

**16 November 2023****OPSS Section 70 Report 2022/2023**

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**Purpose of the report**

To update the committee on the Office for Product Safety and Standards' annual report into weights and measures compliance in the UK and concerns raised by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute about whether consumers are receiving a fair measure from retailers.

**OPSS Section 70 Report**

1. Under Section 70 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985, all local weights and measures authorities in the UK are required to provide data to the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) on weights and measures compliance checks carried out in their areas.
2. OPSS recently published its annual report on the information returned by the local weights and measures authorities.
3. A copy of this year's report is available to view at [:https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/section-70-weights-and-measures-returns-and-reports/section-70-weights-and-measures-report-2022-to-2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/section-70-weights-and-measures-returns-and-reports/section-70-weights-and-measures-report-2022-to-2023).
4. The Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) has raised concerns that retailers have the second-lowest rate of weights and measures compliance, meaning that customers cannot be sure they are getting what they pay for.
5. Medical institutions were among the least visited types of regulated entity during 2022-23, and that this year the rate of compliance for medical measuring equipment has fallen from 94% to 82%, meaning almost one fifth of equipment inspected was non-compliant – the highest rate of non-compliance.
6. 14% of Trading Standards respondents to the Section 70 survey said the cost-of-living crisis made legal metrology a key concern.
7. CTSI welcomed the 91% increase in officers studying the CTSI legal metrology module since 2012-13, especially the rise from 41 in 2020 to 112 in 2022-23.
8. However, the number of UK legal metrology officers has still fallen by 26% since 2012-13, and there has been a decrease of 34% in legal metrology work carried out in local authorities since then.

9. CTSI Chief Executive, John Herriman, commented: “It is great to see the publishing of this data by OPSS, as it offers insights about the state of play for legal metrology and Trading Standards enforcement across the country. However, this data also demonstrates the need for further investment into legal metrology so that more weights and measures work can be carried out across the UK, particularly with the costly pressures of winter approaching which will hit those affected by the cost-of-living crisis the hardest.”
10. Lead Officer for Legal Metrology at CTSI, Daniel Maxim, added, “While it is good to see this data released, it presents a stark insight to the health of the UK legal metrology system. There can be no doubt that a great deal more needs to be done to resource and redevelop the robust system of protection consumers and businesses alike are entitled to.”
11. “It is essential that OPSS urgently heeds these warning signs, in particular around cost-of-living pressures on consumers, low staffing capacity and the continued lack of any legal metrology activity by many Authorities, illustrated by the decline in compliance of patient weighing instruments. It is now essential that greater strategic co-ordination and resourcing be applied so that all elements of local and central Government can work effectively together to create a safe and fair environment for the public.”
12. Charles Pullen, President of the UK Weighing Federation, which represents UK weighing machine manufacturers, commented: “As a basic principle, consumers should be safe, and get what they pay for. This new data suggests this principle is at risk. Accurate weighing instruments are critical for consumer confidence and safety, but also for fair business practices. UK Weighing Federation companies welcome good regulation of our industry to ensure accuracy and quality, but recognise it is only helpful if it is properly enforced. Trading standards departments must be adequately resourced to carry out regular inspections of weights and measures equipment in every part of the country.”

## **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the information.

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