

Report to the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee

1 November 2018

Report on the Office for Product Safety and Standards Strategy and Delivery Plan

**Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Communities and Environment,
Gateshead Council**

Purpose of the report

To inform the Committee about the launch of the Office for Product Safety and Standards strategy and delivery plan which aim to strengthen the UK's capacity to deal with product safety issues.

Background

1. The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) was established in January 2018 by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with the stated objectives of enhancing protections for consumers and the environment and driving increased productivity, growth and business confidence.
2. The OPSS remit is the safety of general (non-food) consumer products such as electrical goods, toys, clothing and cosmetics. It does not cover construction products or products where national capability and regulators already exist, e.g. motor vehicles, medicines and medical devices, and workplace equipment.

OPSS Strategy and Delivery Plan

3. The OPSS launched its 'Strengthening national capacity for product safety: Strategy 2018-2020' and related delivery plan for 2018-2019 in August.
4. The strategy and delivery plan summarise the challenges and opportunities presented by the UK's product safety system and list the actions the OPSS will implement to achieve its four objectives:

Analyse: make the best use of scientific evidence, incident data, risk and intelligence in decision making

Inform: help consumers make informed choices and give businesses the information they need to comply

Enforce: use the full range of tools and powers to maintain protection, fairness and confidence

Build: put in place an infrastructure that equips the UK for future challenges

5. The OPSS intends to carry out a range of actions as part of its commitment to achieving the above objectives. These include:
 - Promoting the Code of Practice for product safety related recalls (PAS 7100) which was launched in March
 - Developing tools and guidance to help businesses and local authorities improve their risk assessment processes
 - Working with the national Intellectual Property Office to publicise the potential safety hazards posed by counterfeit goods
 - Establishing a Trading Standards Co-ordination Unit to lead on engagement with local authorities
 - Strengthening product safety checks at key points of entry into the UK
 - Beginning a market surveillance testing programme in partnership with local authorities
 - Improving the way authorities share information about product risks and receive rapid alert notifications
 - Developing a central hub to enable consumers to access reliable information about recalled products and receive alerts about products they have registered

Implications for Local Authority Trading Standards Services

6. Responsibility for the enforcement of consumer product safety legislation will remain with local authority Trading Standards services.
7. Product safety remains one of the highest priorities for local authority Trading Standards services and any improvements that can be made to the existing regulatory framework would be welcomed.
8. The OPSS is arranging the provision of a number of specialist services centrally to support consistent national enforcement, including aspects of product testing and technical expertise.
9. The OPSS has recently entered into an agreement with the Tyne and Wear Metrology Laboratory which will receive funding to carry out toy safety testing work. This agreement will complement the existing arrangement whereby the laboratory carries out a range of product safety and other testing and support services on behalf of the five Tyne and Wear authorities.

10. The OPSS will not provide direct funding to local authority Trading Standards services. Furthermore, no financial assistance will be made available to cover the cost of purchasing samples for safety testing.
11. The focus of safety sampling will be products manufactured in or imported into a local authority's area.
12. Coordination and joint working between the OPSS and local authority Trading Standards services are currently at a very early stage and we await further information from the OPSS on these and other points, including the implications of exiting the European Union for the UK's consumer product safety regulatory framework.

Recommendation

13. The Committee is asked to note the information contained within the report.