

24th September 2013**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****DOORSTEP CRIME CONTROL STRATEGY****Purpose of the Report**

1. To note the progress made in delivering the doorstep crime strategy.
2. To seek approval from members to the proposed actions to deliver the Trading Standards Service's Doorstep Crime Control Strategy for 2013-14.

Information and Advice

3. **Doorstep Crime** ranges from distraction burglary to rogue traders who call at resident's homes using unscrupulous tactics (e.g. aggressive or pressure selling techniques) to sell their goods and services. Doorstep criminals are known to deliberately and repeatedly target older and vulnerable residents and to share information about particular vulnerable victims. Becoming a repeat victim of doorstep crime often has a devastating impact on a vulnerable adult's independence, confidence and health and can result in an accelerated need for social and health care. Doorstep crime is believed to be massively under-reported. Clearly given the nature and complexity of the criminality, it is very important that the service has an integrated and well thought out approach in order to have the most impact in tackling this crime. This report sets out the approach and seeks the Committee's approval of that approach.
4. The Trading Standards: Doorstep Crime Control Strategy 2013-14 outlines the Service's tactical approach to Doorstep Crime under the headings of Intelligence, Prevention and Enforcement. The control strategy is not a public document and some content must necessarily remain confidential for operational reasons. Below is a summary of some of the key actions planned for this year:

Intelligence

5. The service is aware that the complaints received from the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) only give a very narrow view of the doorstep crime being committed within the County. The service is developing a number of initiatives to raise awareness of doorstep crime amongst other agencies who

work with older and vulnerable residents and to encourage their reporting of doorstep crime intelligence. These include:

- Further developing links with police and district council community support officers to encourage their reporting of suspected doorstep crime incidents to the service.
- Working with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to raise awareness of Trading Standards work and to encourage the reporting of suspected doorstep crime and scams from colleagues working with older/vulnerable adults.
- Providing training to the County Council's contact centre staff to raise awareness of doorstep crime and the need for good quality intelligence.
- Developing staff room posters and aide memoirs for police and advice agencies to increase their doorstep crime intelligence reports to the service.

Prevention

6. A key challenge is how awareness can be raised of doorstep crime amongst older and vulnerable residents to warn them of the risks of buying on the doorstep and to empower them to say 'no' when they are approached. The service works with the media and other agencies involved with older/vulnerable residents, to continually reinforce this message, making use of all communication methods available (website blog, social media, Neighbourhood Alert etc.). This year the service hopes to develop its website blog to name rogue traders that are known to be using bogus addresses.
7. The service is developing closer links with the team in the County Council that manage Assistive Technology provision so that it can act swiftly to install devices in the homes of vulnerable residents who have been targeted by doorstep criminals. Devices such as the "Memominder" are put by the front door and if the person goes near the door they play a message pre-recorded by a family member or carer. e.g. "Don't let anyone in who you don't know."
8. For several years 'no uninvited caller' stickers have been a prevention measure used to give vulnerable people more confidence to say 'no' to uninvited callers. Since 2005 over 490,000 stickers have been widely distributed.
9. Door stickers are currently available by contacting the service by email: trading.standards@nottsccl.gov.uk or by telephone: 01623 452 005. The service is able to supply limited stock to other agencies and can make the artwork available for any agencies who wish to order larger numbers for distribution. Residents can also now print off their own door sticker from the Council's website.
10. The Service will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the stickers by getting feedback from vulnerable residents. Results from recent questionnaires

indicate 45% said that their door sticker had reduced the number of callers at the door; 27% said that their door sticker had increased their confidence in saying 'no' if they answered the door and 14% said that it had given them confidence not to answer the door to an uninvited caller. Only 8% said the sticker hadn't helped.

11. In recent years the service has worked with the police and local community representatives, such as Neighbourhood Watch, to establish 11 cold calling control zones in the County. The aim of the zones is to reduce the overall incidents of rogue trading and distraction burglary in Nottinghamshire by informing traders (via signs on lamp posts) that the residents in the zone do not want to be sold goods and services at their door.
12. A zone generally comprises of one or two residential streets where there have been incidents of doorstep crime reported, there is a concentration of vulnerable residents and where the majority of the residents consulted agree to setting up the zone. The establishment of a zone is resource intensive both in officer time involved in consulting with residents and in the costs involved in erecting the signs and producing residents' packs. This year the service aims to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the zones as a prevention measure and to explore other similar less resource intensive tactics that could potentially achieve similar outcomes.
13. Annual Trading Standards Community Event - 27 September 2013, Arrow Centre, Hucknall. This new event for volunteer/community group representatives and other related agencies will raise awareness of key issues currently impacting on local communities such as doorstep crime, rogue mobility sellers, mass marketing scams etc. The half day event will involve workshops to raise awareness of current key threats (particularly to the vulnerable) and explore how everyone can all work together to mitigate the risks. The event will also act as a first step towards the development of a network of "community champions" to support the work of the service to protect vulnerable residents.

Enforcement

14. Doorstep criminals operate across borders and employ many tactics to evade detection such as giving false names and addresses, continually changing vehicles and trading names and accepting cash only payments. In response the service is therefore continually looking to improve enforcement tactics and working collaboratively with police and other Trading Standards authorities both regionally and nationally.
15. It is proposed that this year to implement the Doorstep Crime Control Strategy the service will:
 - Be actively involved in the new regional and national tactical tasking and co-ordinating groups established by the National Trading Standards Board to combat doorstep crime and other enforcement issues that go beyond local authority boundaries.

- Work with regional colleagues to develop a database of expert witnesses to assist with doorstep crime cases.
- Share information about successful enforcement tactics with other Trading Standards authorities nationally who excel at doorstep crime enforcement.
- Continue to improve joint working with Nottinghamshire police (including police dispatcher training to raise awareness of the offences involved in doorstep crime and initiatives to improve our officers' knowledge of and access to relevant police procedures, such as identity parades and forensics).

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

17. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee:

- 1) Notes the progress made by the Trading Standards Team in delivering the doorstep crime strategy.
- 2) Approves the actions for 2013-14 to implement the Trading Standard's Doorstep Crime Control Strategy as outlined in paragraph 5-15 of the report.

PAUL MCKAY

Service Director for Promoting Independence and Public Protection

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Mark Walker

Group Manager, Trading Standards

Tel: (01623) 452 070

Email: mark.walker@nottscc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (NAB 13/09/13)

18. The Community Safety Committee has the authority to consider and approve the recommendations set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (KAS 05/09/13)

19. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All