

From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services

Simon Jones, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee Meeting, 6th March 2025

Subject: Trading Standards Checked

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides a briefing on Kent County Council's Trading Standards Checked Service.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and Committee members are invited to promote the scheme and its benefits to residents and businesses in their divisions

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The total financial loss from doorstep crime in the UK could be as high as £1.3 billion per year.¹ This does not include the additional costs of repairing the damage caused by the criminals, or the health and social care costs of supporting the victims, on who the impact can last many months and often years.
- 1.2 42% of Kent residents are considered likely to be targeted by doorstep criminals.²
- 1.3 The average loss per victim of doorstep crime in Kent is £15,700.³
- 1.4 Home Office research shows that most of the victims of doorstep crime are over 65 and are two and a half times more likely to be in care or die within two years because of the impact of this type of victimisation.⁴
- 1.5 Kent County Council operates a Trading Standards Checked fair trader scheme to reduce doorstep crime, protect vulnerable consumers and support legitimate businesses.

¹ [November 19 "What's going on 'ere, then? : an empirical exploration of the anatomy of rogue trading incidents](#)

² Mosaic was used to quantify the % of Kent's population who are likely to fall victim to doorstep crime.

³ Based upon monetary loss data of 82 victims in Kent during 2024.

⁴ [ACTSO \(2014\) Summary of Doorstep Crime Report to National Tasking Group. Ruth Andrews](#) (Downloads a document)

2. About Trading Standards Checked

- 2.1 [Trading Standards Checked](#) (TSC) is Kent's only local, safe fair trader scheme. It is part of Trading Standards' approach to tackle and reduce doorstep crime in Kent. TSC offers protection to the most vulnerable, promotes safer communities, reduces doorstep crime and supports legitimate businesses.
- 2.2 Any business based in Kent, that provides home maintenance and improvement services (electricians, roofers, driveway installers, gardeners, plumbers etc.) can apply to be a member of the scheme.
- 2.3 A range of strict vetting checks, many of which can only be carried out by Trading Standards as the intelligence used is not available to private sector fair trader schemes, are carried out by a skilled Intelligence Vetting Officer. If the business is deemed suitable, they are accepted onto the scheme.
- 2.4 By checking businesses, and all owners of a business, TSC provides residents with a directory of safe, reliable traders who trade lawfully and will act fairly and honestly.
- 2.5 TSC works in partnership with Kent Police to tackle and reduce doorstep crime, educate and protect residents from criminals. Further vetting of our members is also carried out by Kent Police if intelligence suggests criminal activity.
- 2.6 TSC pro-actively raises awareness of doorstep crime in Kent and reduces the prevalence of doorstep crime through information and education campaigns. TSC works closely with partners such as Kent Police, the Kent Association of Local Councils, Citizens Advice, Age UK, District Councils and uses a range of social media channels to advise residents how to avoid becoming a victim, how to report criminals and promote TSC as the best place to find a safe trader.
- 2.7 The TSC website receives up to 6,000 visits in a month, with up to 2,500 searches for traders on the online directory.
- 2.8 Since April 2024, TSC on and offline communications and engagement campaigns have amassed a reach⁵ of 2.8 million.
- 2.9 Members pay an annual fee (£299 +VAT) which can be paid in full or in monthly instalments (£24.99 +VAT per month). Members renew their membership each year. The membership fees are reviewed annually.
- 2.10 TSC members benefit from:
 - A unique trader number alongside the TSC logo that they can use to promote their membership. (shown below)
 - Being listed on the TSC website which includes a full profile page that traders can edit and update to promote their business.
 - Industry leading customer reviews functionality.
 - A free option to spread the cost of membership over 12 monthly payments.

⁵ The number of times that TSC content was played or displayed on a social media channel or in printed publications.

- Access to free Trading Standards advice and support.
- Access to KCC's Alternative Dispute Resolution Service.
- Free Member networking and training events.
- Many promotional benefits including social media promotion, inclusion in a printed directory in The Net magazine, and promotion across KCC wide services.



2.11 Residents benefit from:

- A directory of safe local traders that have been vetted to the highest standard and that they can be confident will do the right thing and have good trading practices thanks to the TS support and guidance they receive.
- Information, advice and guidance on how to spot a doorstep criminal, how to say 'no' to them, how and where to find a safe trader and guidance on receiving estimates and contracts. TSC also promotes the reporting of criminal and rogue traders to help gather intelligence so can warn and inform residents if criminal traders are active in their area.
- A phone line to find a safe trader if the resident doesn't have access to the internet. The phone line is available from 9am - 6pm, Monday to Friday, and 9am - 5pm on Saturdays.
- An easy to use and industry leading review system that allows consumers to see reviews from other customers but also leave honest feedback about their trader to help other consumers choose traders.
- A commitment from a TSC trader that if things do go wrong, the trader will enter a Dispute Resolution process to try and find a resolution.

2.12 TSC complements other fair trader schemes that operate across the UK provided by the private sector, such as Checkatrade, or Trust a Trader, because it offers members and consumers a different type of service and higher level of vetting check. TSC has access to intelligence and information that no other scheme can access, therefore providing consumers with a greater degree of confidence in the traders with TSC membership.

2.13 TSC currently has 251 members (30th Jan 2025).

2.14 TSC potentially prevents a loss of £158,000 per month by Kent residents.⁶ This does not account for the knock-on emotional, physical or social care costs.

⁶ [What is Website Conversion?](#) Based on conversion rate of 2% of searches converting to a sale.

2.15 Member Testimonials

Matthew– Invicta Security Ltd “It’s a brand name that people can trust. I totally recommend any new business or even established businesses to get involved with Kent Trading Standards Checked.”

Matt - Moat Building “We’re comfortable being vetted and stand up to any scrutiny. Membership gives the customer confidence and puts their mind at ease.”

Tom – Pro Team Cleaning “I wanted to be represented by a commonly known organisation and more importantly recognised by the public. I wanted a tool that would help me grow my business. It’s good for my customers as the tradespeople they are letting into their house have been vetted by Kent County Council. We are proud to carry the logo on our vans and website as more and more people are getting ripped off by rogue traders. We can stand there and say we have done everything properly and play by the rules.”

2.16 Customer Reviews of TSC Members

Strood resident: Review for Gaslec Kent Ltd
Boiler Service/Gas Safety

“Very Friendly from first phone call. Fitted me in very quickly. Very pleased with work received, very informative. Deen was polite approachable and great from start. Very friendly. Will be recommending to friends.”

Maidstone resident: Review for A&C Pumps Ltd
Diagnosis of faulty sewage pump

“Helped us out with a non-working sewage pump. Came out really quickly, carried out a very thorough diagnosis and came back a few days later to replace the faulty pump. Have used again since and will do again probably.”

- 2.17 A recent case involved a 91-and 93-year-old couple in Charing who were victims of a solar panel scam and had paid £13,500 for equipment that would never work properly, was incomplete and had insufficient panels. The electrical installation was also unsafe. A TSC member, KAA Electrical, stepped in to help by visiting house victims and upon seeing the appalling work went out of their way to assist and rectify the situation.

3. Supporting strategic objectives

- 3.1 Placing economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity - one of the 5 ambitions of the Kent and Medway Economic Framework - TSC supports a thriving local economy by supporting legitimate SMEs in the home maintenance sector. TSC supports small businesses by providing them with free TS advice so they can trade with confidence. TSC promotes members as safe local traders that consumers can trust as well as educating residents about how to avoid criminal traders. TSC drives up standards in this sector which is rife with complaints, problems and consumer detriment.

- 3.2 Integrated Care Strategy (ICS) – TS and TSC play an important role in the delivery of the ICS, specifically outcomes 2: Tackling the wider determinants to prevent ill health and 3: Supporting happy and healthy living. TCS enables residents to have more confidence when choosing a trader and feel safe when they invite them into their home. The advice and information provided by TSC enables communities to come together to tackle doorstep crime and make communities feel safer. Residents are also more informed about and resilient to the issue of doorstep crime. The only way to eradicate doorstep crime is to empower individuals and communities to be aware and say ‘no’ to doorstep criminals.
- 3.3 New Models of Care and Support – TSC is a great example of upstream, long-term prevention. By informing, advising and guiding residents to use safe local traders and avoid doorstep criminals, TSC contributes to KCC’s social care responsibilities and duty regarding prevention as set out under Part 1, sections 2 and 4 of the Care Act 2014.
- 3.4 Environmental Step Change - An estimated 24 million UK homes need upgrading by 2050. That’s 2,525 homes per day, 7 days a week for the next 25 years. (Source: Trustmark) As a membership scheme with a significant number of energy installers and home maintenance providers, TSC is well-placed to make a significant contribution to the delivery of Kent’s Net Zero Carbon emissions target. We are looking to support existing members to upskill and diversify into the green energy sector to help achieve this target safely for consumers. We are also looking to expand our membership by recruiting more members in this sector and enabling consumers to easily find and confidently employ TS checked and safe green energy providers.
- 3.5 Infrastructure for Communities – following a change in the way KCC supports people who can choose what care and support they need and when, TSC is working with KCC social care commissioners to inform and develop the ‘Small Good Stuff’ scheme that connects people in need of support with small enterprise providers of care. This sector is vulnerable to scams and fraudulent activity, so we are working collaboratively to ensure that the care providers recommended by this scheme are safe and reliable to prevent harm.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 TSC has a full year working budget of -£23,000. Income is generated by Member fees and one-off grants.
- 4.2 The scheme is non-statutory but is an important part of Trading Standards’ strategy for tackling doorstep crime and delivers against a number of other strategic objectives. The scheme does not currently achieve full cost recovery but does have a 3-year business plan to increase income which, if successful, would achieve this by March 28. (Based on the current costs and membership fees.)

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 N/A

6. Equalities implications

6.1 The EQIA for this service is currently being updated.

7. Other corporate implications

7.1 N/A

8. Governance

8.1 N/A

9. Conclusions

9.1 TSC is KCC's fair trader scheme that provides residents with a source of safe local traders they can trust. It protects residents, supports legitimate businesses and reduces instances of doorstep crime as well as the subsequent financial and emotional harm caused by this devastating crime.

9.2 TSC is an integral part of Trading Standards and Kent Police's collaborative approach to tackling doorstep crime in Kent. Trading Standards Checked;

- Prevents doorstep crime therefore reducing the burden on the Trading Standards and Kent Police Enforcement services.
- Reduces the burden on victim support, Community Wardens and Adult Social Care.
- Provides a mechanism to improve the trading standards of businesses in this problematic sector where there is a lot of consumer detriment, financial harm and a general lack of knowledge and confidence amongst consumers when choosing and employing traders. TSC provides training and support to help businesses understand their legal obligations and improve their customer service, benefitting them and their customers.

9.1 Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and Committee members are invited to promote the scheme and its benefits to residents and businesses in their constituencies.

10. Background Documents

10.1 N/A

11. Contact details

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