

Annual Report 2024/25



HOME OF TRADING STANDARDS
SCOTLAND

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01 Introduction

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Trading Standards Scotland Team for 2024/25.

The report provides a summary of the work done by the team over the course of the year and the impact that it has had.

The report assesses performance against the TSS Business Plan and provides information on key performance indicators and financial reporting.

Particular pieces of work have been highlighted where they showcase an innovative approach or have been particularly impactful.

Our Vision

To create an environment where consumers can safely make choices

Trading
Standards
Scotland

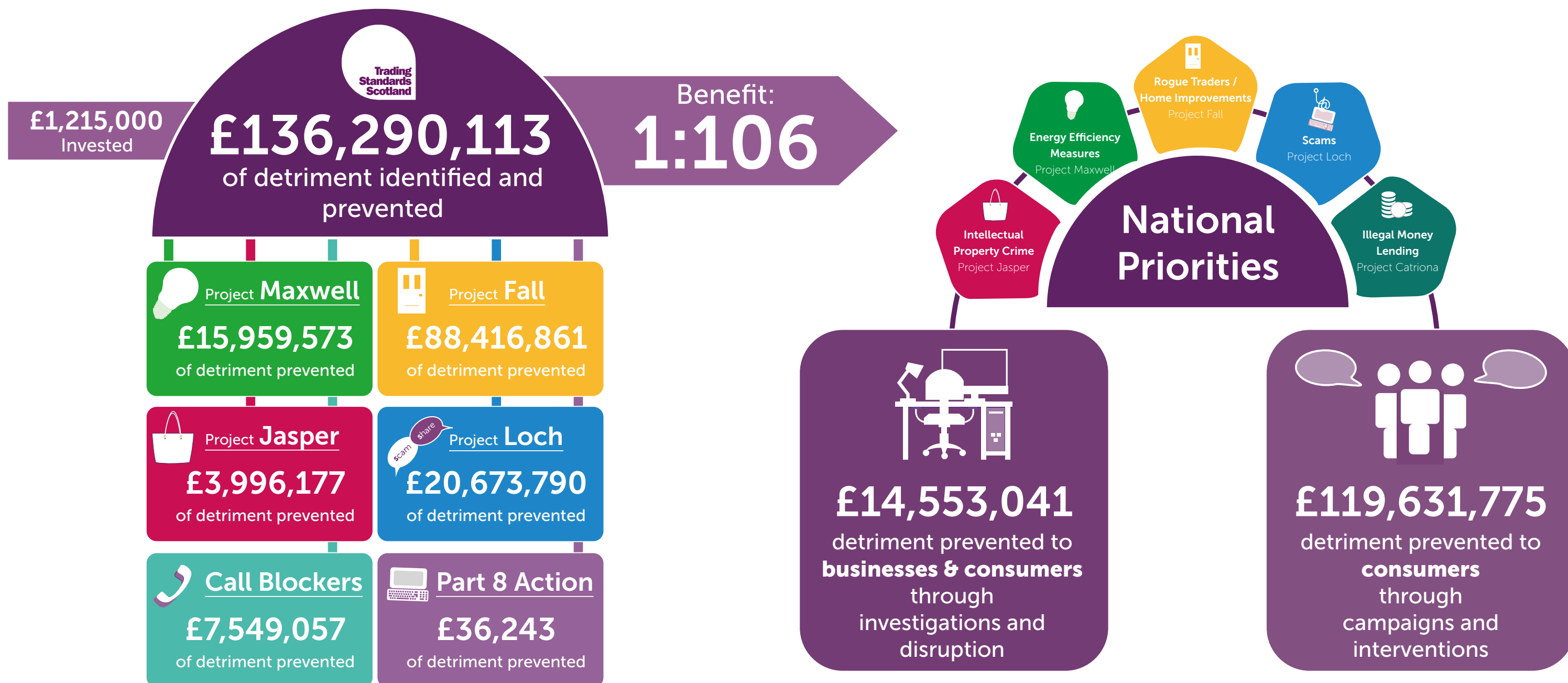
Our Mission

To change the behaviours of businesses and individuals who damage consumer and business interests

02 Infographic Summary of TSS Work in 2024/25

In the 11 years since Trading Standards Scotland was established, the team has successfully prevented **almost £649 million in detriment**, which represents a return on investment of **£48 for every £1 spent**.

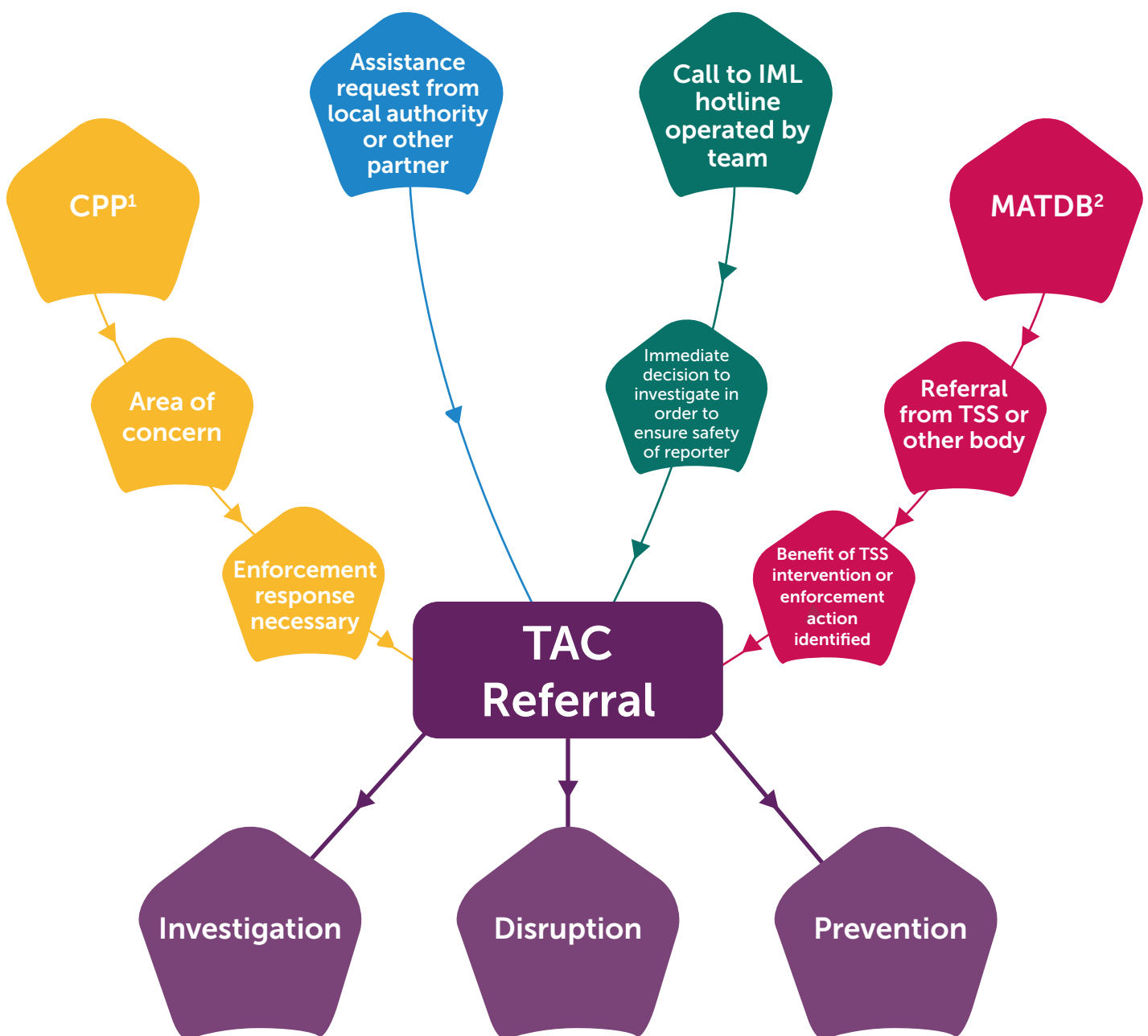
Impact of our Work in 2024/25



03 Workflows

TSS uses intelligence to identify the businesses, individuals and sectors causing the most harm to consumers and where TSS can have maximum impact through enforcement and disruption action or creating and distributing information to consumers that helps them to make safe choices.

A tactical tasking process (TAC) is utilised to identify and prioritise work. This tasking process is jointly owned by TSS and Society for Chief Officers for Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS).



1 Consumer Protection Partnership

2 Multi Agency Tasking & Development Board

04 Governance

The TSS team continue to report to a politically led governance board which includes representatives from all the main political groups in Scotland. The Board is chaired by the COSLA Spokesperson for Community Wellbeing, Councillor Maureen Chalmers.

The Board also invites representatives from a number of partner organisations including the Society of Chief Trading Standards Officers in Scotland, Department for Business and Trade, Consumer Scotland, Scottish Government and Citizens Advice Scotland.

The Board meets on a quarterly basis to scrutinise performance and budgets. It is also responsible for agreeing the annual business plan for the team. The board is constituted as follows:

- **Chair**
- **2 SNP representatives**
- **2 Labour representatives**
- **2 Conservative representatives**
- **1 Liberal Democrat representative**
- **1 Green representative and**
- **1 Independent group representative**

05 Business Plan 2024/25

Our Partnership with Local Authorities

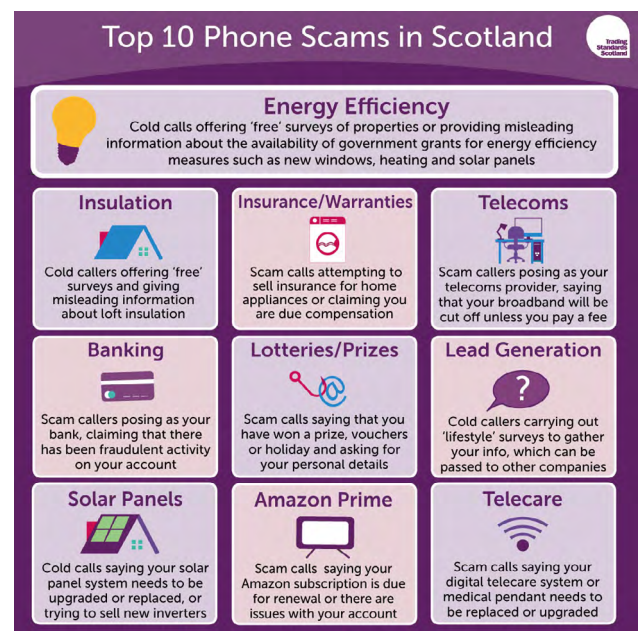
In the Business Plan for 24/25 we laid out specific areas where we would work with local authorities in order to add capacity in specific areas.

Analysing the data gathered by call blocking devices

TSS continue to analyse the data gathered by all of the call blocking devices that trading standards services have installed across Scotland. 1,153 trueCall units have been installed since 01/09/2014 to protect vulnerable residents from nuisance and scam phone calls.

In total, **838,548** nuisance and scam calls were received, of which **832,985** were blocked (**over 95%**).

Data is gathered about the source and timing of these calls and analysis by TSS can help identify problematic sectors and traders, which is of use to local trading standards teams.

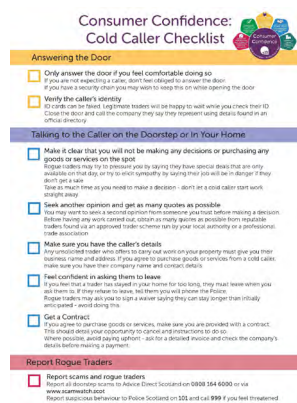


Supporting access to data on potential scam victims

TSS continues to fund access to the Compass database operated by the NTS Scams Team for Scottish local authorities. This allows the transfer of information about potential victims of scams from Scams Teams investigations to be passed to the relevant local authority in order that tailored advice and information can be provided with a view to preventing further harm. There has been a significant drop-off in the use of the database during 2024/25 with only five local authorities appearing to make active use of the information. An assessment of the reasons behind this is being conducted in order to allow a decision in relation to future funding to be made.

Providing a library of prevention materials

TSS continues to develop and expand the library of prevention resources made available to local authorities and partnership agencies through the TSS website.



TSS uses the intelligence database and the investigations that the team conducts to identify issues and develop messaging that will help consumers to make safe choices when contracting for goods or services. The aim is to provide timely information to consumers of current and emerging scams to reduce detriment. Messaging is built on the lived experience of consumers making it relatable and easier to identify a scam attempt.

TSS has run or contributed to several impactful prevention campaigns over the course of the year, further details on these are included later in this report. TSS has conducted research through ScotPulse to develop knowledge on the problems being faced by Scottish consumers in specific sectors. This knowledge can then be used to design targeted campaigns.

Forensic examination of handheld communication devices

The team have continued to develop and invest in this area. Feedback from local authorities has helped to develop processes. The ability to extract information from cellular devices is key to supporting investigations as it can provide intelligence and evidence that is not available through other means. This is an area of work we will continue to develop and will offer to local authorities when we have capacity to do so.

National Priorities



Misleading Marketing of Energy Efficiency Products Project Maxwell

Misleading energy marketing and the sale of energy efficiency products is a key priority area for Trading Standards Scotland. The industry continues to be targeted by rogue traders who have identified consumers' lack an understanding of both energy efficiency products and the government grants/schemes available and exploit these vulnerabilities.

TSS receive funding from the Scottish Government for a project co-ordinator to lead on the response energy efficiency measures, this allows for a holistic and proactive approach to be taken in relation to Project Maxwell.

Over the course of the year, we have continued to see issues with sale, installation and removal of spray foam. This market has been fast moving and has been shown to be reactive to the efforts of TSS to protect consumers. A focused disruption approach has been adopted by the team to ensure that consumer detriment is limited rather than gathering evidence to support prosecution reports that could take years to come to court.

It has also become apparent that consumers who use the Eco4 scheme to install energy efficiency measures and have subsequent issues can face real complexity when trying to



resolve those issues. TSS have worked with local trading standards services on several of these complaints and we intend to develop a toolkit to support officers in resolving issues for consumers in this situation.

The Scottish Government paused work on the Heat in Buildings Bill in 2024 in recognition that further thinking was required to ensure that the Bill did not exacerbate issues with fuel poverty. The Bill is likely to return to Parliament in 2025 and TSS will continue to support policy development in this area by ensuring that the market issues observed by the team are considered.

TSS has also worked closely with Consumer Scotland as they have conducted their investigation into the green heating sector.

Further details on investigations and campaign work relating to Project Maxwell are included later in this report in the Featured Work section.

Intellectual Property Crime Project Jasper



As low risk, high reward crimes, illicit trade especially that of counterfeit products remains a significant threat in Scotland. Counterfeiting affects a wide range of goods and bears consequences for consumers, right holders, and governments alike. As well as posing dangers to the health, safety, and privacy of consumers, it also erodes brand value and results in revenue losses for legitimate companies and lost tax revenues for governments.

The Intellectual Property Office appointed an IP Crime Coordinator for Scotland in the summer of 2024. TSS were involved in the recruitment for the post and are working closely with the successful candidate as they take forward work to tackle IP crime and raise awareness. As a result, the Scottish Anti Illicit Trade Group relaunched in March 2025. This group brings together organisations from both the public and private sector with the aim of tackling illicit trade in Scotland.

During the year TSS have had discussions with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal service to resolve the issues around having to retain large quantities of goods to support prosecution cases. The team currently has over 30 tonnes of goods in storage that are productions in cases due to come to Court. This does influence decisions around whether to take on further enforcement work in this area.

We continue to observe that the sale and supply of counterfeit goods is promulgated through online platforms and this requires constant adaptation of investigative techniques.

Operation Rora was undertaken during 2024/25 and further details of this investigation are provided later in the report.

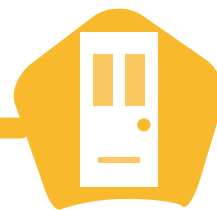
Counterfeit toys may have loose parts and could be made from toxic or flammable materials

Where possible, buy from reputable retailers or trusted brands - online marketplaces are not responsible for checking that toys are safe

#CostOfLivingScams



Rogue Traders/ Home Improvements Project Fall



Itinerant doorstep 'traders' continue to commit consumer crime across Scotland, with wider links proven to serious organised crime including human trafficking, modern slavery, and environmental crime. They are highly organised and difficult to monitor and investigate due to their itinerant nature.

These types of traders are synonymous with overcharging for work that is either unnecessary and/or substandard, with a tendency to target vulnerable and elderly consumers. We have also seen a rise in consumer issues related to home improvement work.

We continue to see a mix of issues arising from established companies and itinerant traders. The former tend to employ problematic sales tactics that do not quite meet the threshold for a criminal prosecution whilst the latter do but identifying the individuals involved is problematic.

During 2024/25 we undertook an engagement exercise with Police Scotland call handlers in an effort to improve reporting of issues with itinerant traders and other consumer law breaches. In addition we continue to work in partnership with Police Scotland on Operation Queensberry to ensure that intelligence sharing is effective.



Scams Project Loch



Mass marketing' scams are a term used to refer to uninvited contact by the internet, letter, phone, or advertising purposefully designed to con people out of money. Scammers try to lure victims with false promises of large cash prizes, goods, or services in exchange for upfront fees, sometimes referred to as 'taxes' or 'donations'.

Examples of such activity includes consumers receiving notification of mysterious inheritances, lottery scams, wine and diamond buying schemes, romance scams, clairvoyant scams, and copycat websites. In many instances, consumers find themselves caught up in a cycle whereby they are constantly targeted as even one response to scammers can mean that they are added to a 'suckers' list which significantly increases the potential of them becoming repeat victims.

The TSS scam dashboard continues to provide ongoing analysis of scam complaints data, in order to inform



prevention and disruption activities. The dashboard shows that investment scams, particularly those involving crypto currency, are responsible for the highest financial detriment both overall, and in individual instances. Information from the dashboard was used to inform the CPP Scams Awareness Week campaign in October that focussed on investment and financial scams.

TSS also noted intelligence regarding the marketing of personal alarm services to consumers with telecare systems, on the basis that their current device is unlikely to work following the VoIP switchover. Further detail on this piece of work is provided later in this report.

ADS data also showed a likely seasonal trend around Christmas with a series of complaints regarding non-receipt of goods, receipt of mis-described goods and failure to accept returns where orders were placed under the misapprehension that the seller was situated in the UK or EU. Consumers had placed trust in domains containing “UK” or UK based place name. Reports indicate the goods in question, mainly clothing, toys and electronic goods, were being dispatched from China or elsewhere in Asia. This area of concern that has been picked up by the Advertising Standards Authority.



06 KPIs 2024/25

The quantitative KPIs for the operational team, as agreed with DBT, are detailed below at **Table 1**. Data from 2023/24 is included for comparative purposes. It is important to note that whilst it is invaluable to reflect some of the enforcement work through quantitative data, it is also important to attempt to measure the work through narrative in relation to outcome and impact. Narratives around the work of the team are provided in Section 7 of this report.

Enforcement

KPI	24/25	23/24
Operations commenced in the period, broken into separate activity strands:		
General	13	12
Civil	4	6
Cyber	3	5
Total	20	23
Reports submitted to the Procurator Fiscal	6	10
Cases submitted for Part 8 Undertaking under the Enterprise Act 2002	0	3
Breach of enforcement orders pursued	0	0
Enhanced consumer measures sought	0	0
Cases referred for POCA investigations (Police Function)	3	6
Cases referred to Civil Recovery Unit	1	1
Cases referred to other enforcement agencies	7	8
Enforcement outcomes undertaken in partnership with local authority trading standards teams and/or other enforcement agencies	15	14
Training events undertaken for local authority Trading Standards services to improve enforcement capability	27	2

Intelligence

KPI	24/25	23/24
Intelligence logs submitted by TSS	1,212	1,194
Analytical products created in the period	86	62
Intelligence development cases commenced	13	12
Intelligence packages developed for local authority operations (cybercrime/other)	0	1

Prevention

KPI	24/25	23/24
Consumers/businesses reached in preventative campaigns: online, printed media, radio/TV	10,114,074	9,022,381

07 Featured Work

Operation Ethie



This was a joint operation, undertaken with North Lanarkshire Trading Standards and Police Scotland, in respect of prolific offenders who had previously been the subject of a TSS investigation.

Working in partnership, TSS identified numerous, roofing frauds, 'Free Boiler replacement' scams and 10-year warranty frauds. Having adopted a robust intervention strategy, TSS ensured a coordinated approach with North Lanarkshire Trading Standards and Police Scotland resulting in cases being reported to Crown against two individuals by all three agencies across a number of years. The court cases were heard in the early part of 2024 and resulted in custodial sentence for both individuals of 18 and 14 months respectively.

Cold callers are giving misleading information about government grants for boilers

Don't deal with cold callers - do some research and seek impartial advice before agreeing to make any payments

#TurnDownEnergyScams



Operation Stricken



This investigation concerned the removal of spray foam insulation, with the business concerned ramping up activity following the TSS campaign to raise awareness of issues with spray foam.

Initially, reporting involved consumers simply raising concerns about the legitimacy of a marketing letter, which made ambiguous reference to "recent enquiries by the company, alongside regulatory authorities including Trading Standards". This developed to a point where the company was claiming to have been chosen by trading standards to help remove the insulation or were otherwise working in conjunction with them. The aim appeared to be to give an air of legitimacy to the company, seeking to convince consumers to have extensive removal work, or in some cases a new roof, at costs of between £5-12k. Some consumers also reported being offered claims management services. Intelligence indicated that a list of consumers has been offered for sale with details of 17,000 consumers who have had spray foam insulation installed, in order that claims management or removal services can be marketed to these consumers.

TSS took focused disruption activity to tackle this issue with the aim of preventing ongoing and widespread consumer detriment. As a result two companies ceased to trade. Intelligence sharing with the HMRC will provide further outcomes. The strategy adopted is ongoing and will continue to identify new traders who seek to mislead consumers into wasting their money unnecessarily.

Trading Standards services are not currently working with any spray foam removal companies in Scotland

Any letters or cold calls suggesting otherwise are likely to be scams

#TurnDownEnergyScams



Operation Rora



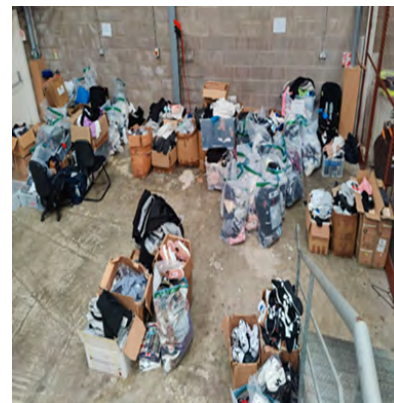
Operation Rora concerns the investigation into an individual who was identified as selling large quantities of counterfeit goods both from a retail premise and online.

Intelligence suggested that several storage and retail locations were being used to store large quantities of counterfeit clothing, shoes and accessories.

Further Intelligence development indicated the subject was also sending goods by post on a regular basis. Online surveillance and an analysis of payment methods confirmed this position. TSS working with Police Scotland provided additional actionable information following an onsite test purchase, leading to application of warrants, for two separate locations.

A day of action was undertaken with support from the local Trading Standards Service and in partnership with Police Scotland's Serious and Organised Crime Team based in Glasgow.

The subject was arrested and interviewed by Police following the recovery of counterfeit goods with a retail value of more than £1 million. Officers from TSS undertook post arrest action that further identified both supplier and transit routes that were shared with enforcement colleagues in the North West of England.



Operation Gartley



This investigation concerned a company that was fitting wood burning stoves without apparent proper regard to safety issues with the potential for offences beyond miss selling, such as reckless endangerment.

Research indicated the subject was previously convicted and fined in 2018 for admitting that he knowingly or recklessly engaged in a practice that contravened professional diligence and left consumers at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Despite the conviction, the subject set up a new Facebook page running his business from there, offering what appeared to be under-priced supply and installation services.

TSS identified a number of previous complaints from installations that were either condemned as unsafe or had to be rectified by certified installers. A case was submitted to Crown providing a secure evidential sample which shows a course of conduct and whilst the subject is no longer trading, the fact installers do not need to be 'HETAS' certified in Scotland leaves a weakness in the system.

If a trader has installed a product in your home and you think it is poorly done or dangerous, you are entitled to ask them to return and repair the issue

If they don't do this you may be entitled to seek a refund or price reduction



Be a #ConfidentConsumer
Know Your Rights, Know You're Right

Operation Tewel



This operation relates to a roofing company who have undertaken work across Scotland with a well-known 'MO' of providing low quotes for necessary work and thereafter inflating the price.

This operation concerns two companies who appear to operate in tandem whereby one company is noted as receiving payment transfer for poor quality work conducted by the other and thereafter carrying out remedial work for poor quality work, although poor standards of work continue to be reported.

The investigation has revealed a network of individuals working across the country and securing identification of those individuals has been challenging. A case will be reported to the Crown now that there is sufficient evidence.



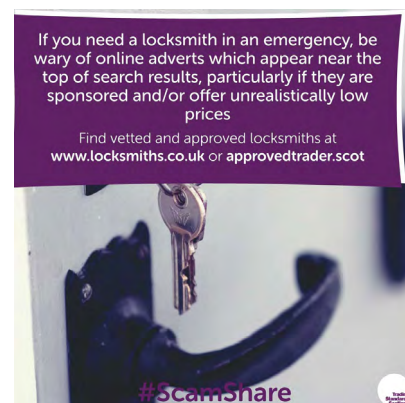
Operations Midmar, Committed & Iguana



Over the course of the year, we have undertaken three investigations in relation to emergency call out services. Two of these relate to locksmiths and one to plumbers.

In all three, the consumer identifies the business through an internet search that brings the relevant company up at the top. The companies, based outside Scotland, act as a booking service for local tradespeople. The consumer receives a quote for a reasonable price but when the tradesperson arrives, the price increases dramatically and there are often aggressive sales practices.

Due to the distributed nature of the operating model, there are issues with identifying individuals to take enforcement action against. TSS will continue to work to tackle this business model.



Operation Whinnyfold



This operation refers to a second-hand car dealer operating across four separate Local Authority areas. The company consistently featured in Tactical Assessments throughout the past two years as a problem trader.

TSS worked with West Lothian Trading Standards to carry out a joint day of action in respect of a forecourt inspection with an external examiner. TSS provided the funding for the examiner who gave an expert view on the roadworthiness of the vehicles being displayed for sale.

This action was undertaken along with Police Scotland on 12th November 2024. During the day of action, TSS and West Lothian TS looked at 25 vehicles at random being offered for sale in respect of safety and general roadworthiness. In addition, TSS undertook to view the sales and advertising practices of the business, after sales service and complaints procedures and records held in respect of these.

Of the 25 vehicles offered for sale that were inspected, 23 were not roadworthy and were temporarily withdrawn from sale via the use of Withdrawal/Suspension Notices provided and issued by West Lothian Trading Standards officers.

West Lothian undertook monitoring of the suspension notices and provided the trader with business advice.

TSS Presentation & Training to Police Scotland's Control Room



In spring 2024 TSS provided an awareness session to Police Scotland Superintendents forum, with a view to establishing an improved understanding of our work at the strategic level, across Scotland.

As a result, the team were invited to provide presentations directly to officers who are tasked with both direct call taking and call resolution.

TSS carried out over 20 presentations to all Police Control Room Staff across Scotland. The subjects covered included:-

- Intelligence sharing
- Common scams and Fair Trading Offences
- Doorstep Sales
- Rogue Traders
- Common Aggressive Sales Techniques
- Bogus Traders vs Fraud
- Case Studies representing real life work and results
- Illegal Money Lending

Other associated gains include having been given access to the officers responsible for updating new Standard Operating Protocol's on dealing with fraud and trading standards issues together with consultation on their content which is used to inform front line officers

It was identified that there was a poor awareness of the existence of TSS at practitioner level, together with a limited understanding of the associated offences and positive outcomes which can be achieved by addressing consumer protection offences. Officers also had little knowledge of Advice Direct Scotland (ADS) as a reporting gateway for consumers.

As a result of this work TSS has received referrals from Police Scotland which have led to the establishment of ongoing investigations.

Scottish Communications Group



This group was set up during 2024/25 and met for the first time in Q1.

The Group was established to help facilitate better joined up working as well as providing a platform for the identification of partners who may be able to collaborate and support upcoming awareness raising work. Membership of the group includes TSS, Citizens Advice Scotland, ADS, Consumer Scotland and SCOTSS.

The Group has continued to meet every 6 weeks to share upcoming campaign plans as well as focussing in on a piece of work being developed by one of the partners. This has provided an opportunity for the partners to give an overview of what they are working on as well as facilitating connection to any partners they would like to involve in the piece of work. Ultimately, this meeting provides a platform for sharing ideas and helping connect one another to additional stakeholders.

Shut Out Scammers Campaign



Shut out Scammers is the yearly campaign coordinated in partnership by Trading Standards Scotland (TSS) and Police Scotland to raise awareness of, and prevent doorstep crime.

It is delivered and promoted across Scotland by local authority trading standards services and local police divisions.

Some of the highlights of the 2024 campaign include:

- Each year we are continuing to build our reach to consumers:

2022 – the campaign reached 1.2 million consumers

2023 – the campaign reached 1.9 million consumers

2024 – this year the campaign reached over 2 million consumers.

- 1 million consumers viewed the campaign advert
- 776,000 consumers reached on digital platforms
- 169 new subscribers to the ScamShare bulletin
- 77 partners participated in the campaign
- 627 uses of #ShutOutScammers
- 42 news articles and websites featured the campaign



Turn Down Energy Scams Campaign



TSS launched their annual Turn Down Energy Scams campaign on the second week of September.

Scammers continue to target those looking to reduce their bills and make their homes more energy efficient by providing misleading information about the efficiency of different measures, the availability of grants and funding and the safety of consumers' existing energy efficiency measures.

As such, the key aim of this year's energy campaign was to empower consumers and to raise awareness of the mis-selling of energy efficiency or energy saving products, particularly in advance of rising energy bills during the autumn/winter months. Area Based Schemes were also highlighted as part of the campaign.

The campaign was supported with a full social media toolkit, downloadable materials from our website and various information leaflets available to local authorities and partners. In addition, following funding from Consumer Scotland, the [2023 advert](#) was shown again on STV.

Around 1,169,473 consumers were reached during 2024 campaign.



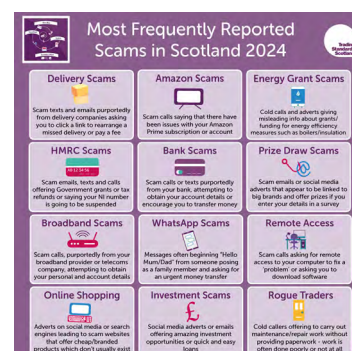
Big Scottish Scams Survey



The third Big Scottish Scam Survey ran throughout June and July 2024.

The aim of the survey was to find out more about the most commonly experienced scams in Scotland, in order to inform the content of future scams awareness campaigns. Some highlights from the Survey include:

- **Delivery scams have remained the most commonly experienced scams across the three surveys**
- **WhatsApp scams have become more prevalent each year**
- **2024 has seen an increase in scams related to medical/mobility aids as well as ticketing scams, rogue traders, courier fraud and buyer scams on online marketplaces**
- **81% of respondents had avoided a scam after reading or hearing information about it. This compares to 79% in both 2023 and 2022**
- **48% of respondents who experienced a scam had reported it. This compares to 47% in 2023 and 41% in 2022**
- **11% of respondents had lost money to a scam in the past year. This compares to 8% in 2023 and 7% in 2022**



A-Z of Scams



A-Z of Scams

As scammers continue to attempt to exploit people’s anxieties around rising costs throughout the festive period, TSS launched their A-Z of common scams in December.

One scam was highlighted on social media from the 1st to the 26th of December, with a variety of online, phone, email, text and doorstep scams covered. The campaign has now been running for three years and continues to grow in popularity.

More information can be found at www.tsscot.co.uk/a-z-scams



Telecare and the Switchover from Analogue to Digital



TSS has been working closely with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government to develop a scam prevention piece of work to raise awareness about telecare scam calls amongst both consumers and Alarm Receiving Centre officers.

TSS has been working closely with the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government to develop a scam prevention piece of work to raise awareness about telecare scam calls amongst both consumers and Alarm Receiving Centre officers.

Since 2022 we have been seeing an increasing number of scam phone calls associated with telecare devices across the country - community alarms, medical emergency panic buttons, wristbands and pendants. These calls are particularly worrying as they target vulnerable consumers. TSS recently found that 900 scam calls about medical alarms were received by trueCall users over just two months in 2024. Several Scottish local authorities have issued warnings about them, and TSS have included warnings in their regular Scams Bulletin.

Typically, scammers cold call those who already use a telecare device and claim to be from the local council, the NHS, a local health team or a company selling personal alarm packages. They tell the resident that their current alarm is obsolete and needs to be replaced or upgraded. The resident is encouraged to act quickly to ensure the alarm stays active – they must provide their personal and payment details over the phone.

If the resident doesn’t have a telecare device the scammer tells them that due to either their age or a medical condition they are entitled to receive a ‘free’ medical alarm or panic button. Although the device they are offering is supposedly free, they ask for card details to cover the nominal £1 installation fee and ongoing subscription costs.

In many cases the scammers have details about the person they are phoning, such as their name and age.

The scammers pitch seems plausible because there is a currently major switch going on from analogue to digital telephone across the country. As part of this process, local authorities are upgrading their telecare alarms to new digital models, but this is being done free of charge.

The following infographic has now been shared with telecoms companies including BT, EE and Virgin and it will be available for consumers attending their public information sessions. The National Scams Team have subsequently adapted the infographic with relevant information for consumers in England and Wales. Finally, a copy of the infographic will be included when new consumers sign up to telecare. TSS will also explore other opportunities for sharing other relevant information when consumers join telecare including information on mobility aids.

What is the Digital Switchover?

By January 2027, all analogue phone lines in the UK will be switched to a digital network. This will affect those who use telecare, such as personal alarm pendants or buttons, as most of these telecare devices use the analogue landline network.

The safety of telecare users is at the heart of the switchover. However, some criminals are taking advantage of uncertainty about the digital switchover to target telecare users and provide misleading information about their devices. They may use scam phone calls or emails to try to obtain users' personal and bank details.

If I have a telecare device, how will it be switched to a digital network?

No telecare users will be migrated to digital services unless they have a compatible and functioning telecare solution in place. Your telecare provider should send you information detailing how the switchover will work. **Local Authorities and their home care alarm providers or contractors will NEVER ask for personal or financial information over the phone.**

If you receive an unexpected call and are asked to provide personal or financial details in order to switch to a digital service, do not give the caller any information. If in doubt, contact your telecare provider.

How can I recognise scam calls?

Some common examples of scams related to telecare devices include:

- A cold caller saying that your current telecare system is obsolete and/or needs to be upgraded. They ask you to provide your bank details in order to pay for the upgrade
- A cold caller asking you to pay over the phone to receive a new telecare device
- A cold caller saying they are working on behalf of the local authority to upgrade personal alarm systems and asking you to confirm personal and payment details

Where Can I Find Trusted Information?

Telecare Providers:
If you have any questions about how the digital switchover will work for you, contact your telecare provider.

Digital Telecare for Scottish Local Government:
Find trusted and up to date information about how the digital switchover will work at <https://telecare.digitaloffice.scot>

Advice Direct Scotland:
In Scotland, report all scams to Advice Direct Scotland by calling 0808 164 6000 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) or online at scamwatch.scot

08 Finance

£1.215million
TSS Grant Funding
for 2024/25

The total grant for TSS from the Department for Business and Trade for 2024/25 was £1,215,000.

In December 2024 an additional £85,843 was provided by DBT for additional areas of work in relation to call blocking and work to tackle sales of counterfeit goods.

The governance arrangements for the team ensure robust financial management, with the team seeking approval for financial planning from the board and also reporting their accounts through the COSLA audit committee.

Total spend for the year was **100%** of the grant allocation.

Table 1 shows the overall spend for 2024/25, Table 2 provides a breakdown by area and Table 3 shows a breakdown of spend by quarter.

Table 1:
Overall
Spend for
2024/25

2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Actual Spend	2024/25 Variance
£1,215,000 + £85,843 = £1,300,843	£1,300,843	0

Table 2:
Spend by
Area

Operational	£519,330
Intelligence & Coordination	£344,452
Management	£351,519
Additional Funding	£85,543
Total	£1,215,000

Full Year Proportion of Spend

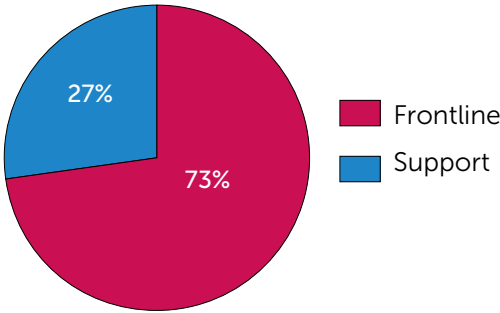


Table 3:
Spend by
Quarter

SCOTTISH ENFORCEMENT GRANT 2024-25: £1,215,000			
GRANT HOLDER: COSLA			
	Profile Forecast	Grant Claim	Variance
Q1 (Apr-Jun)	£300,000	£300,419	-£491
Q2 (Jul-Sep)	£300,000	£262,234	£37,766
Q3 (Oct-Dec)	£300,000	£314,204	-£14,204
Q4 (Jan-Mar)	£338,000	£338,071	-£71
	Total Funding 2024/25	Total Spend	Variance
Cumulative	£1,215,000	£1,215,000	£0

09 Future Developments for 2025/26

Focused Disruption Activity

TSS have started a more proactive disruption approach to tackling consumer detriment.

Disruption tactics are measures that seek to hamper the ability of an individual or a business to continue trading and can range from disrupting their supply chains to taking actions that limit their personal ability to go about their business. This proactive approach can result in a much quicker cessation in problematic activity however all action taken must be proportionate and therefore a careful examination of risk is required.

Disruption tactics have successfully been used to reduce consumer detriment caused by businesses involved in the sale, fitting and removal of spray foam and with a company supplying voltage optimisers. The tactics have led to the businesses ceasing to trade and in some instances returning money to affected consumers. Over the course of the coming year we will continue to develop and refine this approach. This will require close partnership working with a number of other enforcement agencies and private companies.

Intelligence also shows that there are a number of individuals in Scotland who move from one problematic business to another. These individuals are generally responsible for misleading and high-pressure sales tactics. During 2025/26 TSS will focus attention on these individuals, rather than the businesses that they work for, utilising disruption tactics in order to make it difficult for them to continue to cause consumer harm.

DMCC Act Civil Provisions

The Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024 introduces new provisions relating to civil enforcement.

As TSS are not general enforcers, we do not have the powers to use these provisions unless we work in partnership with local authorities.

To date, despite an appetite from trading standards services to do so, the use of civil enforcement provisions in Scotland has not been widespread. This is, in part, due to limited capacity within local authority legal services teams. In order to ensure that these new civil provisions are used effectively in Scotland we will develop a proposal, in conjunction with SCOTSS, to establish a central legal resource to support this work. Initial work on this has already commenced with an assessment of problematic traders operating across Scotland who are causing widespread consumer detriment but not meeting the threshold for a criminal prosecution being prepared.

Shut Out Scammers Campaign Development

For 2025, based on both the previously commissioned ScotPulse data and analysis of the 2024 messaging, Shut out Scammers will launch in spring leading with maintenance and home improvement scams.

Local authorities have suggested having a variety of giveaways for consumers when the van is out and about. Suggestions included pens and trolley coins, with details of the ADS helpline to ensure consumers have this to hand and for subliminal reinforcement. There may be an opportunity for TSS to work on this collaboratively with ADS.

In relation to the awareness raising van, TSS will be developing an improved system of allocation and booking. This will also include a handover checklist for those receiving the van to sign off on to ensure the vehicle and its contents within, remain in good condition and any defects are recorded at an early stage. TSS will also be looking to update the van with the recognisable Shut out Scammers umbrella logo.

TSS will consider how we can maximise working with local authority Trusted Trader and Approved Trader Schemes.

For the 2025 campaign, the team will also be highlighting messaging about the links between mental health and scams, linking in with COSLA colleagues who lead on mental health to ensure consistency of language.

TSS will link in with SEPA on their waste collection campaign as a consumer was recently fined £1800 because their waste was dumped and traced by to them.

Know your Rights

Over the past year, TSS has been aware of a drop in actionable intelligence coming through to the team, particularly in relation to doorstep crime. Whilst Operation QUEENSBERRY has been an excellent example of joint working and intelligence sharing between TSS and Police Scotland, the team are always considering ways to increase reporting amongst consumers. One of the ways in which the team are looking to progress this is through the development of a new awareness campaign on consumer rights.

TSS is also keen to look at how we embed more of an early intervention approach as often complaints often focus at the end result and authorities only become aware of an issue once the sales and installation process is complete. However, the aggressive sales practices which are often used to ensure a sale are not being reported.

In order to try to address this, TSS is in the process of developing a 'Know your Rights' campaign which draws on the practices identified in Part 3 of the DMCC Act that cause consumer detriment. The campaign will focus on the selling tactics traders may use to coerce consumers into agreeing to a sale. The campaign will aim to ensure that consumers are alert to these aggressive sales practices and what to do if they encounter these.

The key aims of the campaign are to:

- Increase awareness of consumer rights in relation to purchases and contracts with cold callers, online sellers or salespeople;
- Increase awareness of where to find legitimate and trusted information on issues such as consumer rights, dispute resolution, trusted traders, finances and reporting issues;
- Encourage consumers to report consumer issues and scams to the appropriate organisation and increase awareness of these organisations;
- Encourage people to talk to neighbours, family and friends about scams and consumer issues; and
- Increase awareness of the Approved Trader scheme, the ADS ScamShare tool, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland Alerts and the ScamShare bulletin

In addition to the social media campaign, DBT additional funding will allow the team to undertake a range of additional awareness raising activities including:

- The production of an advert for television which will air at primetime on STV throughout April 2025;
- The commissioning of pre and post campaign research via ScotPulse; and
- Working with Quantum Communications to deliver targeted and proactive engagement to press and new steams across Scotland.

ReciteMe



TSS are currently in the process of updating both the Trading Standards Scotland and Scottish Illegal Money Lending Unit websites.

As part of this, the team are keen to ensure the website is accessible to allow all consumers to utilise the materials and have been working with ReciteMe to enable this. Consumers accessing the website will then be able to convert text to speech, change the font and background to make easier reading and translate the content into 136 different languages. The team will then be able to promote the new feature through our social media channels and the ScamShare Bulletin.

As highlighted in recent ScotPulse findings, 82% of consumers responded that they would go online for information so it's vital our information is accessible to all.

10 Glossary

COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CPP	Consumer Protection Partnership
CPRs	Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
CTSI	Chartered Trading Standards Institute
DBT	Department for Business and Trade
DMCC	Digital Markets Competition and Consumers Act 2024
IDB	Intelligence Database
IPO	Intellectual Property Office
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LATSS	Local Authority Trading Standards Service
LILLO	Local Intelligence Liaison Officer
MATDB	Multi Agency Tasking & Development Board
SCOTSS	Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland
SG	Scottish Government
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SOLAR	Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators
SSPCA	Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
TAC	Tactical Tasking and Coordinating Meeting
TSS	Trading Standards Scotland



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