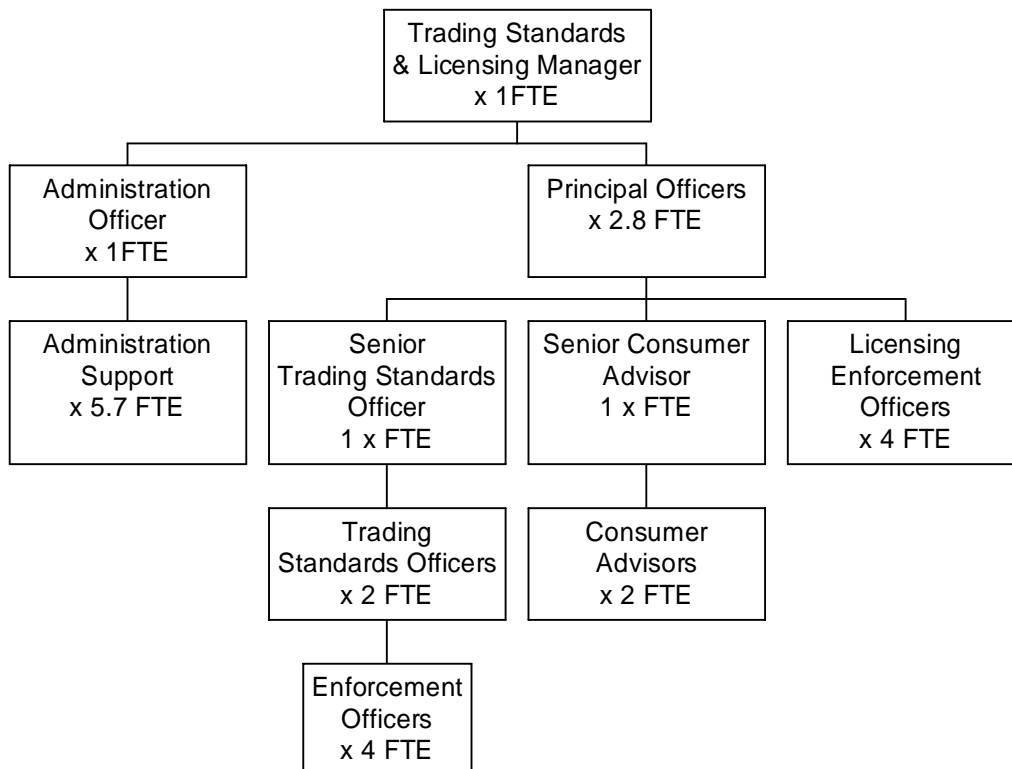


What is Trading Standards & Licensing?

The Borough of Stockton-on-Tees covers an area of 20,400 hectares and is an area of contrasts - a mixture of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages whilst maintaining a strong industrial presence. The population is around 187,000, living in approximately 75,000 households.

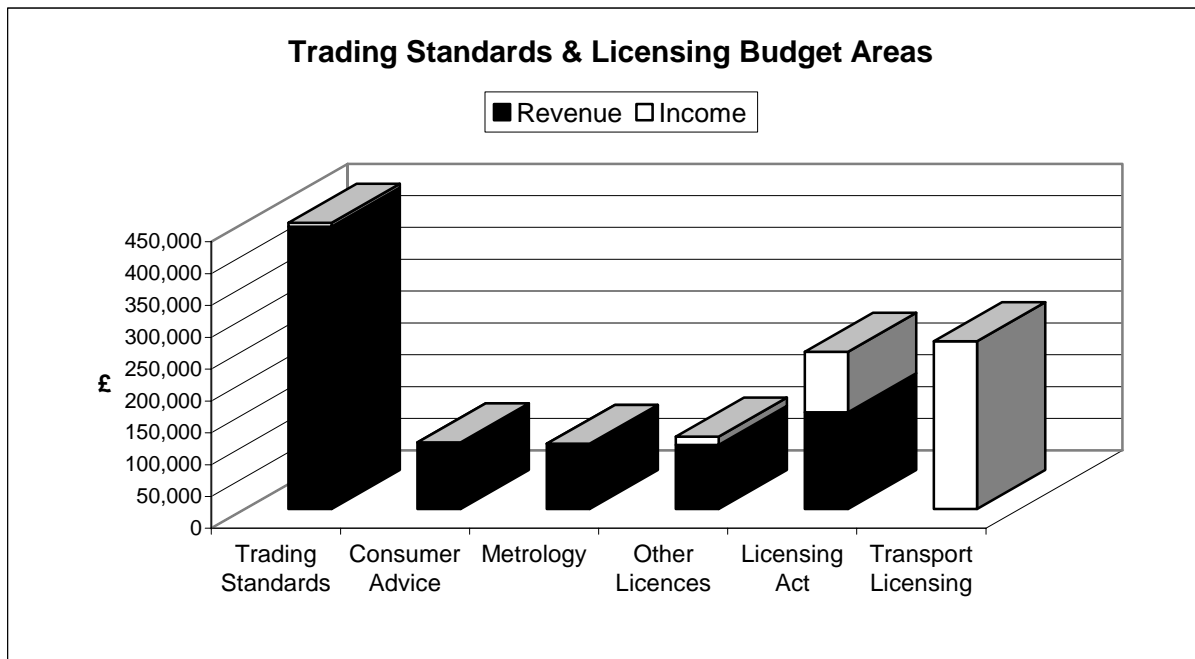
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has a vital role to carry out in providing quality services to the people of the Borough. Within this setting the Trading Standards and Licensing Service provides an important regulatory function, carrying out a range of duties aimed at protecting consumers and reputable businesses. This protection is provided in relation to virtually the full range of personal and household goods and services, from the purchase of daily necessities to the arrangement of a mortgage.

Service Structure



Service Budget

The income and revenue for the main service areas are as follows:



Service Aims And Objectives

The overarching goals of Stockton’s Trading Standards and Licensing Service can be described as follows:

- To create informed confident consumers
- To create informed successful businesses
- To enforce a safe and fair trading environment

Government Objectives For Trading Standards & Licensing

Most central government agencies have now established 5-10 year strategies and have set associated national objectives and targets. The key government strategies that have an impact on trading standards and licensing work are outlined below:

<p>Department Of Trade & Industry – Consumer Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empowering consumers • improving consumer representation • helping consumers and businesses to resolve problems • improving the enforcement of a fair and safe trading environment 	<p>HM Treasury</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventing traders entering the informal economy • improving detection and punishment of traders operating in the informal economy
<p>Office Of Fair Trading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making markets work well for consumers • ensuring vigorous competition between fair-dealing businesses • explaining and improving awareness and understanding of how markets work 	<p>Department Of Culture, Media & Sport – Licensing Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing crime and disorder in licensed premises • ensuring public safety in licensed premises • preventing public nuisance from licensed premises • protecting children from harm

<p>Office Of The Deputy Prime Minister – Creating sustainable communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering economic prosperity • safe communities • high quality education 	<p>Department Of Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the incidence of preventable premature death from smoking • reducing alcohol dependency • improving the health of the nation
<p>Strategy Unit - Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tackling alcohol-related disorder in towns and cities • clamping down on irresponsible promotions • providing better information about the dangers of alcohol misuse 	

Community Objectives

The Community Strategy sets out the key priorities for the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Within the overall policy platform of 'promoting achievement and tackling disadvantage' the Strategy, which is updated annually, sets out key objectives. It can be seen that the Trading Standards and Licensing Service plays a key role in meeting these community objectives in the following ways:

Community Objective	Areas of Trading Standards and Licensing work that link to this objective
Promote the safety and well-being of the community	Promotion of a fair, safe and equitable market place Providing protection for consumers Product safety enforcement Under age sales enforcement Consumer advice provision Consumer Support Network Product sampling and testing Work to prevent people being the victims of commercial crime by doorstep sellers in their own home Road traffic overloading and unroadworthy vehicles Food standards, labelling, composition and sampling Licensing of hackney carriages and private hire vehicles Licensing for skin piercing, explosives and poisons Smoke Free Stockton Initiative Think B4U Drink Campaign
Further regenerate the Borough and improve the local economy	Active targeting of rogue traders Work to disrupt the informal 'black' economy Tackling product counterfeiting Investigation of trading malpractice Advice, assistance and practical help to local businesses Home authority principle Risk based, comprehensive inspection of businesses Provision of wide-ranging calibration service Operation of a Teesside wide" Good Garage Scheme"

Secure a safe and attractive environment for current and future generations	Product safety enforcement Energy labelling for informed choice Accuracy of 'green' claims Fertilisers & feeding stuffs enforcement and sampling Controls on construction products, hazardous substances and packaging requirements Licensing of entertainment, late night refreshment and alcohol under the new Licensing Act
Improve the health of the local community	Active under age sales enforcement Contribute to the anti-social behaviour agenda, especially re the under age sale of alcohol Product safety enforcement Smoke Free Stockton Initiative Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy Think B4 U Drink Campaign Food standards, composition, labelling and sampling
Improve opportunity and achievement in education and lifelong learning	Consumer advice provision Consumer education Consumer Support Network initiatives

Trading Standards & Licensing Service Priorities For 2006/07

The overarching goals of Stockton's Trading Standards and Licensing Service can be described as follows:

- To create informed confident consumers
- To create informed successful businesses
- To enforce a safe and fair trading environment

As a means of working towards these goals and in turn helping to meet local and government objectives, we have developed 10 service priorities for the forthcoming year:

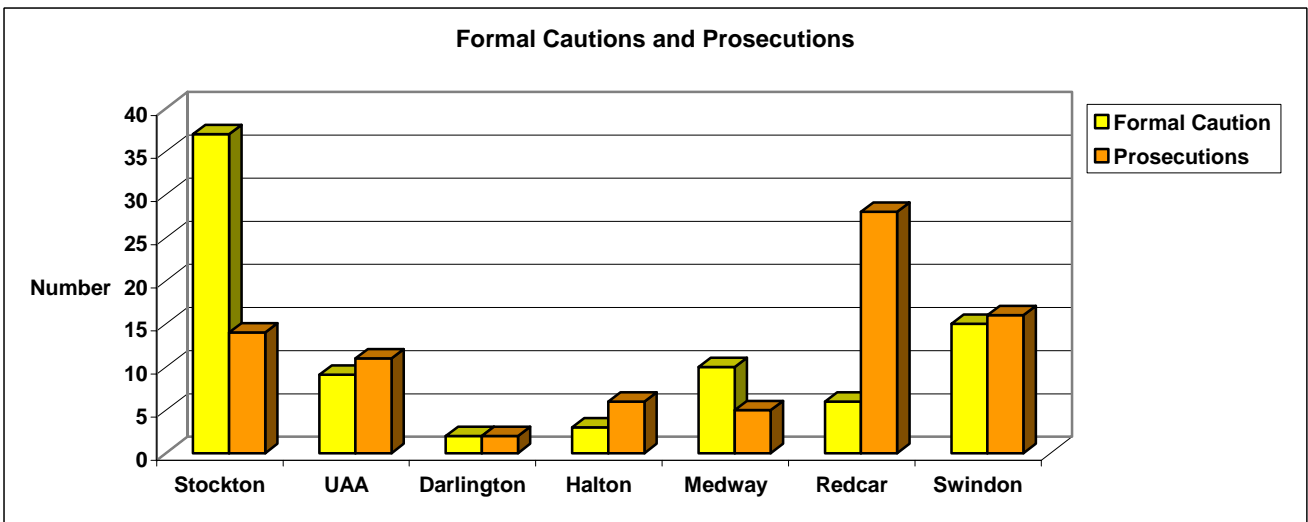
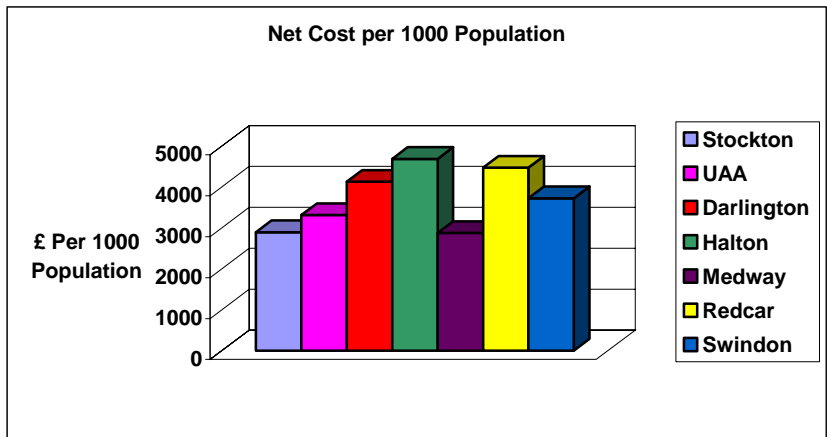
1. To empower consumers by providing high quality advice and information
2. To prevent people being the victims of commercial crime in their own home
3. To ensure fair competition through goods and services being safe, correctly described and priced and accurately measured
4. To ensure quality food standards for healthy consumers
5. To promote good business practice and to help reputable businesses to flourish
6. To disrupt traders operating in the informal economy
7. To prevent harm to children and reduce nuisance caused by young people from access to age restricted goods
8. To ensure the implementation of a fair, transparent and effective gambling regime
9. To reduce crime and disorder in licensed premises and vehicles to help promote a safe and diverse night time economy
10. To develop, modernise and continually improve service provision.

General

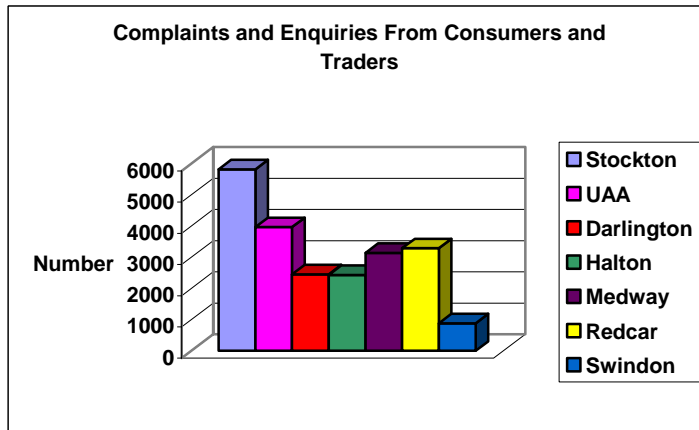
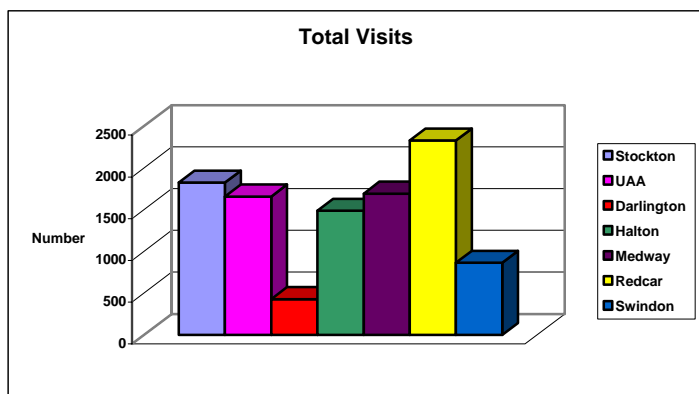
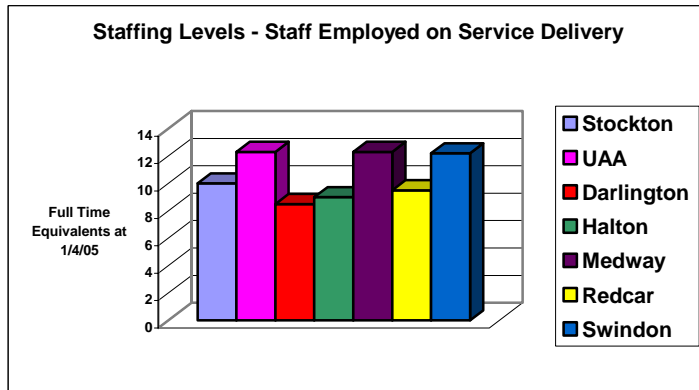
We recognise that comparison of similar services can be an important tool for identifying areas in need of improvement. We have therefore carried out a benchmarking exercise of the data submitted as part of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) return by English unitary authorities in respect of the Trading Standards Service. This return includes data on expenditure, staffing levels, levels of enforcement work, prosecution and formal cautions. The 2005 return was analysed. Data on licensing work is not collected as part of national statistics.

The Nearest Neighbour Selection Model on the Institute of Public Finance’s website was used to identify similar unitary authorities in respect of population density and profile, staffing levels and net cost. From our 15 nearest neighbours we chose Darlington, Halton, Medway, Redcar & Cleveland and Swindon. We also looked at the Unitary Authority Averages (UAA).

The results are as follows:



How Do We Compare



Conclusion

The Service compared very favourably with other similar authorities. The net cost of the Service was lower than the unitary authority average and lower than all but one of our selected nearest neighbours. However, whilst staffing levels were below the unitary authority average the total number of enforcement visits was higher than the unitary authority average and higher than all but one of the other authorities selected. In addition the number of formal actions undertaken including prosecutions and cautions were well above the unitary authority average and the Service dealt with more complaints and enquiries than any other authority selected at a level well above the unitary authority average.

Demand For The Service

Each year the Service receives in excess of 7,000 complaints and enquiries from local consumers. Our Consumer Advice Centre located in the main library in Stockton receives the majority of these contacts.

Nature Of Contact	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Civil Complaints (Relates to specific complaints dealt with by the Consumer Advice Centre)	4124	3911	3952
Enquiries (General enquiries dealt with by the Consumer Advice Centre)	2559	1463	1133
Return Visits (Where a consumer calls for further advice on an outstanding civil complaint)	1586	1935	1656
Criminal Complaints (Relates to complaints dealt with by the Trading Standards enforcement team)	513	529	517
Licensing Complaints (Relates to complaints handled by the Licensing enforcement team)	-	210	347
Total Contacts	8782	7838	7605

Analysis Of Complaints

Analysis of the complaints we receive enables us to identify problem traders and trends in trade practices. This allows us to use targeted enforcement against identified problem traders and trade practices. The majority of licensing complaints concerned issues with drivers.

Licensing Complaints - Subject Of Complaint	2004/05 %	2005/06 %
Drivers - includes poor driving, poor attitude, abusive behaviour	51	36
Operators – includes failure to respond to complaints promptly	13	11
Vehicles – includes failure to provide documentation, failure to attend for test and sub standard vehicle condition	13	21
Other complaints – includes house collections, public entertainment venues, street trading	13	5

Contact Details

Trading Standards & Licensing Team based at 16 Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TX

Access	Availability	
Opening Hours	Monday - Thursday	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday	8.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone Number - Trading Standards - Licensing	01642 526560 01642 526558	
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail - Trading Standards - Licensing Administration	trading_standards@stockton.gov.uk licensing_administration@stockton.gov.uk	
Website	www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor	

Consumer Advice Centre within the Central Library, Church Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1TU

Access	Availability	
Consumer Direct (this is the first point of contact for consumer advice) Telephone Number 08454 04 05 06	Monday - Friday	8am – 6.00pm
	Saturday	8am – 1.00pm
Personal callers to Centre	Monday - Thursday:	9.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday:	9.30am – 4.30pm
Telephone callers to Centre (01642 527938)	Monday – Thursday:	8.30am – 5.00pm
	Friday:	8.30am – 4.30pm
Fax	01642 526584	
E-mail	trading_standards@stockton.gov.uk	
Website	www.tradingstandards.gov.uk/stockton	
Disabled Access	There is level access to the ground floor and a public lift	