

## Regional Strategy 2026-2029

### 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), the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), 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, 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 2026-2029**

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 requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.
11. To deliver upon the requirements in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in Vaping Products and the Underage sale of Vaping Products.
12. To carefully consider the implications of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024
13. To carefully consider the implications of the Product Safety and Metrology Act 2025.
14. To carefully consider the implications of the Renters (Reform) Act 2026.
15. To carefully consider the implications of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 and the associated Environmental Regulations applicable to the ban on single use vapes.
16. To ensure delivery by the allocated 9 LATSS's of the Vape Apprentice programme on behalf of DHSC.

## **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.
- 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 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. These have included the banning of sales of offensive and dangerous substances to under 18's (Offensive Weapons Act 2019); animal licensing provisions, the Tenant Fees Act 2019, the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Act 2022, the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024, the Product Safety and Metrology Act 2025 and the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.
- 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 and respond effectively to the Office for Product Safety and Standards.
- f) 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.
- g) To evaluate and respond fully to the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 upon all consumer protection legislation.
- h) To deliver upon the requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.
- i) To deliver upon the requirements in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in Vaping Products and the Underage sale of Vaping Products.
- j) To carefully consider the implications of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024
- k) To carefully consider the implications of the Product Safety and Metrology Act 2025.
- l) To carefully consider the implications of the Renters (Reform) Act 2026.
- m) To carefully consider the implications of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 and the associated Environmental Regulations applicable to the ban on single use vapes.
- n) To ensure delivery by the allocated 9 LATSS of the Vape Apprentice programme on behalf of DHSC.

## **Partnership Working**

NETSA continues to work with a range of national and regional partners including the Department for Business & Trade (DBT), the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), 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 of Health & Social Care



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero



Department for Business & Trade



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government



GAMBLING COMMISSION

NATIONAL TRADING STANDARDS  
Protecting Consumers  
Safeguarding Businesses

FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY



Regional




Local




**Key Priorities for Action 2026-2029**


**1. Attract resources to enhance the provision for Trading Standards Services in the North East region**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
1.1	<p>Support the NTSB in exercising all 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 2026 – March 2029	<p>Regional representation delivered by NETSA Chair, and the local/regional governance of activities and decisions carried out by NETSA Executive.</p> <p>All the meetings of the NTSB &amp; Governance groups 2025/2027 to be supported.</p> <p>NETSA Executive. Meetings Next meeting. 18 June 2026. NTSB. Next meeting 17 July 2026.</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 2026 – March 2029	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) 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 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</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>

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
1.4	Maintain a Regional Intelligence Analyst (RIA) (funded by NTSB) & Regional Intelligence Officer (RIO) in line with nationally agreed strategy.	January 2026 – March 2029	Regional 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 to host projects/functions devolved from the delivery of the strategy as and when appropriate.	January 2026 – March 2029	Successful funding bids implemented.
1.6	To co-ordinate joint arrangements in respect of enforcement provisions of Energy Performance Certificates in local authorities.  uksi_20151681_en.pdf	January 2026 – March 2029	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 2026 – March 2029	Effects of legislation on regulatory services and marketplace.
1.8	To monitor implementation of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 related to bladed implements and corrosive substances.	January 2026 – March 2029	April 2022 provisions brought into force.
1.9	To carefully consider and respond to the CTSI consultation on the Qualifications Review.	January 2026 – March 2029	Metrology officer working group set up.
<b>Key Priorities for Action 2026 -2029</b>			
<b>2. Ensure consistency of interpretation and sharing best practice</b>			
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
2.1	Respond to all applicable consultations affecting Regulatory Services	January 2026 – March 2029	As and when relevant consultations emerge.
2.2	<b>METROLOGY GROUP</b> a) Project Work to be determined.	January 2026 – March 2029	Agreement to deliver projects on packaged goods.
2.3	<b>FAIR TRADING</b> <b>Responsibility on delivery rests with RTG.</b>	January 2026 – March 2029	Regional LATSS's to participate.

	<p>a) Participate in Scams Awareness campaign with key task of increasing reporting of scams.</p> <p>b) Partnership working with the Anti-Counterfeiting Group (ACG) &amp; the Intellectual Property Office.</p> <p>c) Participation and involvement with National Consumer Week.</p> <p>d) To co-ordinate joint arrangements in respect of enforcement provisions of Energy Performance Certificates in local authorities.</p> <p> uksi_20151681_en.pdf</p> <p>e) Second-hand car market.</p> <p>f) Doorstep crime.</p> <p>g) Multi Agency Safety project on Doorstep crime.</p>	<p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p>	<p>RIA co-ordinated regional activity around illegal trade through social media sites on the internet.</p> <p>Regional LATSS's to be involved with National Consumer Weeks.</p> <p>Legislation implemented. Response required by all LA's. Also, annual reporting regime to Secretary of State. Several LA's organised partnership arrangements. April 2023 F&amp;G energy rated non-domestic properties banned.</p> <p>Consumer Protection Partnership evaluating</p> <p>Development through national Scams team. SPOC's now operational for 3 regional police areas. Call blockers resourced and distributed.</p>
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2.4	<p><b>CONSUMER AND PRODUCT SAFETY GROUP</b></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, e-bikes and water beads.</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>e) Monitor the development of the Office for Product Safety and Standards.</p>	<p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p>	<p>Lead officer Consumer and Product Safety Group. Meetings of national Product Safety Group.</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. Government proposal to ban energy drinks to those under 16. Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.</p> <p>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-</p>
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			<p>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.</p> <p>Announcement on Product Safety Sampling Protocol 2022. Funding for safety testing of selected products including ladders and cosmetics through regional test houses.</p> <p>Product Safety and Metrology Act 2026.</p>
	f) Response to concerns with non-compliant Vaping Products and underage sales of such products.	January 2026 – March 2029	Significant seizures of non-compliant products. Regional arrangements fully implemented.
	g) National surveillance work on electric battery chargers on bikes.	January 2026 – March 2029	LATSS carrying out work on behalf of OPSS. Linked through to regional fire services.
	h) Safety alert on Water Beads.	January 2026- March 2029	OPSS safety alert issued.
	i) Safety alert on Tumble Driers.	January 2026- March 2029	OPSS safety alert issued.
	j) Safety alert on Sleep Pillows	January 2026 – March 2029	OPSS safety alert issued.

	<p><b>TOBACCO CONTROL</b></p> <p>a) Policy Document published</p> <p>b) Operation CeCe National enforcement project to be delivered for HMRC by NTS. Full regional reporting regime in place.</p> <p>c) National enforcement vapes project delivered for DH&amp;SC. Full regional reporting regime in place.</p> <p>d) Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026</p>	<p>January 2026- March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>April 2026 - March 2029</p>	<p>Conservative Government published <i>Stopping the start: our new plan to create a smokefree generation.</i></p> <p>Ongoing enforcement actions. Funding from HMRC for 4 years. Regional Tobacco Control Officer appointed.</p> <p>Ongoing enforcement. Funding under Tobacco and Vapes Bill from DHSC.</p> <p>Royal Assent.</p>
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2.5	<p><b>ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE GROUP</b></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) Tasked to evaluate and update contingency plans in respect of notifiable diseases including rabies and avian flu.</p> <p>c) National Farming Policy.</p>	<p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p> <p>January 2026 – March 2029</p>	<p>Meetings attended, and updates disseminated.</p> <p>Work ongoing.</p> <p>December 2019 Stacey Report on Farm Inspection Review published.</p> <p> Farm Inspection and Regulation Revi</p>
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	d) Notifiable Disease Outbreaks	January 2026 – March 2029	Ongoing monitoring with APHA. All LATSS's monitoring developments with Blue Tongue & Avian Flu.
	e) Legislation to introduce the option to issue FPN's for a range of animal health and welfare related offences.	January 2026 – March 2029	Group monitoring developments.
	<b>Feed Group</b> a) To ensure the delivery of the national Feed Hygiene programme on behalf of the NTSB for the FSA.	January 2026 – March 2029	Effective regional delivery of feed hygiene project through co-ordinator. (Northumberland CC).

**Key priorities For Action 2026-2029**

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

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
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.
3.2	To identify appropriate opportunities for regional joint purchasing initiatives to reduce costs.	January 2026 – March 2029	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 2026 – March 2029	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 ensuring all referrals of dangerous goods inland are investigated.	January 2026 – March 2029	Referral now arriving from LATSS's and OPSS at border points. Actions on dangerous and illegal consumer products now been actioned.
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 2026 – March 2029	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.
3.6	<b>COMPETENCY AND TRAINING</b> Identify all training opportunities in conjunction with partners, including barristers and the	January 2026 – March 2029	NETSA continues to be very successful in providing several

	private sector to maintain competency.		training events with partners including CTSI.
<b>Key Priorities for Action 2026-2029</b>			
<b>4. Use evidence/intelligence gathered locally, regionally, and nationally to target resources</b>			
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
4.1	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.  Develop an annual Regional Strategic Assessment to provide intelligence led recommendations for consideration by NETSA in 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).	January 2026 – March 2029  January 2026 – March 2029	RTG has been established and is operating well. All meetings scheduled.  Document to be produced. Once produced and utilised by RTG. 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 2026 – March 2029	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 2026 – March 2029	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 2024. Kim McGuinness elected as LA7	January 2026 – March 2029	Officers carefully monitoring outcomes.

	Mayor. Ben Houchen re-elected as Tees Valley Mayor.		
4.5	To carefully consider the announcement on the 19 January 2021 that OPSS to be the new regulator for construction products.	January 2026 – March 2029	Officers carefully monitoring outcomes. Consultation ongoing.
4.6	To carefully consider the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 upon existing consumer protection legislation.	January 2026 -March 2029	To monitor developments closely.
4.7	To deliver upon the requirements of Operation CeCe in respect of enforcement around the illegal tobacco market.	January 2026 – March 2029	To monitor delivery through national reporting regime.
4.8	To deliver upon the requirements in respect of enforcement around the illegal market in vaping products and the underage sale of vaping products.	January 2026 – March 2029	To monitor delivery through national reporting regime.
4.9	To carefully consider the implications of the Renters (Reform) Act 2026.	January 2026-March 2029.	To monitor developments closely.
5.0	To carefully consider the implications of the Product Safety and Metrology Act 2025	January 2026-March 2029	To monitor development closely. Consultations live.
5.1	To carefully consider the implications of the proposed ban on single use vapes (June 2025).	January 2025-March 2029.	To monitor developments closely.
5.2	To carefully consider the implications of the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026. Includes proposal to licence/register premises and control marketing of vapes.	April 2026 - March 2029	Royal Assent.
5.3	To ensure delivery by the allocated 9 LATSS of the Vape Apprentice programme on behalf of DHSC.	April 2026 – March 2029	To monitor developments closely.

Chair of NETSA. May 2026