

Trading Standards Assessment of Incoming Complaints / Enquiries

Derbyshire County Council's Trading Standards Service receives over 10,000 enquiries from consumers and businesses each year. It is not possible to investigate or act on all of these.

Consequently, we have an assessment process which is carried out by experienced Trading Standards staff. They look at all incoming enquiries and determine a priority which in turn helps to inform our decision about what action is taken.

In reaching these decisions our staff consider the following factors;

1. Whether the enquiry falls within one of our divisional priorities;
 - Taking action against rogue traders that deliberately or persistently break the law.
 - Providing support and advice to vulnerable consumers including victims of doorstep crime and scams.
 - Supporting local businesses through the Trusted Trader scheme, the provision of business advice and the Better Business Regulation initiative.
 - Acting to ensure that consumers are protected from dangerous or unsafe products.
 - Helping to ensure the safety and security of the food chain.
 - Ensuring that the risk of animal disease outbreak is minimised and that farm animals do not suffer unnecessarily.
 - Promoting the Heart of Derbyshire scheme to help people to make informed, healthy choices about the food they eat.
 - Restricting the access of young people to harmful age-restricted goods such as alcohol and tobacco.

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 all trading standards services try to deal with issues arising from businesses in their own area. Consequently, enquiries about non-Derbyshire businesses may be referred to the trading standards service 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 consider 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?

Following the assessment process, the enquiry is assigned one of the following priorities.

1. **Priority** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic wellbeing is high; there is a narrow timescale for effective intervention. Priority enquiries are likely to require an urgent response / intervention and are allocated for detailed assessment or action by an officer within a short time scale (3 working days).
2. **Routine** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic well-being is moderate, there is a longer timescale for effective intervention. Some routine enquiries are allocated for action by an officer but an urgent action / response is not anticipated. Matters referred to other agencies are likely to fall into this category. Some routine enquiries will not result in follow-up action over and above any advice given by the Citizen's Advice Consumer Service
3. **Low** - Impact on quality of life or risk to economic well-being is low, intervention is not time limited. Low priority enquiries are unlikely to receive individual action over and above any advice given by the Citizen's Advice Consumer Service.

The initial priority assigned to each enquiry is subject to review and may change
 CONTROLLED Enquiry prioritisation-2.20@12/01/2017Trading Standards

after detailed assessment or further information being received.

Routine or low priority enquiries where no immediate follow-up action is taken are included in an overall assessment of the intelligence received by the service. This intelligence is used to inform planning of proactive activities designed to address areas of consumer detriment through advice, warnings and / or projects.

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 01629 533190.

Letter: Derbyshire County Council, Trading Standards Division,
Economy, Transport & Communities Department, Chatsworth Hall,
Chesterfield Road, Matlock, DE4 3FW.

E-mail: trading.standards@derbyshire.gov.uk