners including CTSI.</p>
Key Priorities for Action 2024-2026			
4. Use evidence/intelligence gathered locally, regionally, and nationally to target resources			
	Action	Timescale	Current Status
4.1	<p>Establish and maintain a RTG to consistently consider intelligence with a view to appropriate tasking via the SB Team. Where considered appropriate to seek national resources from the NTG in line with the IOM.</p> <p>Develop an annual Regional Strategic Assessment to provide intelligence led recommendations for consideration by NETSA in</p>	<p>January 2024 – March 2026</p> <p>January 2024 – March 2026</p>	<p>RTG has been established and is operating well. All meetings scheduled.</p> <p>Document to be produced. Once produced and utilised by RTG.</p>

	determining its strategic and operational planning. RIA to develop Regional Tactical Assessments for use of Regional Tasking Group (RTG) Develop and implement a Regional Intelligence Group (RIG).		RIG established and meetings all scheduled in.
4.2	Engage fully with the local Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) to ensure dissemination of intelligence and relevant joint actions are taken with member agencies.	January 2024 – March 2026	NETSA through the RTG has full information exchange arrangements with the local GAIN co-ordinator who is invited to RTG.
4.3	Support the national CACS in the provision of their services in respect of the Consumer Helpline and their advice services.	January 2024 – March 2026	Working group set up to ensure effective support/referral procedures in place.
4.4	Support and respond effectively to the devolutionary process in the region. Based on political process. May 2019. Jamie Driscoll elected as North of Tyne Mayor. May 2021. Ben Houchen re-elected as Tees Valley Mayor. 28 December 2022. Announcement on North East Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). For Newcastle City Council, Northumberland County Council, North Tyneside MBC, the City of Sunderland, Gateshead MBC, South Tyneside MBC and Durham County Council.	January 2024 – March 2026	Officers carefully monitoring outcomes.
4.5	To carefully consider the announcement on the 19 January 2021 that OPSS to be the new regulator for construction products.	January 2022 – March 2024	Officers carefully monitoring outcomes. Draft Regulations published and consulted upon. Gateshead led on scoping exercise.

4.6	To carefully consider and respond to the CTSI consultation on the Qualifications Review.	January 2022 – March 2024	Officers provided a full response.  05 Qualifications review 2021 Consultz
4.7	To carefully consider the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 upon existing consumer protection legislation.	January 2024 -March 2024	To monitor developments closely.
4.8	To deliver upon the requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.	January 2024 – March 2026	To monitor delivery through national reporting regime.
4.9	To deliver upon the requirements of Operation Joseph in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in vaping products and the underage sale of vaping products.	January 2024 – March 2026	To monitor delivery through national reporting regime.
5.0	To carefully consider the implications of the Government Policy Document: “Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation”.	January 2024-March 2026	To monitor developments closely.
5.1	To deliver upon the lettings scoping Project as funded by NTS.	June 2023 - March 2024.	To monitor delivery

Chair of NETSA. January 2024