



# **West Northamptonshire Council**

## **WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE**

### **2023-24 Plan regarding Enforcement of Section 54 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 - Sale of aerosol spray paints to under 16's**

#### **Introduction**

Section 32 of the Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 places a duty on the local Weights & Measures authority (Trading Standards Service) to consider, at least once in every period of twelve months, the extent to which it is appropriate for the authority to carry out in their area a programme of enforcement action in relation to section 54 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (which prohibits the sale of aerosol paint containers to a person under the age of sixteen) and to the extent that they consider it appropriate to do so, carry out such a programme.

West Northamptonshire Council is a Unitary Council which, from 1st April 2021, took over the provision of local public services from the aggregated Councils of Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire, and from the disaggregated Northamptonshire County Council. West Northamptonshire Council Trading Standards Service was created from half the disaggregated Northamptonshire County Council Trading Standards Service

#### **Background**

Graffiti is the gateway to a plethora of other problems – anti-social behaviour and criminality – and brings with it a huge social cost.

Nationwide, the bill to the council taxpayer for the removal of graffiti is £1 billion a year. The bill to clear up graffiti on the London Underground alone amounts to £10 million a year.

In Northampton, Veolia employ a dedicated graffiti removal team at around £30k per annum and all operatives emptying bins are expected to remove graffiti as they do so. In Daventry and South Northants very little graffiti is reported and most of the removal is dealt with using graffiti wipes and occasionally paint at a relatively low cost. Highways spend around £20k.

Where there are large amounts of graffiti you invariably find neglect; it occurs in an area which isn't cared for or it occurs in an area where members of the public feel uncared for and so feel it is not worth reporting. There may also be anti-social behaviour issues like littering, street drinking, drug use and other examples of criminal damage, like glass broken in bus shelters or other petty vandalism.

## **2022-23**

Following the trend of previous years, the Service has not received any complaints alleging the sale of spray paints to children under 16. Therefore, no test purchasing exercises were arranged.

## **2023-24**

West Northamptonshire Council Trading Standards Service will:

- ❖ Respond to any complaints alleging the sale of spray paints to under 16's by advising retailers of their legal responsibilities and good practice to not sell spray paints to young people under the age of 16.
- ❖ Liaise with Northamptonshire Police and Environmental Protection to gain intelligence around underage sales of spray paints and where appropriate work with relevant partners to reduce the incidence of graffiti within West Northamptonshire.
- ❖ Carry out test purchasing exercises using volunteer underage test purchasers in response to any complaints or local intelligence.
- ❖ Investigate and take appropriate enforcement action in respect of offences under Section 54 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 in accordance with our prosecution policy.
- ❖ Make available a retailer training pack covering all age restricted products.
- ❖ Where appropriate make use of the media to publicise relevant issues.
- ❖ Continue to promote PASS accredited proof of age cards to retailers and also the use of the 'Challenge 25' scheme, whereby businesses are advised to ask for PASS accredited proof of age if the purchaser looks under 25.

## **Enforcement background**

Graffiti is usually regarded as criminal damage under section 1(1) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971. Councils may issue a fixed penalty notice to deal with an offence under section 1(1) "which involves only the painting or writing on, or the soiling, marking or other defacing of, any property by whatever means" (Section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003). Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) includes articles made, adapted or intended for use in causing criminal damage. It does this by amending the list of offences in section 1(8) of PACE to include offences under section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971. The effect is to give police officers power to stop and search where they have reasonable suspicion that a person is carrying, for example, a spray paint can which they intend to use in producing graffiti.