

## **Trading Standards Assessment of Incoming Complaints / Enquiries**

Derbyshire County Council's Trading Standards Service receives an average of 18,000 enquiries each year. We are not able to investigate or act on all of these and so we have an assessment process which is used to prioritise all incoming enquiries.

The assessment process is carried out at twice-weekly meetings of senior Trading Standards staff who are experienced in all aspects of our work.

At the meetings, each incoming enquiry is assessed and assigned a priority which determines the action that we will take.

In reaching these decisions our staff consider the following factors;

1. Whether the enquiry falls within one of our divisional priorities;
  - Taking effective action against businesses that deliberately or persistently break the law
  - Providing support and advice to Derbyshire businesses and consumers to maintain a fair and safe trading environment.
  - Taking effective action in relation to the storage and supply of dangerous goods.
  - Maintaining food standards and helping people to make informed, healthy choices.
  - Preventing the spread of animal disease and taking action in cases of unnecessary suffering of livestock.
  - Restricting the access of children and young people to harmful age-restricted goods

If the enquiry does fall within our priority areas we go on to consider the following;

2. In relation to any business involved;
  - Is it based in Derbyshire or another part of the country? Enquiries about Derbyshire businesses are prioritised on the basis that the trading standards service nationally tries to deal with issues arising from businesses in their own area. Enquiries about non-Derbyshire businesses may be referred to trading standards colleagues in the area where the business is based.
  - The previous history of the business, have there been other complaints of the same type? Have we had other problems with the business in the past? Do they usually deal with customer complaints effectively?

- Is the business a member of the Derbyshire County Council's Trusted Trader Scheme? In order to maintain our support for the scheme enquiries about Trusted Traders are always given priority.
- Other factors, such as the size and risk assessment of the businesses. We would tend to prioritise enquiries about businesses we classify as high risk such as food producers / importers, livestock markets and manufacturers / importers of products caught by safety legislation (for example, toys, electrical goods and furniture).

3. We also look at the following;

- Is there a vulnerable consumer involved?
- Is the amount of detriment high – either to the individual complainant or the public at large?
- The nature of detriment – is there a safety or public health risk or is it purely economic?
- The frequency with which the type of enquiry occurs – is there an issue of general consumer awareness? Is the trading practice complained about widespread?
- Is there any adverse environmental impact?
- Is it an issue of animal welfare?

The end product of the assessment process is that the enquiry is assigned one of the following priorities and dealt with accordingly. Low priority enquiries may receive no further action.

- 1 **Priority** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic well-being is high, narrow timescale for effective intervention
- 2 **Routine** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic well-being is moderate, longer timescale for effective intervention
- 3 **Low** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic well-being is low, intervention is not time limited.

### **Feedback on our Assessment Process**

We will review our assessment process every year and we welcome any comments you might have; you can contact us by;

- Telephone: via Call Derbyshire 08456 058 058.
- Letter: Derbyshire County Council, Trading Standards Division,
- Cultural and Community Services, Chatsworth Hall, Chesterfield Road, Matlock, DE4 3FW.
- Fax: 01629 536197
- E-mail: [trading.standards@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:trading.standards@derbyshire.gov.uk)