

Business Services Policy

In providing business services we aim to help businesses in Norfolk to succeed. We achieve this by concentrating on the following key areas of activity:

- (1) Providing businesses with access to information and compliance advice on request to help them succeed
- (2) Providing targeted support to start-up, small, high-risk and non-compliant businesses
- (3) Primary Authority Partnerships
- (4) Providing calibration, verification and testing services to businesses
- (5) Providing a Trusted Trader scheme
- (6) Providing a Market Fair Scheme
- (7) Providing business scam alerts.

Throughout all our activities we have regard to the Regulators' Code.

(1) Providing businesses with access to information and compliance advice on request to help them succeed

On receipt of business requests for advice we will respond in a number of ways including:

- directing the business to our website or that of a partner organisation, such as the Chartered Institute of Trading Standards' Business Companion
- referring the business to another agency
- providing leaflets produced by partner organisations, our business briefings or standard letters
- providing comprehensive bespoke information or advice via the telephone, email or a letter, and/or
- visiting the business to provide comprehensive advice

In each case, our response will be proportionate to:

- the potential risk to consumers caused by a failure on behalf of the business to understand the information/advice provided,
- the experience of the business in question, and
- the impact upon the economic prosperity of the business or its competitors in not achieving compliance in the respective area(s) of the law.

We will prioritise requests for advice from new businesses, Trusted Traders and Primary Authority businesses.

We reserve the right to refuse to provide advice to third parties whom we believe are (i) likely to charge a business for passing on the advice we have provided or (ii) represent non Norfolk based businesses.

Free Business Advice

We will provide advice to businesses at no charge in the following circumstances:

- i) **Start-Up Businesses:** We will provide advice on and signpost to all the relevant legislation that applies to a Norfolk based start-up business. If more detailed advice or support, including interpretation of the legislation, is required then the section below dealing with charges for business advice will apply.

- ii) Current businesses: We will provide signpost advice and information to ensure existing businesses in Norfolk are aware of the applicable trading standards legislation. Where a non-compliance is apparent with a Norfolk based business, either through our contact with the business or through a referral from a partner authority, we will also make sure that the business is aware of the action to be taken to address the non-compliance.

Charges for business advice

Charges for business advice will be applicable in the following circumstances:

- i) Bespoke Advice. If a business requires more detailed or interpretative advice on trading standards law then we will provide the advice on a cost recovery basis at a pro-rata hourly fee.
- ii) Primary Authority: We will charge for providing services on a cost recovery basis under a Primary Authority Partnership. For more details see **(3) Primary Authority Partnerships** below.

(2) Providing targeted support to start-up, small, high-risk and non-compliant businesses

We provide targeted support by:

- a) inspecting all high-risk businesses in Norfolk on an annual basis,
- b) conducting inspections or other interventions at those businesses presenting the highest risk to consumers or other legitimate businesses,
- c) engaging with start-up businesses, and
- d) engaging with businesses for which we act as Primary Authority.

(a) Inspection of all high-risk businesses in Norfolk on an annual basis

Prior to the start of each service year, we determine those individual businesses in Norfolk that are deemed to be high-risk by virtue of:

- the Food Standards Agency (FSA) risk schemes for food and feed premises, or
- the DEFRA risk scheme for animal health premises, or
- our own risk scheme (based on the FSA risk scheme) for other premises, and
- their previous trading history, when they have demonstrated significant non-compliance with trading standards and we are concerned that they might not comply in the future.

We plan and deliver an inspection programme to ensure that all these businesses are inspected by allocated officers during the service year.

(b) Inspections or other interventions at those businesses presenting the highest risk to consumers or other legitimate businesses

(i) Planned inspections/other interventions

Prior to the start of each service year, we determine, via intelligence, those business sectors in Norfolk that are deemed to present or are likely to present the highest risks to consumers/other legitimate businesses because, for example:

- the CitA consumer helpline receives a large number of consumer complaints about the business sector

- we have conducted interventions in the past and identified high levels of non-compliance with trading standards within the business sector
- new legislation will take effect, which will have a significant impact on the business sector

We plan and deliver a series of targeted interventions whereby we, in conjunction with partner organisations if appropriate:

- produce/identify and disseminate information/advice on compliance with trading standards to businesses within the sector,
- inspect/visit or otherwise contact a number of businesses within the sector to establish levels of compliance and take corrective action to ensure compliance where necessary,
- determine the impact of our enforcement activities, and
- use the results to further inform/advice the business sector and/or consumers and/or inform our intervention planning for the future.

(ii) Ad hoc inspections/other interventions

Where we receive consumer/trader complaints via the CitA consumer helpline or referrals from other enforcement agencies about the non-compliance with trading standards of individual businesses, we will respond in a number of ways including:

- taking formal enforcement action, [Please refer to the CES Enforcement Policy], or
- inspecting/visiting the individual business concerned, or
- ensuring the individual business is included in one of the series of targeted interventions already planned, or
- offering information and advice to the business by telephone, email and/or letter, or
- referring the matter to another enforcement agency, or
- taking no action, beyond noting the complaint/referral for intelligence purposes

In each case, our response will be proportionate to the risk to consumers and/or legitimate businesses caused by the identified non-compliance with trading standards.

(c) Engaging with start-up businesses

Start-up businesses are identified throughout the year and we will:

- inspect or visit the start-up business, or
- ensure the start-up business is included in one of the series of targeted interventions already planned, or
- offer information and advice to the start-up business by telephone, email and/or letter, or
- determine that no proactive contact is necessary.

In each case, our contact will be proportionate to:

- the potential risk to consumers, which would be caused by the start-up business being unaware of their responsibilities in relation to trading standards, and
- the impact upon the economic prosperity of the business or its competitors in not achieving compliance in the respective area(s) of the law.

(d) Engaging with businesses for which we act as Primary Authority

Primary Authority businesses will be inspected/visited or otherwise contacted on at least an annual basis:

- as part of the inspection programme for high-risk businesses, or
- as part of the planned series of targeted interventions, or
- as a result of a complaint/referral received, or
- to maintain the Primary Authority relationship.

(3) Primary Authority Partnerships

We will enter into a Primary Authority Partnership with businesses that trade across local authority boundaries.

Primary Authority is a statutory scheme established by the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008. Primary Authority enables a business to form a legally recognised partnership with one local authority (the “Primary Authority”) to get assured advice about how they can comply with legislation. Assured advice must be taken into account by other local authorities when dealing with that business, such as carrying out inspections or addressing non-compliance.

We will provide advice, including assured advice, and support under these partnerships and charges, including an annual fee, will be charged on a cost recovery basis.

(4) Providing calibration, verification and testing services to businesses

We provide:

- an instrument verification service in response to all requests from Norfolk businesses.
- a calibration, testing and equipment hire service to Norfolk businesses and to businesses outside Norfolk where the Trading Standards Service has the capacity to do so and the economic interests of Norfolk are served.

(5) Providing a Trusted Trader Scheme

We provide a membership scheme of accredited traders. Benefits of the scheme include:

- promotion via a website, a directory and our Customer Service Centre
- a comprehensive customer feedback system
- consumer protection law advice
- staff training, where resources permit, and
- independent alternative dispute resolution provided by Ombudsman Services

(6) Providing a Market Fair Scheme

We provide a Market Fair Scheme to which markets and car boot organisers can sign up. Members of the scheme agree not to allow certain items to be sold at their markets; to help safeguard market and car boot visitors and protect legitimate traders from unfair competition. Benefits of the scheme include:

- a handbook containing information on the law relating to consumer goods
- information updates and alerts to support scheme members, and
- weatherproof signage for members to display at their market place.

(7) Providing business scam alerts

We provide alerts to businesses detailing the latest scams and new variations on old scams. Business Scam Alerts are available via our website, our Twitter account @NorfolkCCTS and our facebook page. To sign up to our business scam alerts by email go to our Trading Standards Scam awareness and advice page.

Charges for our Services

In addition to the charges for business advice outlined above charges also apply to our calibration, verification and testing services, our Trusted Trader scheme, our mediation service and where we provide licences or bespoke presentations on trading standards matters to businesses or other groups.

When responding to requests for information, advice or other services, we will meet our Service Standards for Businesses.

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