

**02 March 2023****Update on the Successful Funding Bid  
to OPSS, January 2023.**

---

**Anneliese Hutchinson, Service Director, Economy, Innovation & Growth,  
Gateshead Council**

---

**Purpose of the report**

To update the Committee on the successful funding bid to the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) to conduct a safety information activity.

**Background information**

1. In January OPSS announced there was funding available to support public safety information projects relating to product safety or legal metrology. They encouraged bids for funding aimed at the most vulnerable consumers, specifically the digitally excluded and those particularly impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Funding was for short-term projects that could be completed within this financial year and could have been for either:
  - Reports on the organisation's current activity.
  - Scoping proposals on future activity.
  - Conducting consumer awareness and education activity.After discussions with the 5 Tyne and Wear authorities, the laboratory submitted a scoping proposal.
2. Within the current financial climate there has been an increase in the use of food banks and other community-based groups to collect and distribute products other than food such as toys and small electrical products, possibly without understanding the safety implications of sharing such products.

**Proposed activity**

3. The bid submitted to OPSS was for Trading Standards staff from the 5 local authorities to visit both registered food banks and other community hubs during March 2023 and simply ascertain exactly what goods are being distributed.
4. It is important to note that whilst public safety is always of the highest importance, discussions have taken place internally between the 5 authorities and externally with OPSS to reiterate that this an information gathering activity. Advice from experienced officers may be given but the overall aim is to work with, not against, groups within our communities.
5. Staff will be given a short questionnaire to complete for each site, which will be used for statistical returns to OPSS.
6. Laboratory staff will be available to provide assistance and will also be collating information before submitting the final report back to OPSS.

**Outcomes**

7. At this time, OPSS cannot guarantee further funding, but it is hoped that the scoping project can lead to more in-depth work within the community targeting product safety and those most vulnerable.
8. This project gives TS staff the opportunity to engage with community groups and build strong working relationships. Further work could include product safety talks, consumer advice or information on loan sharks or illicit tobacco.

### **Funding**

9. A maximum of £10,000, inclusive of VAT can be reclaimed.

### **Recommendation**

10. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

---

Contact: David Malone, Gateshead Council, 0191 4784550 or [davidmalone@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:davidmalone@gateshead.gov.uk)

---