



Trading safety

A survey of trading standards teams

May 2018



Contents

Introduction	3
Key points	3
Report Summary	4
Background	8
Brexit	10
Survey and qualifications	12
Budgets	14
Non-filling of vacancies	15
Sharing equipment	16
Cuts in jobs and hours	17
Loss of skills and experience	18
Future concerns	19
Workloads	20
Work changes	22
More scams and rogue traders	23
Reactive not proactive	24
Under pressure	25
Unpaid work	27
Morale	29
The future	32
Final comments	34
Conclusion	35



Introduction

This survey is part of UNISON Scotland's Damage series: a programme of surveys looking at the impact of the age of austerity on services and those who deliver them. *Trading Safety* takes a closer look at the issues affecting staff in local authority trading standards teams.

Trading standards is an essential local government service protecting consumers, enforcing safety legislation and supporting legitimate business to ensure public safety.

While trading standards perform a number of functions locally, all 31 services:

- enforce fair trading
- combat illegal trading
- monitor product safety
- address under-age sales
- verify weights and measures.

In day-to-day terms this means ensuring that the things we buy are safe, are in the correct amounts, are as described on the packaging, that price displays are fair and we are not overcharged.

Key points

- Members are struggling to deliver a high quality service
- Budgets have been cuts by 12% since 2012/13. An earlier report from the improvement service states that cuts amount to 21% "over the last five years"
- The number of trading standards officers has dropped by 23% since 2012/13. There have also been substantial job cuts for other roles in the teams
- This is an ageing workforce, experienced staff are retiring/being made redundant and fewer young people are getting the opportunity to start a career in trading standards meaning there will be a skills shortage in the future
- Brexit will increase workload substantially but the cuts continue
- 70% of respondents indicated that morale was low or very low in their teams and 78% stated that they do not expect it to improve in the next few years.



Report summary

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Government choices mean that local government services have taken a disproportionate share of the cuts: 90 per cent of jobs lost in the public sector have been in local government services. Within those services the government's priorities mean that other services have experienced massive cuts. The Trading Standards Update¹ report to COSLA by Colin Mair of the improvement services state that trading standards has "declined in financial and capacity terms across the last twenty years and quite rapidly across the last five years (21%)".

Responses to our freedom of information request to local authorities indicate that this year's budget is 12% less than in 2012-13 and six per cent less than 2016-17. Numbers of trading standards officers have dropped by 23% since 2012-13 and six per cent since 2016-17. It was more difficult to get a clear picture of the numbers in the wider staff teams as many authorities have changed how teams operated and many are sharing staff and functions with other teams within the authority now.



¹ http://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/17-11-24_item_13a_ts_strat_review_appendix.pdf



When we asked members about their team's budgets the vast majority of members stated that their team's budget had been cut this year and over the last five years. This year 23% believed there had been severe cuts and 47% believed the cuts had been severe over the last five years. A further 47% stated that there had been cuts this year while 48% stated there had been cuts over the last five years. Only two per cent stated that the budget had increased this year and one per cent over the last five years.

Staff are under substantial pressure to try and maintain a quality service with less staff and resources. Work is now spread over fewer staff and some work has just stopped e.g consumer advice at a local authority level. Cuts mean that travel budgets are severely restricted which makes actually getting out and about to check things difficult. This gives rogue traders free rein to scam citizens. Training budgets have also been restricted meaning that while dangers and crime are rapidly evolving trading standards teams are struggling to keep up.

Trading standards teams have responded to the staff shortages in a number of ways. Members indicate that teams now struggle to undertake some of the specialist roles such as animal health. Members are concerned about the loss of specialist knowledge and experience as it's usually the staff with the longest service who volunteer to go. Most struggle with heavy workloads and therefore their work is much more reactive rather than proactive: dealing with things that have gone wrong rather than preventing them. Teams have had to adapt and find new ways of working.

We also asked about the number of vacancies and any problems or delays in filling posts. There are serious concerns about the future of the trading standards service without new people coming in and also the lack of opportunities for training and experience for the younger staff to enable them to replace the older staff when they leave.

Responses to our FOI indicated 18 vacancies across Scotland which again adds to staff shortages in the teams. While 12 per cent of respondents stated that there was a vacancy freeze in their authority where jobs are being advertised only five per cent of respondents stated that posts were easy to fill. 31per cent stated that posts were hard to fill and 13 per cent stated that posts were filled with less qualified staff.





The vast majority of respondents (78%) indicated that their workload had got heavier in the last few years while only two per cent felt it had got lighter. Members indicate that the sheer volume of work is causing problems. There just aren't enough people to do what needs to be done. This leads to delays and a reduced level of service. They also report, as in many of our other surveys, that the loss of senior staff means that work that was previously done by those at a higher level is now pushed down onto staff on lower grades.

The other issue that was raised was the impact of the loss of administrative and clerical support on the workload of those who now have to do all of this work themselves on top of a growing workload. Members also indicate that their work is much more reactive and that there are increasing numbers of scams to deal with.

The majority of respondents (60%) state that they are skipping breaks, staying late or taking work home in order to keep on top of their workload. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) stated that they were doing unpaid work frequently. Some indicated they were not able to use up all their leave entitlement. While some may think that getting work for nothing from public servants is a great thing it's not the way to ensure the delivery of a quality service. Work life balance isn't about just about having free time. In order to function properly at work and do a good job you need to avoid exhaustion, you need appropriate breaks in your working day, and out with it, to recharge, to relax so that you can focus and deliver. While 39% stated that they rarely did unpaid work, comments revealed that many of those were overworked but had made a conscious decision to no longer take work home or skip breaks because they were so unhappy and stressed about their workload and that it was clear that no matter how much you did work just kept on coming.

Staff in trading standards teams are finding their working lives very difficult. Over 70 per cent indicated that morale in their teams was low or very low with only six per cent saying it was good. The biggest issue raised regarding morale was budgets cuts. Many say that they don't feel valued and that senior staff in their authority do not recognise the importance of trading standards. Not only is a heavy workload difficult, worrying about the problems you know aren't being dealt with also puts pressure on staff.

Uncertainty about the future is also a key issue, they have already been through a range of cuts and reorganisations and can see that more are on the way. Many are concerned about further cuts and how the service can, or will, be provided going forward. While, as yet, nothing has come of the trading standards review and the proposals for either regional or a national service, the lack of any decisions also adds to feelings of uncertainty. Brexit, its implications for regulatory regimes and lack of clarity as yet as to whether and which powers will return to the UK or Scottish governments also adds to this uncertainty.





Respondents also indicate that lack of access to training is also impacting on staff morale. In such a fast moving and safety critical environment staff need training in order to keep on top of the risks. Members also indicate that poor communication by leaders in their authorities also has a huge impact on staff morale. There seems to be a widespread feeling that senior leaders in the authority do not value or understand the vital role of trading standards. As in many of our surveys where staff indicate that morale is good, that is about good managers and teamwork.

While so far media discussions on Brexit haven't focused on the detail the forthcoming changes in trade regulations will have a significant impact on trading standards operations in the UK. Trade relations and the regulatory regime in the UK have been managed through the EU for over 40 years. That is all about to change. There will be a period of uncertainty where business, particularly SMEs, and citizens will need advice and support. The promised new trade deals with countries outwith the EU will create new partners and so new regulatory requirements.

In its search for new trade partners the UK will need to be able to reassure trade partners that there is a regulatory regime in place to ensure that agreements will be met and trading standards should play a huge role in that. Particularly around fair trading environment and protection of intellectual property. There is a real risk that cuts to trading standards will impact on their ability to do this work and therefore there is a substantial risk to future trade negotiations and the ability to attract new businesses to the UK.

Many members raised concerns about the ageing nature of trading standards teams and the problems that are being stored up for the future by not replacing those who retire. There will soon be a substantial loss of expertise and experience and the lack of recruitment means that there are few people currently building up that expertise for the future. The trading standards review currently being undertaken by the Improvement Service also raises concerns about both the ageing of the trading standards teams and the impact of substantial budget cuts. This is an ageing workforce - experienced staff are retiring/being made redundant - and fewer, if any, young people are getting the opportunity to start a career in trading standards meaning there will be a skills shortage in the future.

Again we see a highly-dedicated workforce exhausted and demoralised by austerity. Staff are working hard to protect citizens from financial and physical harm. They support businesses by ensuring that they aren't undercut by fraudsters and those who don't follow the rules. They are dedicated highly-qualified teams who are under enormous pressure. They feel exhausted, undervalued and are struggling to deal with the demands placed upon them.





Background

This survey is part of UNISON Scotland's Damage series: a programme of surveys looking at the impact of the age of austerity on services and those who deliver them. *Trading Safety* takes a closer look at the issues affecting staff in local authority trading standards teams. The survey was conducted in January 2018.

What trading standards do:

Trading standards is an essential local government service protecting consumers, enforcing legislation and support legitimate business to ensure public safety.

While trading standards perform a number of different functions locally, all 31 services:

- enforce fair trading
- combat illegal trading
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That people cannot buy items that are banned in the UK or they are not the legal age to use. That retailers are properly licensed to sell the goods they stock and are meeting the license conditions. This includes fireworks and tobacco. Enforcing legislation on selling dangerous fireworks or selling them to children is a great example of their vital role in protecting citizens from serious injury.

That businesses aren't increasing profits by selling smaller weights and volumes than we have paid for or are sourcing counterfeit goods or items which don't meet safety standards. Trading standards teams check that the measures you get in the pub are correct and that the spirit in the bottle is the brand you are paying for - not a cheaper alternative, that when you buy a litre of fuel that you are getting a full litre.

This protects both citizens and legitimate businesses who are undercut by those who can charge less by not following the rules.

Regulations are in place to protect us all but they are meaningless without enforcement. This requires a fully-resourced trading standards service. Cuts to trading standards bring considerable risks. Counterfeit tobacco products are extremely dangerous. Fake branded perfumes, cosmetics and creams are a considerable risk to anyone who puts them on their skin. Taking food processed for animal consumption like seeds and nuts for birds and then selling to humans increases profits but puts people at serious health risk. Substituting horse meat for beef etc means that people are not getting what they paid for and are eating something they would not want to consume.

The internet makes it much easier for consumers and retailers to source goods from all round the world. This places increased demands on trading standards as goods which do not meet European safety standards are arriving daily in people's homes and direct to retailers. Unscrupulous or just poorly informed retailers can put the public at serious risk through not just food and beauty products but also electrical goods not suited to the levels of electricity from UK outlets. These can, and do, then explode or catch fire.



Trading standards also work closely with the police services identifying rogue traders. Vulnerable and not so vulnerable, people are at risk from rogue traders who are either not producing work of a safe standard or are actively defrauding people out of money or use the offers of service to gain access to their homes to then steal from them.

There is also the growing range of online and direct mail scams where people are losing hundreds of thousands of pounds to criminals. The Herald reported people in Scotland lost £7m in phone scams in just one year².

They also have to identify businesses like home traders to ensure that they are meeting all the appropriate legislation. They also deal with a range of issues regarding animal health. These are vital roles protecting the public from financial and physical harm.

Much of the legislation that they are involved with is currently European and therefore the UK leaving the EU has a considerable impact on their work. Trade relations have been managed through the EU for some time with consistent standards. Leaving the EU will lead to new regulatory requirements and could lead to variations. There will also be the need to guarantee a fair trading environment as part of new trade deals, protection for intellectual property. Cuts to trading standards threaten this vital enforcement role.

Sadly, despite the growth in their workloads and the implications of leaving the European Union about to add more, these teams are experiencing severe budget and jobs cuts. Members are under enormous pressure trying to manage their workloads and protect the public.

Like all public services, trading standards teams have experienced budget cuts leading to job losses and at the same time they are also experiencing a range of increased demand. There is little sign of any increase in resources in the near future. The overall block grant will continue to fall until 20/21. Austerity is having a seriously detrimental impact on the ability of trading standards teams to protect both the public and business.

² Scots Robbed of £7m by phone scams in just a year. The Herald 21st February 2018

Brexit

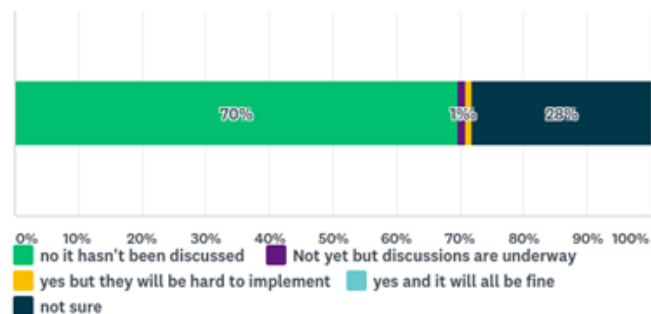
While so far media discussions on Brexit haven't focused on the detail, the forthcoming changes in trade regulations will have a significant impact on trading standards operations in the UK. Trade relations and the regulatory regime in the UK has been managed through the EU for over 40 years. That is all about to change. While it's not yet clear quite what changes there will be in regulatory frameworks and how much deregulation will occur, it is clear that there will be a period of uncertainty where business, particularly SME, and citizens will need advice and support. The promised new trade deals with countries outwith the EU will create new partners and so new regulatory requirements.

In its search for new trade partners, the UK will need to be able to reassure trade partners that there is a regulatory regime in place to ensure that agreements will be met and trading standards should play a huge role in that. Particularly around fair trading environment and protection of intellectual property. There is a real risk that cuts to trading standards will impact on their ability to do this work and therefore a substantial risk to future trade negotiations, future jobs and the wider economy.

We therefore asked members if there was work underway to prepare their authority for the impact of Brexit.

While members did state that there may be discussions/planning underway that they were not aware of with so little time left before Brexit it is concerning that staff aren't more involved in planning for such substantial change. There needs to be a much clearer picture of the resources that will be required to deal with Brexit in this sense and consideration as to how that will be funded.

Q12 Does your employer have plans in place for the changes in regulatory regimes following Brexit?



Comments

- *As far as I know [our] employer is aware of potential changes and our manager on a Brexit Think Tank so [they] will be keeping them and us abreast of matters.*
- *The impact will be huge. CTSI are leading on this to some extent. There will be a lot of unpredictable effects of Brexit when the support and liaison bodies in the EU are no longer there.*
- *No discussions have been made. But members of the department do have great concerns of the workloads, problems and blatant flaunts of the law that are likely to occur when the UK government removes us from the EU law standards. We are expecting to have to give a massive amount of help and advice on how to navigate a potentially instantly changing legal horizon.*



- *There is a lack of information on this passed down*
- *I'm not aware of any local discussions although I'm aware that there is a National Trading Standards Brexit think tank discussing some issues*
- *Given our small size as a Council service I would not expect much from my employer. I would however expect a lot of dialogue and planning within CTSI and SCOTSS though and this has already begun.*
- *Brexit has never been mentioned*



Survey and qualifications

Survey responses

The survey asked members a range of questions regarding their working lives. The current debate around public sector finance has become very confusing; with claim and counterclaim around levels of cuts and job losses; using different starting points for comparisons and using lack of clarity round capital and revenue spend. The Damage series attempts to add more detail to the figures and let people hear directly from workers about whether budgets and staffing levels are adequate to deliver a high quality service.

We conducted the survey of members using a questionnaire via Survey Monkey and encouraged them to leave comments to expand on their answers. We also made a freedom of information request to all local authorities to get more detailed information on trading standards budgets and staff numbers.

UNISON surveyed a range of members working in trading standards teams across Scottish local authorities in January 2018. Respondents worked in a range of roles including enforcement officers, consumer advice officers, fair trading officers, trading standards officers, managers and team leaders. 55 five per cent of respondents identified as female and 45 per cent as male.

Qualifications

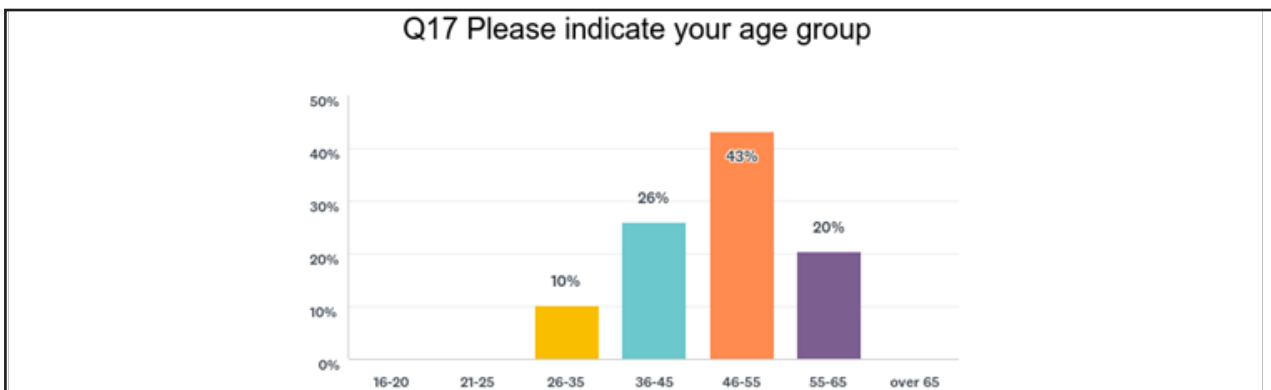
We asked members what qualifications they hold.



Many have degrees in consumer affairs, Trading Standards Diplomas, and specific technical qualifications to enable them to, for example, carry out weights and measures checks.

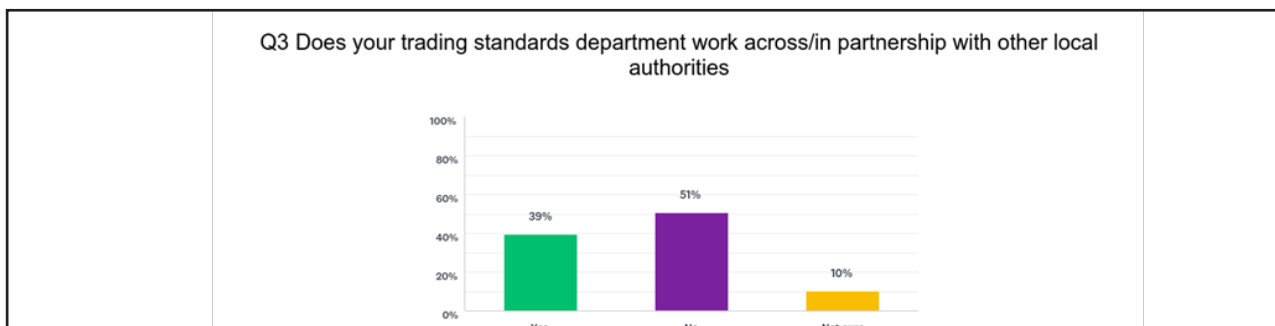
Trading standards teams are highly qualified staff with a range of specialist skills. As the vacancies question revealed, where there are vacancies authorities are often struggling to find qualified staff. Authorities/the government need to make this an attractive job and career if we are to expect people to get a degree and/or take on a trainee role with continued study. This is a vital role in protecting citizens and businesses from fraud and serious physical harm.

There were responses from members in 29 local authorities. Stirling and Clackmannanshire share a service hosted by Stirling so there are no staff in Clackmannanshire to take part.



The vast majority of respondents (43%) were aged between 46 and 55, with a further 20 per cent aged over 55. Many members raised concerns about the ageing nature of trading standards teams and the problems that are being stored up for the future by not replacing those who retire. There will soon be a substantial loss of expertise and experience and the lack of recruitment means that there are few people currently building up that expertise for the future. The trading standards review currently being undertaken by the Improvement Service also raises concerns about both the ageing of the trading standards teams and the impact of substantial budget cuts.

The vast majority of respondents had been working in their role for over ten years, and over 30% for over 20 years. This also supports the comments made by respondents later in the survey about the lack of new recruits and their concerns about breadth of expertise when the older staff retire/take voluntary severance.



In response to cuts authorities are trying to work with other authorities to try and find ways of protecting citizens. While only Stirling and Clackmannanshire are in a formal shared service arrangement almost 40% of respondents said that they were working with other authorities in some way. Despite half saying that they were not doing so the comments revealed that plans/discussions were already taking place so more may be doing so in future. The issue is whether this is joining up to provide a better service to citizens or as a result of budget cuts meaning there aren't the resources to deliver a proper service without sharing.



Budgets

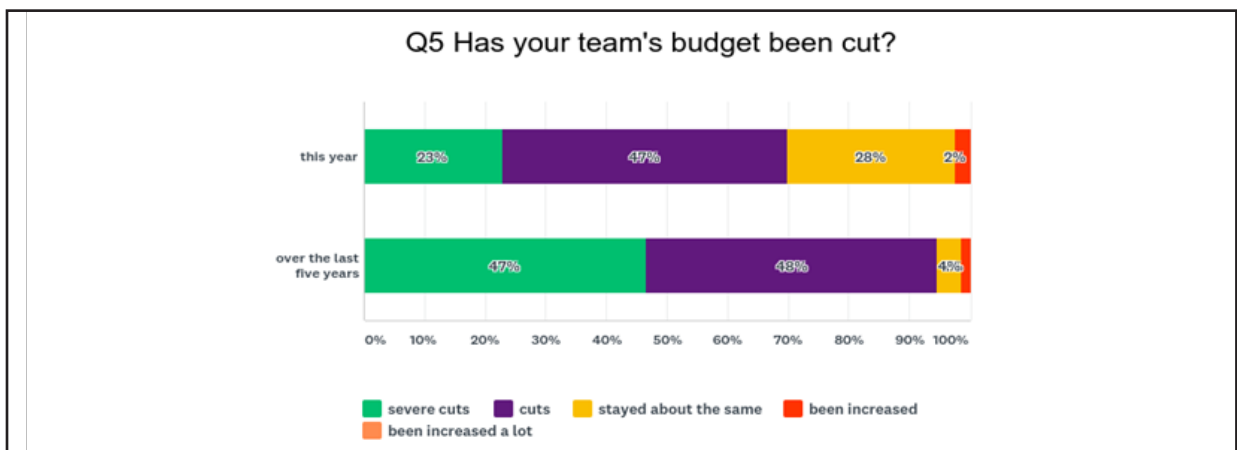
Government choices mean that local government services have taken a disproportionate share of the cuts: 90 per cent of jobs lost in the public sector have been in local government services. Within those services the government’s priorities mean that other services have experienced massive cuts.

The Trading Standards Update³ report to COSLA by Colin Mair of the Improvement Services state that trading standards has “declined in financial and capacity terms across the last 20 years and quite rapidly across the last five years (21%)”

Responses to our freedom of information request to local authorities indicate that this year’s budget is 12 per cent less than in 2012-13 and six per cent less than 2016-17. Numbers of trading standards officers have dropped by 23% since 2012-13 and six per cent since 2016-17. It was more difficult to get a clear picture of the numbers in the wider staff teams as many authorities have changed how teams operated and many are sharing staff and functions with other teams within the authority now.

Survey responses let you see beyond these figures to hear directly from members about what these budget cuts mean to those trying to maintain a high quality service for citizens.

When we asked members about their team’s budgets the vast majority of members stated that their team’s budget had been cut this year and over the last five years. This year 23% believed there had been severe cuts and 47% believed the cuts and been severe over the last five years. A further 47% stated that there had been cuts this year while 48% stated there had been cuts over the last 5 years.



Only 2% stated that the budget had increased this year and 1% over the last five years.



Members’ comments on the budget cuts focused on telling us about:

- the impact of cuts to budget specific within their teams,
- the impact of the non-filling of vacancies,
- redundancies, and
- that some work was no longer being undertaken.

Members are under substantial pressure to try and maintain a quality service with less staff and resources. Work is now spread over fewer staff and some work is no longer being undertaken. Cuts mean that travel budgets are severely restricted which makes actually getting out and about to check things difficult. Training budgets have also been restricted meaning that while dangers and crime are rapidly evolving, trading standards teams are struggling to keep up.

³http://www.cosla.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/17-11-24_item_13a_ts_strat_review_appendix.pdf



Non-filling of vacancies



Comments from members include

- *Lack of resources, [we dont have a] vehicle to carry out duties. Pool cars booking takes time and turned down if none available.*
- *cuts to specific budgets Less money available for training, test purchases, analysis/examination of goods, etc. Job freezes in place too, so lack of recruitment and less staff. All make it harder to carry out the job to its fullest.*
- *A lack of training on new legislation has made the job more difficult. As there are vacancies, savings have been made by not filling them.*
- *Cuts every year and the constant threat of more cuts - we have been 'under review' by the department for more 18 months - still no decision*
- *Over the past 5 years the budget has been reduced and every expenditure is questioned from PPE to attendance at training courses. Reduced staffing levels has increased the workload of existing staff.*
- *The budget for training has been cut, meaning transport and accommodation are no longer paid for so we miss out on training that is too far away to travel there and back in a day or that we cannot drive to (unless for specific training budgeted for at the beginning of the year). In addition, accommodation and transport costs are not permitted for TSI conferences, meaning we miss out on useful training and interaction with colleagues in other authorities.*
- *We have very little or no money available to us. We do not carry out sampling in terms of safety. Market Surveillance is a statutory requirement however we do not do it. We do not participate fully in projects as we cannot purchase items for testing. We have been unable to deal with a problem trader as we have no money available to us to store seized items.*

Non-filling of vacancies

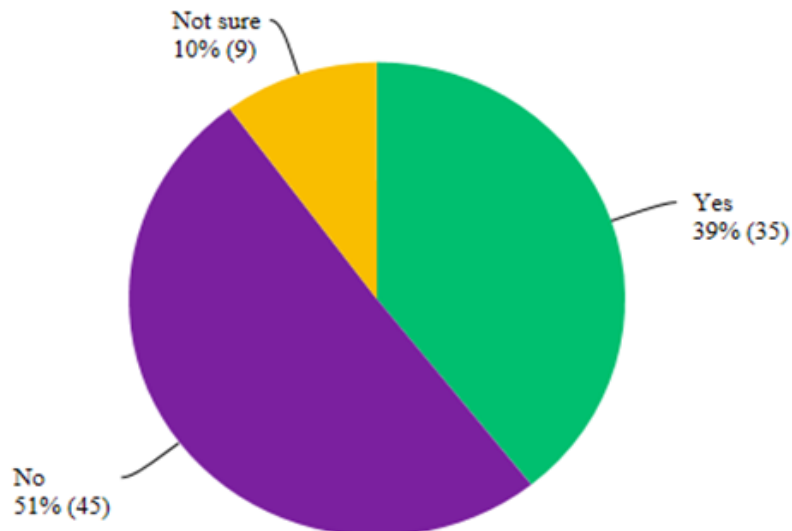
- *Team leader leftand the role hasn't been filled. Our assistant manager was also moved.... When people leave the work doesn't decrease it just gets spread around the remaining staff. Cuts in other departments such as Scientific Services have also impacted our Service.*
- *Overall the cuts have been made when someone (Usually experienced) has left and not been replaced. However, there is also a severe lack of trained/qualified people coming into the profession, so any new recruits have been inexperienced. This has demanded even more from the experienced staff to train the newer staff and services become spread ever more thinly.*
- *Reduced projects £ staff members retired - only recruiting manager now. Still down 2 positions*
- *Specialist officers not being replaced leaving remaining officers to take on these roles.*
- *2 officers have moved to other roles in the Dept but there previous post has not been filled. One of our 3 Teamleaders have left and their post has not been filled.*
- *In the last 18 months there have been two unfilled posts following staff retirements. The work performed by these staff members has had to be taken on by remaining staff.*



Sharing equipment

Does your employer work across/in partnership with any other councils?

Over half of respondents (51%) stated that their employer did not work in partnership with other authorities. While only Stirling and Clackmannanshire have a formal shared service agreement in place for trading standards teams, comments indicate that there is collaboration and sharing of information across local authorities and also the police service. There are also plans being put into place for more sharing across in any areas with the Lothians and Northern authorities having the most developed plans.



Joint working and collaboration can lead to service improvements particularly when staff are able to learn from the experience of others and shared intelligence leads to both prevention of problems and apprehending those who are committing crimes. But the comments from members indicate that much of the drive for sharing is shortage of resources in particular staff and specialist knowledge. This type of sharing is just spreading scarce resources more thinly, risks losing local knowledge and leaves the public at risk.



Comments from members include

Sharing equipment

- *Sharing average quantity equipment.*
- *Informal resource sharing MOUs with local authorities. Part of weighbridge vehicle consortium. Shared metrology laboratory [between two] local authorities.*
- *Group Subject meetings with other West of Scotland Authorities. Shared contribution to use [another council's] Scientific Services*
- *We share expensive assets with other Councils - mainly specialist vehicles and equipment. We participate in liaison arrangements including conduct of national projects. We share an intelligence system across Scotland.*

Sharing intelligence/expertise

- *Occasionally other local authorities assist us and we also assist them in joint operations.*
- *We share information, resources and meet regularly to discuss specific topics in our expert groups.*
- *No formal arrangements. Informal arrangements between Chief Officers as and when required to bolster capacity*

Cuts in jobs and hours

Job cuts

It has been very difficult to get accurate figures on jobs cuts in trading standards teams despite a freedom of information request. This is because teams have been reorganised and responsibilities redefined in recent years. We are therefore not able to definitively state the number of job cuts particularly in managerial, specialist roles, administrative and support roles. Even without the impact of job cuts the age of the current workforce means that retirements will lead to a substantial loss of staff and expertise.

We do have figures for the cuts to trading standards officers. There are 23 per cent fewer trading standards officers than in 2012/13 and six per cent less than 2015/16. Members indicate that jobs cuts are not restricted to these roles and we believe that other roles in the teams have been similarly cut. It's no surprise then that members comments reveal over worked teams struggling to protect the public from danger.

Jobs have been cut through a combination of voluntary severance and non-filling of vacancies when staff retire or leave for other jobs. Even if posts are filled after someone leaves there are often substantial delays. This saves money but again leaves the remaining staff under enormous pressure. Even when the post is filled it takes time for people to get up to full speed.

Comments from members include

Redundancies

- *We lost one of our four permanent staffing posts in 2013 – not only a workforce reduction of 25%, but the loss of a valuable member of staff with nearly twenty years experience in the Trading Standards service.*
- *Not job cuts as such but the Council asked for voluntary severance in 2016 and we lost 6 members of staff who took that up and have obviously not been replaced.*
- *16 to 5 member of staff, work has to be prioritised and as a factor of that volume has to suffer as less staff can do less work*
- *In the last 5 years we have lost 5 posts. Response times have increased and services have been withdrawn. Proactive inspection work has been dramatically reduced. This means we are not supporting local business and consumer interests*
- *Staffing levels have reduced by almost 1/3 over the last 4-5 years. This has included deletion of two senior management posts as well as a number of Fair Trading Officer posts.*

Non filling of vacancies

- *Officers who have left have not been replaced. Any duties that they had been responsible for were re-allocated to Officers already struggling with their existing workload.*
- *Yes. The size of the team has reduced over the years, usually because officers who leave are not replaced. The result of this is that we are a more reactive service and are less able to do the important developmental, educational and preventative work we did before.*
- *Team Leader's post not being refilled. Majority of posts left empty after early retirement package.*
- *4 chief officers have/will retire in 2018 and in 3 of these posts no commitment has yet been made to establish replacements at the same level.*



Loss of skills and experience

Trading standards teams have responded to the staff shortages in a number of ways. Members indicate that teams now struggle to undertake some of the specialist roles: e.g. animal welfare. Members are concerned about the loss of specialist knowledge and experience as it's usually the staff with the longest service who volunteer to go. Most struggle with heavy workloads and therefore their work is much more reactive than proactive: dealing with things that have gone wrong rather than preventing them. Things going wrong are costly both for the victim and public services who have to pick up the tab for fixing them. Teams have had to adapt and find new ways of working. These are not service improvements.



Comments from members include

Less specialist work

- *Resulted in a heavier workload, putting the individual under pressure and working to tighter deadlines. People looking to be given advice on some things that are not in my remit.*
- *Jobs not been replaced mean more work for current staff sometimes dealing in areas that we are not familiar with and lack expertise*
- *Really cuts over the past 10 years have left us in a vulnerable position without the resources to remain resilient as demand for services increase and our areas of responsibility are widened. In the last 5 years there has been a lot of new legislation that we enforce with little formal training for the whole team and greater responsibility with fewer people to do the work. It is leaving areas of Trading Standards work completely unenforced. It is a Postcode lottery of enforcement across the UK as different authorities maintain expertise in certain areas, where others it's lost.*
- *No staff reductions, increase, take on trainees, they pass exams and leave for other authorities. Enforcement Officer are expected to take up extra work load. Other Authorities not training up officers.*
- *As above - Loss of experience and knowledge. When issues arise that officers have no previous experience of, there isn't a knowledgeable colleague to help or provide support. Things therefore take longer. Difficult to build up expertise in any one area, as before, due to having to cover so many areas of work. Additional stress Increased work load and responsibility. More areas of work that can't be covered due to lack of available staff and / or knowledge.*

Less proactive

- *More tasks, less job shadowing, less training as budget cuts. No proactive work.*
- *Impact is that work that used to get done now does not. Service has become a responsive service only*
- *The whole way we work has changed, we no longer carry out routine inspections. We are reactive rather than pro active. In addition to the posts already cut we expect to lose a further 4 members of staff within the next year.*

Future concerns

We also asked about the number of vacancies and any problems or delays in filling posts. As noted earlier there are real concerns about the future of trading standards without new people coming in and also the lack of opportunities for training and experience for the younger staff to enable them to replace the older staff when they leave. Responses to our FOI indicated 18 vacancies across Scotland which again adds to staff shortages in the teams.

While 12 per cent of respondents stated there was a vacancy freeze in their authority where jobs are being advertised only five per cent of respondents stated that posts were easy to fill. Thirty-one per cent stated that posts were hard to fill and 19 per cent stated that posts were filled with less-qualified staff.



Comments from members include

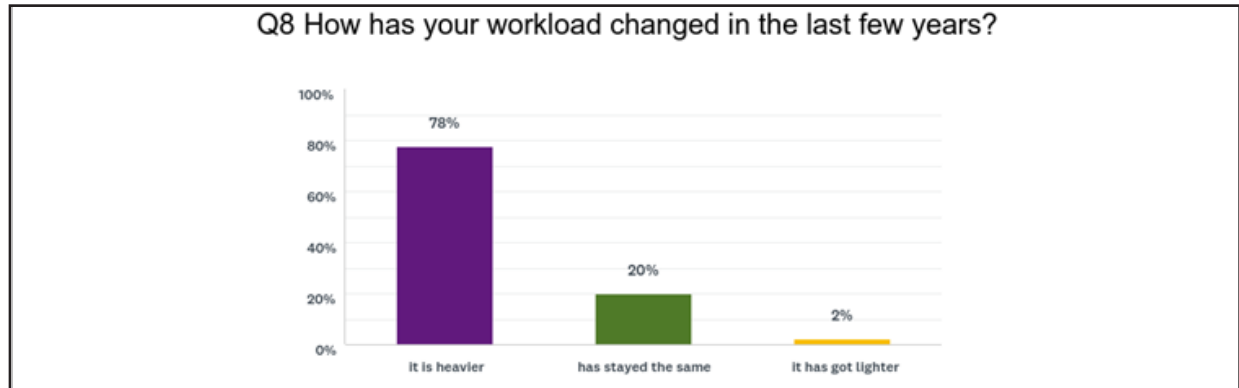
Hard to fill

- *Lack of people qualified TSOs, lack of job security pay*
- *Yes - we have vacancies at present. There are almost no applicants left to fulfil these roles due to lack of routes into the profession. Lack of staff numbers overall can also be a deterrent.*
- *Yes - Posts advertised as fixed term rather than permanent. Unusual to get applicants as it's too much of a risk for those already in employment. One post was filled only because the applicant had been made redundant from their previous post.*
- *Yes as people overworked and have also left service*
- *Many applications due to job shortages in area, however difficult to recruit suitable or qualified candidates.*
- *We will have 3 TSO vacancies in March. These posts will be almost impossible to fill.*
- *permanant posts have been changed to temporary and it has been difficult to find qualified staff*
- *We were unable to fill 2 temporary posts. Lack of skilled staff available*
- *We filled a TSO post 2 years ago with only 1 applicant coming forward. We filled an AH&W Post 4 years ago and had plenty of applicants*
- *It has been difficult to attract qualified staff .*
- *We recently tried to recruit but only managed to attract one applicant, who was appointed but did not really have the level of experience listed under the essential criteria relating to the original job description.*
- *Posts left unfilled for long time to bring savings, now proving difficult to fill.*
- *Where posts have been filled it has taken months and months.*



Workloads

Has your workload changed in the last few years?



The vast majority of respondents (78%) indicated that their workload had got heavier in the last few years while only two per cent felt it had got lighter. Members indicate that the sheer volume of work is causing problems. There just aren't enough people to do what needs to be done. They also report, as in many of our other surveys, that the loss of senior staff means that work that was previously done by those at a higher level is now pushed down onto staff on lower grades. Many also indicate that they lack of specialist roles is also creating problems. When we also asked about whether the work itself changed many gave us much more detail on these changes.

The other issue that was raised was the impact of the loss of administrative and clerical support on the workload of those who now had to do all of this themselves on top of a growing workload. Members also indicate that their work is much more reactive and that there are increasing numbers of scams to deal with.

Comments from members include

Sheer volume of work

- *Staff left are not replaced and work load falls onto to current staff.*
- *Increasing requests and complaints from general public still have to be responded to by less staff.*
- *The loss of a post left three people trying to cover what used to be done by four - the biggest impact is that we lost that person's expertise, so we now have to try to cover a broader spread of issues which inevitably becomes more time-consuming.*
- *We seem to keep taking on more and more work with fewer people to do it. Any talk of efficiencies and streamlining only mean more with less for us. There has been no transformation of the service. We are all just trying to keep the plates spinning and hoping as few as possible fall. It is not being managed.*
- *I struggle with my workload however the solution from management is that we won't bother to enforce certain things so that it eases the workload*

Unpaid additional responsibilities

- *Environmental Health and internal (corporate) Health and Safety have been added to my duties*
- *We have now taken on responsibility for Nicotine and Vapour E Cigarettes as well as Tobacco and we have two new recruits to assist us with the E -Cig work, we are regularly asked by the Trading Standards Department to assist at concerts for Counterfeit goods and various other tasks/visits which are out of normal hours and we are now also being asked to cover civil complaints.*
- *Less staff with same subject areas to cover. Know something about a lot of things and little in depth knowledge.*



Administration

- *Changes to the admin section have resulted in officers taking on more and more jobs which would previously have been functions of the admin section. I spend a significant proportion of my time carrying out admin tasks such as printing letters and linking documents. This time could be better spent protecting consumers. I struggle to stay on top of my workload and find that my 'to do' list is getting out of hand. Even if I were allocated no further work the stuff I have outstanding would keep me busy for 2-3 months.*
- *With intelligence led projects rather than a 'routine inspection' regime more resource intensive investigations are uncovered. Investigations involving contact with other local authorities TS sections are often delayed due to staff shortages there.*
- *one seventh of our staff has not been replaced as time has passed, workloads haven't decreased and as such, those officers work is being passed around the remaining staff. Most work is responding to issues, time to seek out and prevent public issues is minimal*

Reactive work

- *With fewer staff it has become more difficult to stay on top of the workload. The comparison with spinning plates is often made. The Services ability to keep abreast of legislative changes has been diminished and our ability to carry out in-depth or large scale investigations has been adversely affected.*
- *The move to responsive work only, means that work load per officer has not increased but over all work carried out by the department has reduced.*

Scams

- *The workload has remained the same however the substance has changed: Greater emphasis on Scams and under-age sales. Less on product safety, weights and measures and agriculture.*
- *Asked to take on workload of those who have left and who are off sick or on maternity leave. Work requiring to be carried out has become reactive with very little time for proactive work. This style of reactive working is unsustainable as we miss out on the proactive and routine style inspections we lose sight of what is happening in the marketplace. Ultimately we are balancing too many areas of legislation with too few staff. Traditional areas of work like metrology, consumer safety and fair trading are being added to by new tobacco legislation and the huge area of scams and bogus callers that affect our growing elderly population. While some assistance has come in the way of funds for tobacco enforcement we need funds to cover all TS duties not just one sector*
- *On a personal level, my workload increased due to my line manager retiring and not being replaced therefore a tier was removed. In terms of overall workload of the team, the volume has not changed but the challenge has come from the nature of matters we investigate which are increasingly complex (eg online crime, doorstep scams etc).*

Work previously done by senior staff

- *Covering areas that senior officers used to cover, on top of basic workload. Involved in all areas of work rather than a number of specialist areas.*
- *Dealing more complex issues - particularly in areas such as product safety*
- *doing more work that traditionally a TSO would do. The only things I seem to not do that they do is weights and measures*
- *As staff numbers reduce, some work is being cut and other work is distributed among the remaining staff. Work which has traditionally gone up the management structure is now being done at lower levels.*



Work changes

We then asked “has the work you do changed in the last few years?”

There were similar responses to that on workload but with more detail on the type of changes and the impact on the service.

Some feel they have become a “jack of all trades” rather than specialising in one area and building up expertise like in the past. Others report they have found that they can’t do in-depth work on a case anymore, they don’t have enough time to do detailed investigations and are just “skimming the surface”. Many state that their teams don’t do as wide a range of work anymore: some areas are now taking a “back seat”, like filling stations. On top of this, work that was previously the preserve of managers is now being pushed down onto ordinary staff, without that being reflected in a pay rise or regrading.

As in responses to questions about cuts, many report they are no longer able to work proactively or get out and about checking and preventing problems. They are now reacting to issues reported by the public, responding when things have gone wrong.

Many report an increase in scams and rogue traders, not just with the expansion of internet telecommunications giving new opportunities for fraudsters, but also with how much easier it is for rogue traders to source goods which don’t meet safety standards.

As in other surveys the cuts in administrative support combined with increased “online” report filling again lead to staff that should be out and about protecting the public instead spending too much time in offices filing in forms.

Comments from members include

Focus of work

- *Jack of all trades master of none. Expectation to cover all aspects of legislation with lose of expertise in some fields.*
- *It has become more targeted rather than general Trading Standards work.*
- *Yes, not able to spend as much time on each investigation. Just touching the surface sometimes.*
- *Yes, no longer undertaking the full range of trading standards grade functions.*
- *Yes. Work load all around performance indicators. Safety Petrol Filling stations other enforcement takes back seat.*
- *Yes, certain work is no longer done, priorities have been reset to reflect this.*
- *Work done by higher grades or additional to role*
- *The work is always changing due to the fluid nature of the job. I also find myself working at a higher level that is above my pay grade.*

Reactive not proactive

- *As noted above I now spend a significant amount of time carrying out admin tasks. My work is also more reactive than proactive. Issues which could have been addressed via advice often go unchecked and we only get involved at a later stage when it has become a real issue. I also don’t feel like I have the time to research issues properly or give issues the attention they merit.*



More scams and rogue traders



- *Less knowledge of local area and what types of premises are in the area as routine visits gone and project based.*
- *More intelligence led, therefore more office work - less visits*
- *We are all trying to work in more joined-up and intelligence-led ways, but this means we now have additional intelligence work to do.*
- *There has been a withdrawal of consumer advice, almost entirely now at local level. This is not left to CAB and the Consumer helpline they run. We do fewer routine inspections, with the exception of tobacco, where it has increased. More of the work is supposed to be targeted and intelligence-led, but it is just more work, not more targeted work.*
- *Yes, the job is almost unrecognisable. We are very reactive to complaints and referrals but carry out very little in the way of routine inspection and business advice. These types of work were both preventative and corrective and I feel we are missing out on up to date knowledge of our local area. The move to 'mobile' or flexible working now prevents office discussion whereby support from colleagues would provide a speedy resolution this now is all solo work with single research to query taking longer to resolve issues.*
- *We no longer undertake routine inspections of premises/businesses. We were originally told by our management that the focus of our work would be 'intelligence led'. However this seems to have quickly changed whereby we get no meaningful intelligence (even though we have an intelligence manager) and most of our work is through projects and the odd complaint. Many staff feel that our service is being intentionally run into the ground for whatever reason, without focus, leadership or direction from management.*

More scams and rogue traders

- *Yes, busier and the complaints have become more involved as criminals are moving into our area.*
- *There's more attention now on dealing with itinerant rogue traders which has its own challenges.*
- *much heavier leaning towards Serious and Organised Crime, much more work with the Police in this area whether it be them assisting us or vice versa.*
- *Yes more online work*
- *Larger online presence and requirement to enforce matters via internet investigations.*
- *Yes. Trading Standards work is always changing, which does make it more interesting! Scams and protecting vulnerable consumers has become our main activity. Also intelligence led work with a big input to intel systems. Underage sales and addressing tobacco legislation is much more of a priority although the resources have been put in by the Scottish Government to implement that work.*
- *More emphasis on internet enforcement and on line resources*
- *We are increasingly intelligence led and work with many partners both within and outwith trading Standards. Scams and doorstep crime are priorities and many investigations concern online trading and social media.*
- *It has to some extent in order to keep up with the changing consumer landscape. Especially with regard to online shopping, social media etc. Now having to try to keep up with trends which often involves having IT skills which were never part of the job when I started out.*



Reactive not proactive

Not out and about checking reactive not proactive

- *More reactive work. Less knowledge of local area and what types of premises are in the area as routine visits gone and project based.*
- *yes funding cuts have reduced the amount of test purchasing and overtime we were previously given.*
- *Not so much contact with public.*
- *Work has changed in that we get out of the office to do visits less. We have re-structured teams following 2016 when staff left under the voluntary redundancy scheme.*
- *The job is more office based. Not a lot of visits get done now.*
- *My work is now unrecognisable from what I was previously used to. The paperwork has increased substantially and the amount of time spent in the field has reduced accordingly.*
- *Yes - no resources to carry out traditional routine inspections, constantly reactive to changes, and emergencies.*

Too much admin

- *As noted above I now spend a significant amount of time carrying out admin tasks. My work is also more reactive than proactive. Issues which could have been addressed via advice often go unchecked and we only get involved at a later stage when it has become a real issue. I also don't feel like I have the time to research issues properly or give issues the attention they merit.*
- *More work, [the council] are trying to adopt intelligence led enforcement that has required officers to pick up new skills and has created extra work for all officers who are meant to input intel onto the [a new IT system]. More working with police, hmrc and other agencies.*
- *My work is now unrecognisable from what I was previously used to. The paperwork has increased substantially and the amount of time spent in the field has reduced accordingly.*



Under pressure



We followed this up by asking “Do you feel under pressure to take on work for which you are not experienced/qualified to do to a high standard?”

The answers to this question have similar themes to those raised in response to earlier questions. Staff are being given work that was previously done by managers or more senior staff with no change to their pay. They also raise concerns about their lack of access to specialist training. As stated in earlier responses many feel that they are now expected to be a “jack of all trades” but aren’t properly qualified or given access to training for the specialised roles they are expected to undertake. It’s not just about training, job cuts mean that many of the most experienced staff have left. These are the people for whom the packages offered are the most attractive. This is a huge loss to a service, experience really matters when you are trying to spot scams.

Comments from members include

Extra management

- *To some degree, yes. Especially in the more administrative/HR areas of the work, where i.e. in recruitment matters I have little experience over the years. Our section, admittedly very small, has remained very stable in nearly 20 years and some aspects of a manager’s role I have rarely had to deal with. This has increased markedly since the reduction in staffing in [our council]. Aspects of the operational work are also changing and becoming more demanding e.g. investigative procedures, disclosure etc. and the need to tackle online trading issues, gathering of electronic evidence - these are areas where it is very hard to keep abreast procedures that must be used in order to secure best evidence etc.*
- *Yes, as we do not have a principal, managerial work that he done, FOIs, allocation of complaints, collating work for Head of Service, policies etc has fallen to us*
- *Management dropping management tasks to staff. Never been trained, didn’t apply for the job to which those duties apply and of course, we are being asked to do those tasks completely free of charge.*
- *Yes particularly work previously done by managers and admin staff and investigations involving matters which I’ve not been trained in.*
- *I find that team leader delegates work that I feel they should be doing as they have the necessary skills and experience that I don’t have*

Lack of experience

- *Yes, we no longer have time to build up specialist knowledge of particular subjects. There simply isn’t the time to carry out jobs to the standard which would have previously been the norm. When staff make large seizures of counterfeit/unsafe products they aren’t taken off any of the other rota’s and continue to be allocated new work. We are also asked to take on work without the required resources to complete the job.*
- *There is no longer as many specialist officers in which you can rely on for assistance therefore yes I do on many occasions feel out of my depth.*
- *100% - doing something i have very little experience in that if not done correctly can have disastrous results*



- *Because you do not deal with something on an on going basis you continually have to refresh your knowledge. Not through organised training, as there has been a ban on training.*
- *We are finding it harder to keep up to speed with legislative changes. In a larger organisation it was possible to allow members of staff to develop specialist knowledge in certain areas eg: Consumer Safety, Consumer Credit, IP Law, Fair Trading etc. Going further back, to Regional Council days, there was a body of HQ staff tasked with providing specialised knowledge and guidance. Sadly missed.*
- *The wide range of legislation we are expected to know has been added to the difference is that we previously would have had a few staff who would have had expertise in one area while taking on other duties. This 'expertise' now covers sometimes 2,3,4 areas and we now rely heavily on local working groups to provide opinion or expertise. These targeted working groups meet quarterly and in some areas staff are unable to attend due to work pressures.*
- *Yes - there are so many specialisms within trading standards, if the person who deals with a specialism is absent, you have to deal with it. specific examples are petroleum forecourt emergencies and animal health issues - both critical to make sure you work to a high standard with little or no experience.*
- *Very much so. Skills gaps caused by experienced officers not being replaced. Specialisms being lost. More of a requirement to be "generic officers". Increased stress in having to deal with issues with little experience, training or managerial support. Personally led to mental health difficulties.*

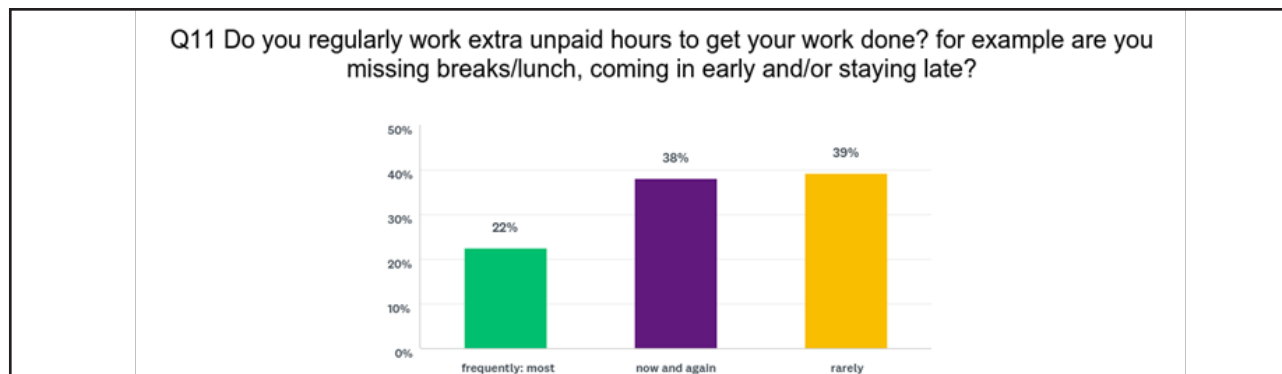
Lack of specialist training

- *I feel under some pressure when I am speaking to someone who expects me to give them an answer and provide advice, when I myself, don't know the answer to their questions. They can become upset and aggressive. They also expect the work to be done to a timescale irrespective of the other work you have. Everyone thinks their case is urgent. There are also more requests received from people with a mental health issue for which we have not received training*
- *Yes, legislation is currently changing and we have to pick it up as we go along without any formal training*
- *Feel I don't get to attend many training courses. Much training, mainly website based, done over internet in office*
- *We are responsible for hundred of pieces of legislation, as the team has been "delayed" over the years, the expertise has been lost. There are now a number of areas where we are having to learn on the job, especially with less formal training being available and training budgets being cut. The lack of training could be the biggest threat in future, as it is now no longer budgeted for in the team, it is decided across the department.*
- *There is some pressure regarding this in that due to re-structure and loss of staff with specialisms it obviously falls to remaining staff to deal with these.*
- *Not so much under pressure but cuts have impacted on our training budget. Those staff selected to go on particular training courses are being asked to 'cascade' train the other staff. In circumstances, this can mean that certain staff benefit from proper, detailed quality training over a period of a few days, whereas this is condensed into an hour for the rest of staff, essentially being delivered by someone not qualified to train, not has the appropriate expertise to deliver a complex course, answering detailed and complex questions. It simply does not work, creates an unequal skills gap amongst staff and impacts on the efficiency and ability of Trading Standards to deliver a quality service.*



Unpaid work

Do you work unpaid hours (stay late skip breaks) to get work done?



This section supports the answers given to earlier questions demonstrating that trading standards teams are struggling with high workloads. The majority of respondents (60%) state that they are skipping breaks, staying late or taking work home in order to keep on top of their workload. Just over a fifth of respondents (22%) stated that they were doing unpaid work frequently. Some people indicated they were unable to use up all their leave entitlement. While some may think that getting work for nothing from public servants is a great thing, it's not a way to ensure the deliver of a quality service. Work life balance isn't just about having a free time. In order to function properly at work and do a good job you need to avoid exhaustion, you need appropriate breaks in your working day, and outwith it, to recharge and to relax so that you can focus and deliver. While 39% stated that they rarely did unpaid work comments revealed that many of those were overworked but had made a conscience decision to no longer take work home or skip breaks because they were so unhappy and stressed about their workload and that it was clear that no matter how much you did work just kept on coming.



Comments from members include

Catching up in the evening

- It's just difficult to do exams and still have a heavy workload, time was give for study but still feel under pressure. therefore most studying has to be done in your own time at home which leads to a very poor work/life balance.*
- Evening work done is on flexi so not unpaid. Occasional unpaid late evening/weekend work necessary to catch up.*
- Occasionally work later at events to cover late finishing times although not pressurised to do so.*
- things getting moved from week to week and in worst cases year or more passing without checks being made. Research, reading and updates on law frequently undertaken in own time in order to do job effectively*

Not using leave

- Tend to work late and lunch breaks have become shorter, especially in the past year. We now have more annual leave, as public holidays have been removed (part from Christmas/New Year). With our very small staffing this means it can be extremely difficult to take all of one's allocated leave in the year and usually permission has to be sought to carry-over, though this is becoming more difficult.*



Skipping lunch break

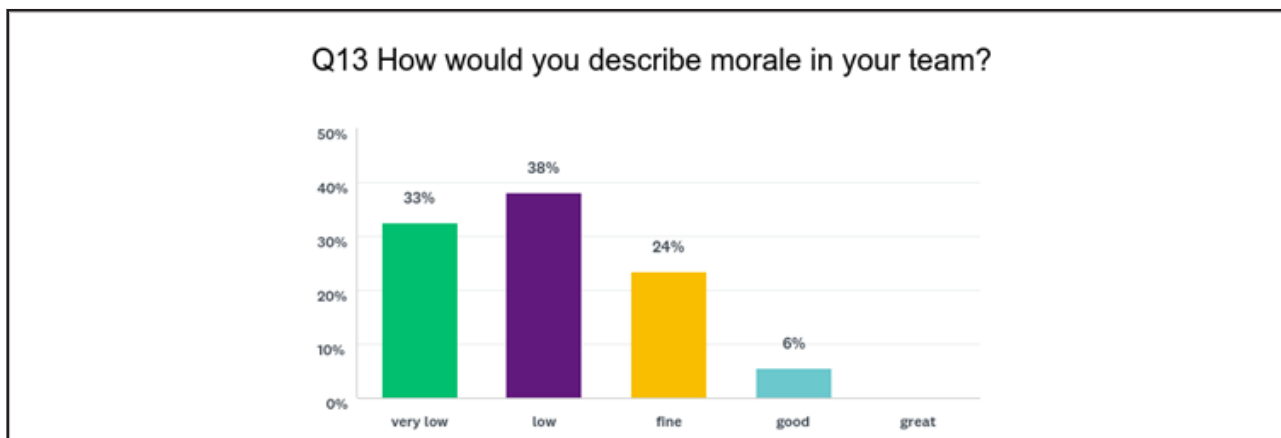
- *Frequently have a working lunch or just take a few minutes to eat a sandwich. I also regularly research issues in the evening as I won't have time at work the following day.*
- *Usually work through lunch and eat on the go.*
- *Expected to cover for admin staff. Part time. Not expected to get tea breaks in morning or afternoon. Lack of staff work over lunch. Expected to deal with consumers as soon as they walk in office who have not made an appointment. Drop what you are doing.*
- *I never take a lunch. I work between 6-15 hours extra per week, depending on workload. I previously used to work every weekend but have stopped this, as completing all my tasks just increased the workload.*
- *I only get half an hour lunch break but I have to take walking time off my lunch to get to a service by two*

Had enough

- *It is unfair to expect that the staff that are left are expected to do the work of officers that have left the service for no extra money*
- *All the goodwill that made me do extra unpaid work in the past has now been exhausted as management do not give me the credit, compassion and understanding for going above and beyond the role I do now. You get no thanks or reward for doing extra.*
- *If stuff doesn't get done in the time available, it just has to be left not done.*
- *I do some extra work, but I try hard to stop myself doing it as it is not good for my family nor my own health. In the main, work gets left, gets delayed and gets closed with no action taken, which leads to complaint from the public. It is a lot more stressful than when I joined the profession 15 years ago. There is a lot less job satisfaction and now it just feels like firefighting.*
- *None whatsoever - refuse to do so*
- *As there is no overtime payments, I often have to inform staff that work they wish to do cannot be done. I believe that a 35hr/week contract should be honoured by both parties.*
- *I usually take a working lunch where I eat my lunch at my desk and carry on working. I refuse to do unpaid work as I feel being on the same pay scale as some of the staff I supervise due to our Workforce and pay and benefit review is really unfair and out of principle I try and not do any extra work*
- *I used to. Now I have no wish to offer any more to the job than my contracted hours. I carry out my job to the best of my ability but on the basis that I may lose my post at any time.*
- *We have become specialist in prioritising - some things cannot be done as there is not enough time or staff, we have to decide which is the highest priority and what is the most practical way to deal with things rather than the 'correct' way. I have worked longer hours in the past, however, this is not sustainable for a work/life balance over the long term, you have to accept for your own mental health that you just can't do everything. However, I still regularly work through lunch.*



Morale



It is clear from this section that staff in trading standards teams are finding their working lives very difficult. Over 70 per cent indicated that morale in their teams was low or very low with only six per cent saying it was good.

The biggest issue raised regarding morale was budget cuts. Severe budget cuts mean that staff are under enormous pressure to try and deliver a quality service. Many say that they don't feel valued and that senior staff in their authority do not recognise the importance of trading standards. Not only is a heavy workload difficult, knowing the risks from the work that you are unable to do, but it also puts pressure on staff. Uncertainty about the future is also a key issue, they have already been through a range of cuts and reorganisations and can see that more are on the way. Many are concerned about further cuts and how the service can or will be provided going forward.

While, as yet, nothing has come of the trading standards review, and the proposals for either a regional or a national service, the lack of any decisions around this also adds to feelings of uncertainty. In such a fast moving and safety critical environment staff need to training in order to keep on top of the risks. Respondents also indicate that lack of access to training is also impacting on staff morale. Members also indicate that poor communication by leaders in their authorities has a big impact on staff morale. As in many of our surveys where staff indicate that morale is good, that is about good managers and teamwork.



Comments from members include

Cuts

- *Increased workload. Uneven workload between staff, some TS staff only employed for one type of legislation (Tobacco funded) others must enforce all legislation.*
- *Officers workloads have increased across the service, resources have reduced including staff numbers.*
- *Constant pressure from cuts, never knowing what will happen next. Difficulty planning for the future with the continuing uncertainty.*
- *Due to cuts, uncertainty in future of Trading Standards in Scotland. Salary not increasing in line with rising costs of living etc.*
- *annual cuts and uncertainty*
- *Cuts/bad management decisions/lack of experienced staff/micro managing of staff*



- *Constant worry about jobs. Lack of support from Central Govt who seem more concerned at keeping Big Business happy instead of ensuring that we have good, well written and enforceable legislation in place, better structure and adequate resources in place UK wide to direct resources at critical points, points of contact to direct issues emanating outwith the UK and EC and authoritative guidance and coordination at a national level. Most officers want to protect consumers and good businesses, but instead of assisting us to do so in a climate of reducing resources there seems to be more and more hindrances. It seems that there is only ever any change when there are casualties.*
- *Not replacing staff and partnership that doesn't work and no one doing anything about it*

Not valued

- *No one is happy at work. Very demoralising knowing there is crime being committed in the area that we just can't deal with. We used to give talks to schools, OAP groups etc, we now can't do this. We can't do the work we are trained to do and want to do*

Access to training

- *It can change dependant on workload Sometimes allocation of places on training courses is a bit ad hoc*
- *None of them see any great prospects, and I don't see anything for them either! I hope to recruit into higher posts from my current staff, but this sometimes leads to a need for training. Recruiting into the posts then left vacant can really only be filled from people either unemployed or in unrelated jobs leading to a greater need for training. This training is a big factor in reducing morale as the stresses get bigger and the results / impact of our activities is reduced.*
- *Lack of training for most staff and current austerity throughout the authority.*

Good managers

- *It is fine despite the financial and staffing constraints due to them being a close knit, experienced group who help and support each other. Occasional "battles" over funding for training, equipment , cover for mat leave etc can temporarily damage people's morale but, so far, they tend to bounce back.*
- *Small tight-knit team*
- *personnel are generally happy that [our manager] is a good employer*
- *Although a good team, with good interpersonal relationships, there is a general dissatisfaction about the direction of the work we are doing, being so short staffed and developing lack of professional pride, both locally and nationally.*
- *It is fine as we are a small team and we pull together to make it work. It can be very frustrating for us all not being able to take on duties that we want to.*
- *Due to a good team spirit and decent immediate boss.*

Poor communications

- *officers feel that the more work that they do the more they are given with no end in sight.*
- *No real direction, too many reviews locally and nationally.*



- *Lack of support, lack of direction, lack of communication*
- *Little or no leadership or direction. No respect amongst different grades of staff. Work type not always allocated intelligently.*
- *Management structure and how they perceive TSD. TS Institute seem to be trying to justify themselves as a professional body/ If you are not a member you do not receive any training. They get help with funding and accommodation from, Local Authority who are our employer not chosen few.*

Poor leadership

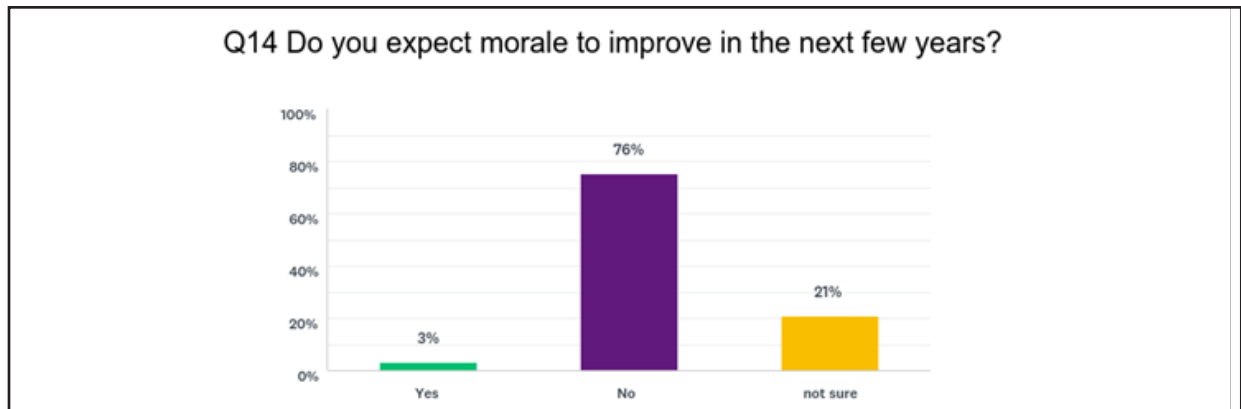
- *poor comms/manager job cuts, lack of information, lack of support*
- *Morale is poor due to frequent internal re-organisations and a lack of consultation / staff involvement in respect of the same. Moreover, there are no longer any qualified Trading Standards Officers at a senior level within the management structure, meaning that decisions about budgets and service delivery are taken by staff who do not fully understand the role of Trading Standards and who may have a vested interest in protecting their own profession at the expense of Trading Standards.*

Uncertainty

- *- mostly I would say morale is middle of the road, so nearer to fine, but that is because we have a good (very small) team. However, the general morale within the authority is not great (budgetary/ staffing issues etc) and in our circumstances, there is the uncertainty of how our partnership with colleagues [in other organisations] will progress. There is also of course the extreme uncertainty about the strength or lack of strength in trading standards nationally and this has also impacted in the thoughts of staff. Morale probably has to be graded therefore as low.*
- *A great deal of uncertainty, and disappointment that discussions around larger regional or national Trading Standards teams seem to have ground to a halt.*
- *Cuts to the service are expected to be considerable over the next two years. These are yet to be determined.*
- *persons facing unknowns budgets/brexit etc*
- *Uncertainty for the future. Expectation that if other staff leave their posts will not be filled. No future for Trading Standards*
- *The lack of a Principal Officer results in a lack of direction to a certain degree. Job insecurity is becoming an ever bigger factor in staff morale particularly given the apparent lack of concern about the current state of Trading Standards and no obvious plan to rectify matters. The uncertainty is a drain on morale.*
- *Colleagues concerned as to what future holds*



The future



The low morale is also partly due to a feeling that things will get worse rather than better in the next few years. An even higher proportion (78%) than those who thought morale was low do not believe that morale will improve in the next few years.

Comments here were very similar to the comments on current morale. Members are well aware that there are more budget cuts to come. There are few, if any, efficiencies left to be found. Budget cuts mean cuts in services. So no surprise that future cuts and job losses were the most common reason given for their answers. Members also raised concerns about the impact of the ageing workforce as there were few young people getting the opportunity to start a career in trading standards meaning there will be a skills shortage in the future. There were also concerns about further reorganisations, either internally within the authority or the creation of national or regional services.



Comments from members include

Ageing workforce

- *Can't see any changes for the better, as workforce is elderly with no new recruits being trained up*
- *In the next few years we'll all be late 50s-early 60s.*
- *There are no plans for change and the workforce are all hitting 50. There is no succession planning*

Reorganisation

- *Uncertainty around regional working etc*
- *Only if we can make progress on larger regional or national Trading Standards teams.*
- *Depends on what happens. There was going to be a review of Trading Standards in Scotland but after a recent w years of lack of progress it would appear this is not going to happen as there is no will from the Gov or Chief Officers*

Cuts

- *Can't see anything changes. less concentration on types of work and more cuts.*
- *Budget cuts are being discussed and will directly affect staffing levels for the department.*
- *Being employed in local government for over 20 years I have witnessed cut backs/restructuring every year. I see no different in the years ahead.*



- *Other than Education/Social Work all other functions are chasing the remainder of the shrinking budget. Reduction in staffing numbers will result I imagine in a lowering of morale.*
- *if budgetary position does not change, posts will unlikely be filled therefore just more added workload pressure*
- *Every year there are cuts to local authority budget which takes their toll on morale*
- *Cuts will continue for several years.*
- *I do not see the situation improving unless the council / Department receives more funding to recruit staff*
- *Non TS leadership, lack of understanding role of TS and staff*
- *continuing cuts and uncertainty over future TS structure in Scotland*
- *With promised cuts by the council morale is more likely to decline*
- *There will be more cuts.*
- *With further cuts announced I expect it to remain at a very low level.*

Job Cuts

- *If there are no vacancies filled and people leave the service the matter could only get worse.*
- *Staffing levels are not expected to improve. The future of the profession is now unclear and under critical threat*
- *[Our council] facing budget cuts - so uncertainty over Trading Standards funding/jobs etc.*
- *To much pressure on staff*
- *Major reduction in staffing levels*
- *Changes of government might give hope but TS needs a long lead in for the qualification of officers lost through cuts.*
- *I expect to have to leave the profession - there are no promotional opportunities and the job is becoming more complex and there are fewer of us*
- *morale unlikely to improve until uncertainty over jobs is stable, however improved communication would be a good starting point*



Final comments

We also asked members if they wanted to leave any final comments on the impact of cuts on their ability to protect the public. Again we see a highly dedicated workforce exhausted and demoralised by austerity.



Comments from members include

- *Having worked here over 20 years the job has changed quite significantly. Don't know where the service will be in the next 5 - 10 years*
- *Disillusioned as to the future of Trading Standards which is supposed to be being dealt with at a national level due to ageing workforce but so far just a load of talk and no action*
- *This is definitely a worrying time for staff to come into Trading Standards profession as all contracts available for employment are temporary.*
- *Laptops are dated and technology for working out of the office needs to improve. Mobile phones where you can actually check your diary when on the move and check emails, look up the internet etc would be of benefit. There are also continuous problems with connecting to the secure network from within and outwith the office, which makes an increased workload even more stressful to manage.*
- *There is a concern with the overall workforce ageing and the lack of young people coming into the profession. Many over 55/60 left under voluntary redundancy arrangements over the last few years, so most staff are now aged 30-55. So experience has been lost but equally young people are not coming in.*
- *Our department is working well beyond its capabilities. No daylight at the end of the tunnel. Goodwill keeps us afloat. Just like post Public sectors, underfunded and ignored.*
- *Still treated as a "Cinderella" service.*
- *The job has changed too much in the last few years. It is like nobody cares anymore.*
- *we are a small service and our needs come well down the list. We do a lot of good innovative work which is recognised and gets a better profile. It is a constant effort to do this, and I don't know how long we can keep this up.*
- *All LA's are facing really difficult budget decisions, but slicing over the years and everyone taking a hit has really hit TS hard, we are a small service with blow harder to take.*
- *Nothing the top management at the council produce regarding the current changes is written to confuse anyone not in management and is never in plain English*
- *I am concerned with the amount of funding that Trading Standards Scotland are receiving from U.K. Government when I feel some of this money should be paid to the local Trading Standards Authority*
- *Investment in the delivery of TS must be a priority or there be no service left in 10 years. There are no staff coming in to replace the staff leaving or retiring*
- *There are no Trading Standards managers at a sufficient level to raise the profile/awareness of the service. Feeling that EH managers discriminate against Trading Standards when it comes to job cuts.*
- *I wish I had worked in Trading Standards in another era. We are employed in a service which is low in morale, rudderless, fragmented, without leadership, caustic and wholly dysfunctional.*



- *I strongly believe that Trading Standards should be a National Service, similar to SEPA. However, I think that the decision has been postponed for so long that it is no longer realistic to Nationalise without major investment in recruitment and training.*
- *Problems with an ageing workforce and a lack of younger officers being trained up and recruited into the profession.*
- *Trading Standards are not able to perform their necessary functions as they should due to cuts to resources. Consumer protection is at an all time low.*
- *In over 30 years of trading standards service I have never known morale to be so low. Officers have little enthusiasm for the job.*
- *The council does not treat staff as individuals, not interested in how diligent and hardworking staff are. Only interested in budgets and the bottom line is the cost of the service. Lack of consideration for service users and impact on them.*
- *Despite all the cuts, my Authority isn't as broken as some of the others around the country.*
- *I worry for the future in Trading Standards. I am currently researching alternative careers. I loved my job and still do enjoy many aspects of it but cuts mean it is harder to achieve anything meaningful and of worth. It is a service that is not missed until it is gone!*
- *Trading Standards have people who are great at their job and want to do the job but there are no resources to be able to do it. We are a vital Service but so small that we get missed.*

Conclusion

UNISON surveyed members working in trading standards teams in January 2018. We asked them a range of questions about the impact of public sector budget cuts on themselves and the work that they do. This report analyses their responses and allows you to hear directly from the workforce about what it's like trying to deliver high quality public services under austerity. The report reveals a dedicated workforce working hard to protect citizens from financial and physical harm. They support businesses by ensuring that they aren't undercut by fraudsters and those who don't follow the rules. They are dedicated, highly qualified teams who are under enormous pressure. They feel exhausted, undervalued and are struggling to deal with the demands placed upon them.

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