

16 November 2023**Report for period to July 2023**

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Gateshead Council**

Purpose of the report

To inform the Committee of the work of the Joint Metrology Laboratory for the period and operational duties to present.

Metrology Laboratory**Operational**

1. The laboratory is operating at full-strength with 6 full-time members of staff.
 - Laboratory Supervisor
 - Technical Supervisor
 - Technicians x3
 - Senior Support Assistant

All 6 members of staff are available to assist officers from the 5 authorities.

2. With the recent turnover of staff and re-structure, relevant training courses have been identified. The Laboratory Supervisor and Technical Supervisor have recently attended a UKAS Laboratory Manager's course. The Technical Supervisor will also be attending a Trading Standards Institute (TSI), Technical Management Course in November and February (2-part course).
3. Annex 1 gives the submission totals for the first three-quarters of 2023 along with the figures for 2022 over the same period for comparison purposes. 2022 was a record year for submissions and 2023 is already 600 submissions higher.
4. As previously reported, the building is due a refurbishment including a full electrical re-wire. Work is still due to begin this calendar year and be complete before the end of the financial year. The schedule will be managed to allow the building to remain operational during the work

Training

5. Over the last 6 months the laboratory has hosted several training courses for Trading Standards Officer's (TSO's) and trainees. For TSO's there was a TSI led course on the testing of disposable vapes. Trainees from the North-East Trading Standards Association (NETSA), including some from within Tyne & Wear, have been attending week-long courses aimed at helping them qualify as TSO's. In the future the laboratory aims to become a hub for TS apprentices and have a permanent training room that qualified TSO's can utilise for refresher training.

Aid and Advice to Industry

6. The weighbridge test unit (WBTU) has been booked by the laboratory for a week in November. Each of the 5 authorities has the WBTU for a day and technicians from the laboratory are available each day to assist.
7. The Public Weighbridge continues to be utilised by local industry and other road users.

UKAS Calibrations

8. Annual submissions have once again increased, and the numbers are presented in Annex 1.
9. The laboratory's annual UKAS audit is due in January 2024.

Product Safety

10. There have been a number of Halloween costumes submitted for flammability testing during October. It's pleasing to report that the majority of costumes, especially clothing, passed. An area of concern this year has been with face masks where there have been several failures. Follow-up action by both Gateshead and North Tyneside TS has led to these dangerous products being removed from sale.
11. The laboratory continues to manage the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) safety sampling budget for 2023/24 for the North-East and Yorkshire. The budget is primarily available to test products which are either manufactured or directly imported into the region.

Recommendation

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

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Annex 1

Annual Total 2023 (Quarter's 1,2 & 3)

Submissions		Items
330	UKAS M1	2829
32	UKAS F2	258
419	UKAS F1	1527
143	UKAS E2	771
Total UKAS Submissions		5385
37	Sec 74(4)	80
2	NAWI	2
2	Volume	2
0	Traders	0
2	Verification	2
Total Submissions		5471
UKAS Certificates		934
Non UKAS Certificates		39

Annual Total – 2022 (Quarter's 1,2 & 3)

Submissions		Items
344	UKAS M1	2579
30	UKAS F2	198
419	UKAS F1	1380
110	UKAS E2	574
Total UKAS Submissions		4731
49	Sec 74(4)	110
2	NAWI	1
1	Volume	1
0	Traders	0
1	Verification	1
Total Submissions		4844
UKAS Certificates		913
Non UKAS Certificates		113