

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Meeting with Cabinet Member, Health and Communities****21 October 2014****Report of the Strategic Director, Health and Communities****TRADING STANDARDS EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL 'SCAMBUSTER' TEAM****1. Purpose of Report:**

To seek the Cabinet Member, Health and Communities approval for the Head of Trading Standards to renew the current agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council to host the regional trading standards 'Scambuster' Team.

2. Information and Analysis:

- 2.1 Funding was first identified by Government in 2005 to support regional trading standards teams to tackle rogue traders and organised criminal groups that operate across local and regional boundaries. In November 2008 Cabinet authorised the Head of Trading Standards to enter into an agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council to work in collaboration with a regional team based in Nottinghamshire to tackle rogue traders operating in Derbyshire. It is necessary to authorise officers employed by another local authority to enforce trading standards legislation in Derbyshire.
- 2.2 Trading Standards Services work together on a regional and national basis and have adopted the 'National Intelligence Model' (NIM) to help prioritise enforcement action against those traders that breach trading standards legislation and pose a risk to consumers. Those criminals operating at a national level are identified as 'Level 3'; whilst regional criminality is 'Level 2'; and local breaches identified as 'Level 1'. Activities to combat rogue trading can be classified into three groups: 'Intelligence' – whereby information about the criminal activity and those involved is collected to determine the scale of the rogue trading; 'Prevention' – activities to prevent the criminality, for example by raising awareness amongst the public to guard against scams; and 'Enforcement' – a range of actions to tackle the criminals.
- 2.3 As well as working with regional and national trading standards colleagues, Trading Standards Services work closely with other enforcement colleagues including Police, HMRC, District Council Environmental Health and many other local and national enforcement agencies. For many years both Derbyshire and the Trading Standards East Midlands (TSEM) group have regularly attended the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) to share information and activities to tackle rogue traders. A regional 'Tactical

and Tasking' Group comprising representatives from each authority assess and determine priorities and consider 'emerging threats. They are supported by a Regional Intelligence Analyst (hosted by Derbyshire) whose role is to analyse data and recommend action to tackle the rogue trading.

- 2.4 Nottinghamshire County Council agreed to host the regional team in 2008. At first the funds were received as a grant direct from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), but since the implementation of the Consumer Landscape Review and the establishment of a National Trading Standards Board (NTSB), the funding is now allocated on an annual basis by NTSB. All trading standards services that have identified criminal operations based in their area and committing offences on a regional or national basis are able to submit a bid for support to either the regional Tactical and Tasking Group or to the National Tasking Group. The support sought can either be financial or for practical assistance to tackle the criminality. The regional and/or national tasking group assess all such bids to determine whether additional support can be provided based on the level of activity, the extent of the criminality, the clarity of the intelligence and an assessment against other priorities.
- 2.5 Derbyshire Trading Standards Service has successfully bid for additional funding to support the legal costs associated with a Derbyshire based rogue trader who was mis-selling mobility products to vulnerable consumers throughout the country. We have also worked closely with the regional team on a number of investigations where offences have been committed in Derbyshire. Derbyshire Trading Standards Service has also received much support from Derbyshire Constabulary in tackling organised crime groups responsible for the sale of illicit tobacco.
- 2.6 To ensure that appropriate legal arrangements are in place to conduct 'cross-border' investigations and, if necessary, carry out enforcement activities, it is necessary to have an agreement in place between Nottinghamshire – as host authority – and all the other seven authorities within the East Midlands. This agreement provides the necessary legal authorisations and sets out the process for agreeing priorities and managing operations. It also determines how any risks associated with regional enforcement action – for example legal costs – might be minimised and or shared. The current proposed agreement, which has changed slightly from the original agreement, is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.7 The Regional Team currently consists of a Team Leader and three investigators with additional legal processing and administrative support from Nottinghamshire County Council. The agreement does also include an allocation of officer time from each authority. This would normally be when an investigation is 'tasked' to the regional team involving a rogue trader operating in one or more of the East Midlands authorities and also provides a developmental opportunity for the seconded officer to work with specialist investigators. In addition, TSEM has successfully bid for additional funds to

investigate a 'Level 3' organised crime group based in the East Midlands but committing offences nationwide.

- 2.8 A briefing note about the East Midlands Regional Team and some examples of successful enforcement action is provided in Appendix 2 to this report.

3 Other Considerations:

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered; human resources, legal, financial, prevention of crime and disorder, equality of opportunity; environmental, health, human resources, property and transport considerations.

4 Background Papers:

Cabinet Report: Authorisation of Scambuster Investigations and Collaborative Cross Authority Working within East Midlands (Community Safety) dated 4th November 2008.

CabCo Report: Trading Standards East Midlands Scambuster Team; 11th April 2011.

5 Key Decision:

No

6 Call-in:

Is it required that call-in be waived for any decision on this report?
No

7 Officer's Recommendation:

That the Cabinet Member, Health and Communities agrees to the Head of Trading Standards renewing the current agreement with Nottinghamshire County Council to host the regional trading standards 'Scambuster' Team.

**David Lowe
Strategic Director
Health and Communities**

Appendix 1- Regional Scambuster Agreement



TSEM Scambusters Team

Collaborative Working and Cross Authority Officer Authorisation Protocol for Scambusters Investigations

Interpretation for the purposes of this agreement

“Accountable Body”	Nottinghamshire County Council (also referred to as NCC).
“ARIS Payment”	Payment under the Home Office’s Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme.
“BIS”	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, which is the Government body funding the Team.
“BIS Funding”	The funding allocated on behalf of BIS to the Scambuster Team project via the NTSB governance structures.
“Commencement Date”	The date the Delegated Power is granted by the signatory authority.
“Delegated Power”	The discharge of the statutory powers contained in ‘specified legislation’ granted by the respective local authority to the ‘Accountable Body’ in pursuance of Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, Regulation 7 of the Local Authorities (Arrangements for Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000 and or Section 13 (7) of the Local Government Act 2000.
“NTG”	National Tasking Group; the body responsible under the NTSB framework for tasking regional Scambuster projects.
“NTSB”	National Trading Standards Board; the body responsible for allocating the BIS funds and management of the project.

“Primary Authority”	The local authority taking primacy for the investigation either on the basis of the trader and or consumers being based in their local authority area.
“SBT”	TSEM Scambuster Team.
“SGG”	Scambuster Governance Group; the national body responsible under the NTSB framework for governance of the Scambuster project work-stream.
“Specified Legislation”	Consumer Credit Act 1974, Consumer Protection Act 1987, Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008, European Communities Act 1972, Enterprise Act 2002, Estates Agents Act 1979, Fair Trading Act 1973, Fraud Act 2006, Hallmarking Act 1973, Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tour Regulations 1992, Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, Property Misdescriptions Act 1991, Timeshare Act 1992, Trade Descriptions Act 1968, Trade Marks Act 1994 , Video Recordings Acts 1984 and 1993, Weights & Measures Act 1985, and all secondary legislation made under any of the Specified legislation.
“Term”	Starts from the date of delegation onwards, which will continue whilst the Scambuster Project and TSEM team exists.
“TSEM”	Trading Standards East Midlands comprising the local Trading Standards Services of Derbyshire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Leicestershire County Council, Lincolnshire County Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Derby City Council, Leicester City Council and Nottingham City Council.
“TSI”	Trading Standards Institute; the body responsible for receiving BIS funding provided to NTSB. This includes issuing contracts to regions, financial oversight of the teams, and the making of financial arrangements in line with the decisions of the NTSB or other empowered NTSB groups.
“TSEM TTG”	TSEM Tactical Tasking Group, as identified by TSEM Heads of Service.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To enable the Scambusters Team to function effectively and efficiently across the region, officers in the team will require authorisation to exercise statutory powers. This is to enable them to enter premises, vehicles, stalls and other places to inspect goods, records and documents and to make purchases and where necessary to seize goods, records and documents under a specified set of legislation to enable them to conduct investigations into scams and rogue trading practices.
- 1.2 This document seeks to explain the process under which officers within the SBT will obtain those statutory powers. A list of the Officers to be authorised is contained in Appendix 1. This appendix is subject to change as Officers employed change over time.
- 1.3 To explain the governance and management arrangements for the SBT.
- 1.4 To explain the process that will be adopted when considering the institution of legal proceedings.
- 1.5 To outline the support and resources that each TSEM local authority agrees to provide to NCC in exchange for it hosting the Scambusters team.
- 1.6 To outline the objectives of the TSEM Scambusters team.

2 Application

- 2.1 Each local authority within TSEM where possible will need to put in place arrangements to authorise Officers from the Scambusters Team to enable them to exercise statutory powers as necessary under the Specified Legislation, where such powers exist, thereby enabling the SBT to conduct effective and lawful investigations.
- 2.2 Not all of the legislation referenced in 'Specified legislation' above affords Officers any statutory powers, but they are contained in the list for completeness as they may be used for alleged offences in prosecutions.
- 2.3 The authorisations will extend only to officers employed by the 'Accountable Body' engaged on activities within the Scambusters team conducting investigations that are within the remit of the Team's work.
- 2.4 The delegated powers exist to enable the Scambusters officers to conduct effective and lawful investigations across the TSEM local authorities.
- 2.5 The delegated powers do not inhibit the individual local authorities and their authorised officers from exercising their existing powers under the 'specified legislation' or any other legislation under which they are authorised.

- 2.6 The delegated powers extend only to the conduct of investigations and associated working practices. They do not extend to the institution of legal proceedings for breaches of the 'specified legislation'.
- 2.7 The institution of legal proceedings in respect of investigations led or conducted by the Scambusters Team will be considered on a case by case basis. The 'Accountable Body' will consult with the local authorities in whose area alleged offences have been detected.
- 2.8 Should it be expedient for the 'Accountable Body' to institute proceedings on a collective basis, the 'Accountable Body' shall seek authority from the individual local authorities to do so.

3 Scambuster Team – Governance and Management

- 3.1 The 'Accountable Body' will establish the Scambusters Team and will be responsible for the day-to-day operation and supervision of the Scambuster Team.
- 3.2 The Scambusters Team is a shared resource of the TSEM local authorities who are committed to working in partnership to deliver the outcomes set out in the project plan submitted and agreed by NTSB.
- 3.3 The Scambusters Team will be an integral part of the TSEM regional Tactical Tasking & Enforcement activities and will play a key role in delivering the agreed Control Strategies.
- 3.4 Tasking and oversight of the Scambusters team will be via the TSEM Tactical Tasking Group (TTG).
- 3.5 The Scambusters Team will be subject to the scrutiny of the TSEM Heads of Service Group. This Group may also operate as the TTG.
- 3.6 NCC will provide reports on the operation of the Scambusters team to every TSEM Heads of Service meetings. The Team Manager will attend and contribute to these meeting as required.
- 3.7 TSEM will provide a nominated Head of Service from an Authority other than the Accountable Body to represent the region on the NTSB Scambusters Governance Group. This Head of Service will provide scrutiny and oversight of the SBT and its operations on behalf of NTSB and all TSEM Authorities.
- 3.8 The Scambusters Team Leader will be responsible for reporting back to NTSB every quarter, or as and when required.

4 Conduct and Control of Investigations

- 4.1 The TTG will make decisions on prioritising the work of the SBT to meet the agreed Control Strategies.
- 4.2 The SBT will not, as a matter of routine, investigate individual complaints received concerning alleged scams and rogue trading activities. The SBT's activities will be intelligence led tackling level 2 and level 3 targets identified under the control strategies and providing specialist support to level 1 Trading Standards teams.
- 4.3 It is envisaged that there will be three possible scenarios under which Officers from the SBT will be engaged in carrying out investigations on behalf of the 8 Authorities within TSEM.
- 4.4 The first of these is where it is appropriate for the investigation to be led by the SBT. The most likely reason for this scenario is because the investigation goes across authority borders. Although such investigations will be led by the SBT, assistance is likely to be required from local authority colleagues. This will be agreed through the Tactical Tasking process.
- 4.5 Under the circumstances described in 4.4 above, paragraphs 4.6 to 4.10 will have effect.
- 4.6 The conduct and control of investigations led by the SBT will be the responsibility of NCC. Investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the Enforcement Policy of NCC.
- 4.7 Any Authorisations required under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 will be obtained by the Authority that has jurisdiction for the area in which the proposed activities are to be actioned. NCC will also ensure compliance with the requirements of the Criminal Procedures & Investigations Act, Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and any other legislation associated with the conduct of investigations. However, NCC expects all TSEM authorities to provide any necessary and reasonable assistance to ensure compliance with this.
- 4.8 NCC will also be responsible for responding to requests for information made under the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Enterprise Act 2002. However, NCC expects all TSEM authorities to provide any necessary and reasonable assistance to ensure compliance with this.
- 4.9 Feedback on the progress of the investigations carried out by the SBT will be provided to the TTG. The TTG as oversight body for the SBT will scrutinise and authorise the progression on investigations tasked to the SBT.
- 4.10 The TSEM Heads of Service Group or other nominated group will authorise the action to be taken following the submission of an investigation report to the

Accountable Body which may include the commencement of legal proceedings. The decision will be recorded.

- 4.11 The second is where NTG task the team to investigate cases of national significance (Level 3). Paragraphs 4.4 to 4.10 shall apply to this situation in addition to any requirements imposed by the NTG.
- 4.12 The third scenario under which it is anticipated that the SBT will be engaged in investigations is one where it is appropriate for the SBT to assist a local authority to bring an investigation, but where the SBT does not lead the investigation itself.
- 4.13 Under the circumstance described in paragraph 4.12 above, paragraphs 4.14 to 4.19 shall apply.
- 4.14 Where it is the case that intelligence highlights potential offences, but a local authority (the primary authority) is tasked to further the investigation itself (but with assistance from officers within the SBT) then Officers from the SBT will act under the guidance of the primary local authority as required.
- 4.15 Any investigation conducted under these circumstances with the assistance of the SBT members will be the responsibility of the primary authority, which shall have responsibility to ensure compliance with RIPA, CPIA, PACE, and any other legislation associated with the conduct of the investigation. NCC will provide any necessary and reasonable assistance to the authority to ensure compliance with these requirements.
- 4.16 The conduct and control of investigations undertaken will be the responsibility of the primary authority. Investigations will be undertaken in accordance with the Enforcement Policy of the primary authority.
- 4.17 The primary authority will authorise the action to be taken following the submission of an investigation report to the Accountable Body which may include the commencement of legal proceedings. The decision will be recorded.
- 4.18 The primary authority will be responsible for responding to requests for information made under the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Enterprise Act 2002. NCC will provide any necessary and reasonable assistance to ensure compliance with this.
- 4.19 The primary authority will be expected to feed-back progress on such investigations for oversight to the TTG.

5 Responsibilities and Actions of the Authorities

- 5.1 NCC shall be responsible for the actions and competence of the persons employed within the SBT and shall ensure that the SBT shall comply with

legislative requirements with regard to investigations under its control. In addition, NCC shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that any actions taken are lawful and within the spirit of the protocol.

- 5.2 All TSEM authorities shall be liable for the actions and competence of persons within its employ, and shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the competence of those persons in carrying out their functions, and that they comply with legislative requirements and the spirit of this protocol.
- 5.3 Information and intelligence provided between NCC and the other TSEM authorities shall be used for the purpose of preventing and detecting crime, and discharging responsibilities under the Enterprise Act 2002. Information provided is subject to the restrictions on disclosure contained in Part 9 of the Enterprise Act 2002. It is provided only to assist in the performance of regulatory functions and shall not be divulged to third parties unless to do so would be lawful, having regard to the Information Gateways within Part 9 and section 244 of the EA 2002.
- 5.4 NCC and the TSEM authorities endorse a joined up approach to the enforcement of the specified legislation. The partners will attempt to promote consistency in enforcement. However, this protocol does not attempt to restrict the powers of authorised officers of the SBT or any of the TSEM authorities from discharging their duties as appropriate.
- 5.5 All TSEM authorities agreed at the outset of the TSEM Scambusters project to share any redundancy costs incurred should the project be terminated that are not covered by POCA assets recovered, apportioned on a population basis. NCC reserves the right to wind up the TSEM Scambusters project early if necessary to offset and redundancy costs.
- 5.6 Acknowledgement of Joint and Several Liability: Where any Party enters into an agreement or arrangement for the proper and reasonable delivery of the Scambusters scheme or in furtherance of the aims and objectives of the Parties pursuant to the provisions of this Agreement, the parties shall be jointly and severally liable in respect of all rights, duties, obligations, actions, liabilities, claims, proceedings, costs, expenses and damages arising out of or in respect of any such agreement or arrangement and each Party shall keep the others fully indemnified in respect of all such rights, duties, obligations, actions, liabilities, claims, proceedings, costs and expenses and damages
- 5.7 Where any party enters into an agreement or arrangement for the proper and reasonable delivery of the Scambusters scheme, that party shall be liable in respect of all rights, duties, obligations, actions, liabilities, claims, proceedings, costs, expenses and damages arising out of or in respect of any Scambusters case involving investigations or legal action undertaken in its own area.

6. Staffing & Accommodation

- 6.1 The core of the SBT will consist of a Team Leader, 3 Investigators and an Intelligence Assistant employed by Nottinghamshire County Council. Office accommodation for the team will be located in Nottinghamshire. The set up costs and annual staffing, accommodation and running costs will be met from the NTSB funding.
- 6.2 Should NTSB reduce funding to the project, NCC reserves the right to change the number of staff employed by the team to balance the budget available.
- 6.3 NCC as host authority will seek to recover the costs of human resource services, financial management, audit, payroll, health and safety advice, basic legal services and project management from the NTSB funding.
- 6.4 All TSEM authorities (including the Accountable Body) commit to providing a “virtual” element to the SBT, by providing a minimum of:
 - 0.4 FTE (approximately 88 officer days) for county authorities per year, or
 - 0.2 FTE (approximately 44 officer days) for unitary authorities, per year
- 6.5 This support in 6.4 would be a flexible allocation, and could range from a named officer being seconded to the SBT for a number of weeks or a number of officers assisting with an operation on a particular day. The extra support would be agreed through the regional tactical tasking process. Support would be requested wherever possible where the work had a direct link to the employing authority.
- 6.6 All TSEM authorities agree to provide support to the SBT to disseminate early alert warnings to consumers/businesses and promote the work of the team as and when required.
- 6.7 TSEM agrees to provide support from its Regional Co-ordinator to support the management and delivery of the SBT and to assist in promoting the SBT’s work.
- 6.8 All TSEM authorities agree to provide the SBT use of their specialist surveillance equipment and meeting and interview room facilities as necessary and with the appropriate prior notice.
- 6.9 All TSEM authorities agree to contribute to the cost of the storage of goods seized by the SBT or any other test purchasing or operational support costs needed as part of a regional operation. Any such costs will be agreed in advance by TTG as part of the operational briefing.

7. Legal Costs and Proceeds of Crime

- 7.1 NCC will provide a proportion of Legal Services Manager's time to be recovered from the NTSB funding. This will be to undertake routine legal work such as processing Scambusters files, taking relevant cases in magistrates' courts and liaising with solicitors/barristers. Any additional legal costs will be in the first instance met from the SBT budget awarded by NTSB.
- 7.2 The SB Team Leader will identify as a risk to the NTSB through the quarterly reporting mechanism any litigation or legal costs for level 2 and level 3 cases over and above the NTSB provided funding. NCC will take appropriate steps to ensure that all legal costs incurred in respect of SBT cases are met by NTSB, thereby minimising any potential liability to TSEM authorities of the pursuance of SBT cases.
- 7.3 In the event that legal costs were incurred on a SBT led case that were not met from any NTSB monies granted or any POCA assets recovered, all TSEM authorities agree to share such costs incurred apportioned on a per head of population basis.
- 7.4 Where grant funding has been used to pay all or some of the legal costs of a case, TSEM/NCC is required following successful prosecution to reimburse the NTSB in the event of full costs recovery. Where less than full costs are recovered, TSEM/NCC is required to reimburse NTSB on a pro rata basis to the costs recovered against costs claimed.
- 7.5 All TSEM authorities agree to contribute existing POCA capability within the region to support the SBT when needed. When an offence is committed within an authority that has an Accredited Financial Investigator (AFI) that authority would be asked in the first instance to lend its AFI to support the investigation.
- 7.6 In any case where there has been SBT involvement, 50% of any ARIS payment received by TSEM/NCC are required to be paid to the NTSB. Where NCC considers that 50% is inappropriate, agreement will be reached with the NTSB (where possible) before Scambuster resources are committed to the investigation.
- 7.7 All remaining assets recovered as a consequence of a SBT led investigation will be used as follows:
 - 1) To pay the employing authority of an AFI for their involvement in the case (repaid to the employing authority at an hourly rate based on salary and on-costs).
 - 2) To cover any redundancy costs involved in the winding up of the SBT at the end of funding.
 - 3) To cover any legal costs incurred in respect of SBT cases not met by NTSB funding.

- 7.8 The future use of any remaining assets will be agreed under the TSEM governance arrangements.
- 7.9 Where an investigation is led by a local authority and the SBT plays a supporting role, the division of any assets recovered would be negotiated on a case by case basis.

8. TSEM Scambuster Team Objectives:

- 8.1 The SBT will work across borders, to focus on fraudulent and malicious trading practices that cause serious detriment to consumers and legitimate business and would benefit from a regional approach.
- 8.2 The SBT will act as the enforcement arm of the TTG, working to the benefit of all TSEM authorities, taking a proactive intelligence led approach to tackle level 2 and 3 targets identified under the control strategies.
- 8.3 The SBT will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to ensure action is taken by the most appropriate agency.
- 8.4 The SBT will implement preventive measures, by working with the TSEM Trading Standards Services to proactively give early warnings to consumers and businesses about specific dishonest trading practices as they arise.
- 8.5 The SBT will offer specialist enforcement expertise to TSEM authorities to support investigations led by those authorities (i.e. to parachute in to assist in relevant investigations)
- 8.6 RTG will have regard to the NTSB Integrated Operating Model and will task the SBT following requests from the NTG to tackle national level 3 cases. RTG will have scrutiny and oversight of those cases.

9. Dates of commencement and termination of this protocol

- 9.1 This Protocol will come into force on the Commencement Date and will continue until such time that it is reviewed again.
- 9.2 This protocol does not prejudice the right of a TSEM authority to withdraw the Delegated Power at any time during the Term. However all TSEM authorities agree not to withdraw the Delegated Power unreasonably.

10. Signatories

Date of Commencement:

On behalf of TSEM partner

On behalf of NCC

Name of Authority:

Derbyshire County Council

Signed by (Print):

Robert Taylour

Signed by (Print):

Position:

Head of Trading Standards

Position:

Signature:

Signature:

Date:

Date:

Appendix 1

Officers to be Authorised

Mark Hughes

Ian Phillips

Michael Baxter

Jim Adam

Rachel Hillier

Jane Poole

David Black

Alan Kirk

Steve Wyatt

Mark Barsby

Tony Perkins

Peter Gallimore

John Friend

Appendix 2 - Summary of East Midlands Scambuster Activities

REGIONAL SCAMBUSTERS TEAM

BACKGROUND

Scambuster teams were set up by council trading standards services working together on a regional basis in 2008/9, with national government funding. The teams were set up to tackle cross border/regional criminal activity in the broad “fair trading” arena. This was to add to (not replace or substitute) activity already being carried out by local Trading Standards services.

In the region, the Scambuster team is hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council on behalf of the eight Trading Standards services in the East Midlands. Governance, direction and tasking is provided within the region via Heads of Service and Senior Managers. The regional team work closely with the eight individual Trading Standards services, with opportunities for officers to be seconded in to the team and the sharing of skills and experience in tackling and managing large and complex investigations.

Since 2008, the relatively small Scambuster team in the East Midlands has tackled a range of issues from unsafe counterfeit goods, to illicit tobacco, high pressure mobility aid sellers, home improvement doorstep criminals and charity bag scams. All of the team’s investigations and successful prosecutions have helped to protect vulnerable older people in their homes, keep local communities safe, and remove dangerous products from the market, whilst also supporting legitimate businesses.

THE STATISTICS

	April 2008 - March 2014
No. of investigations	33
No. of prosecutions taken	21
No. of offenders convicted	15
Prison Sentences	21 years
Amount of Fraud	over £5 million

SCAMBUSTERS IN ACTION

Keeping People Safe At Home

This case, an investigation into doorstep criminals is just one example of the Scambuster model in action. Lincolnshire Trading Standards were receiving complaints from elderly and vulnerable residents who had been coerced into paying for work, often unnecessary, to be carried out on their roofs and driveways. After starting an initial investigation, Lincolnshire soon realised that there were two linked groups of rouge traders who were working right across the region and further afield and that the case needed more capability than they had to be successful. The case was referred to the regional Scambuster team to continue the investigation.

All victims are elderly, frail, or vulnerable and in many cases are all three. The youngest victim is aged in their mid-60’s and the eldest is in their 90’s. Many have been repeatedly targeted by these gangs. Once the Scambusters team identified the

full scale of the offending, involving large scale fraud and over £1 million pounds in cheques cashed from victims, and potential money laundering, the team sought national funding to put the rogues out of business as quickly and efficiently as possible, with the right amount of officer support required for the case.

The successful investigation into these two groups has seen all but one of the individuals involved remanded since their arrest. Ten individuals are currently on bail with strict bail conditions, including curfew, residency, reporting in to Police stations twice a week, and no communication with each other or any of their victims. A breach of these conditions will see them further remanded. Trial dates have been set for January and February 2015.

Stopping the Fraudsters

A company that sold a 99 year old man a mobility scooter has been stopped in its tracks. Following complaints to Trading Standards, Scambusters were tasked with investigating a company that targeted elderly, disabled and vulnerable people by cold calling them to sell mobility aid products.

The complex investigation uncovered a large number of complaints from across the UK, with all victims aged over 65 years of age. The issues ranged from unsuitable goods being provided, or non-delivery of any goods, to refusing to give refunds when orders were cancelled. Many victims felt pressurised into agreeing to buy products, whilst others were mis-led by the company's claims that they were working on behalf of Social Services.

Once the case went to court, all four of the main offenders received prison sentences, with two individuals receiving 5 years, one sentenced to 18 months and the Director sentenced to 3.5 years for 10 counts of fraud and disqualified from acting as a Director for 10 years.

Taking The Lead Nationally

The East Midlands Scambuster team is nearing trial and the conclusion of a long, complex nationwide business advertising scam investigation, which local action from various Trading Standards services in the UK had previously failed to stop.

The team has been awarded National Trading Standards Board funding for additional investigative officers and resources to tackle a multi-million pound fraud targeting legitimate small businesses and conning them out of thousands of pounds for advertising in publications that don't exist.

This investigation has seen a true partnership approach, with support from local Trading Standards services plus other region's Scambuster teams in taking statements from the many victims across the country and on the large scale raids on numerous business premises.