

# **Northumberland County Council**

## **Housing and Public Protection Service**

### **Public Protection Service Statement 2018 - 2021**

**Head of Service: Philip Soderquest ,**

**Lead Member: Councillor John Riddle,**

**Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing &  
Resilience**

# Public Protection

## Service purpose and functions

### Purpose

The purpose of the Public Protection Service is to protect and improve public health and the environment for all. Also to regulate and support a safe & fair trading environment for the benefit of the businesses and consumers of Northumberland and so contribute to a vibrant and growing economy.

The aim of the Public Health Protection Unit is to provide; environmental health, operational community safety, environmental enforcement, food safety and animal welfare services to protect and improve the environment, public health, safety and well-being of residents, and support business growth.

The aim of the Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit is to provide Building Control, Licensing, Pest Control and Trading Standards Services by responding to requests for advice, guidance and services from businesses and residents and taking proportionate action when breaches of legislation are uncovered

The key services required by legislation to be delivered by the Public Health Protection Unit and Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit.

### Primary functions:

- Animal Welfare of companion animals
- Dog Control & fouling
- Environmental Enforcement (incl fly tipping, littering, abandoned vehicles)
- Housing Standards & HMO Licensing
- Noise / Smoke / Dust Control
- Regulation of private water supplies
- Anti-Social Behaviour Control/ Community Safety
- Air Quality Monitoring
- Contaminated Land
- Environmental assessments for planning consultations
- Regulation of permitted industrial premises
- Food Hygiene and Safety Inspections
- Port Health
- Infectious disease control
- Health and Safety
- The 'Produced in Northumberland' food verification scheme.
- Food Standards Inspections
- Animal Health for farm animals
- Fair Trading
- Product Safety
- Weights and Measures
- Under Age Sales

- Civil Law Consumer and Business Advice
- Primary food and feed producers regulation
- Building Regulations
- Dangerous Buildings / Demolitions
- Land Charges Register & Searches
- Street Naming and Numbering
- Licensing Enforcement / Committees
- Taxi Licensing
- Licensed Premises
- Pest Control

# Service Parameters

## Key service facts and figures

### Public Health Protection Unit

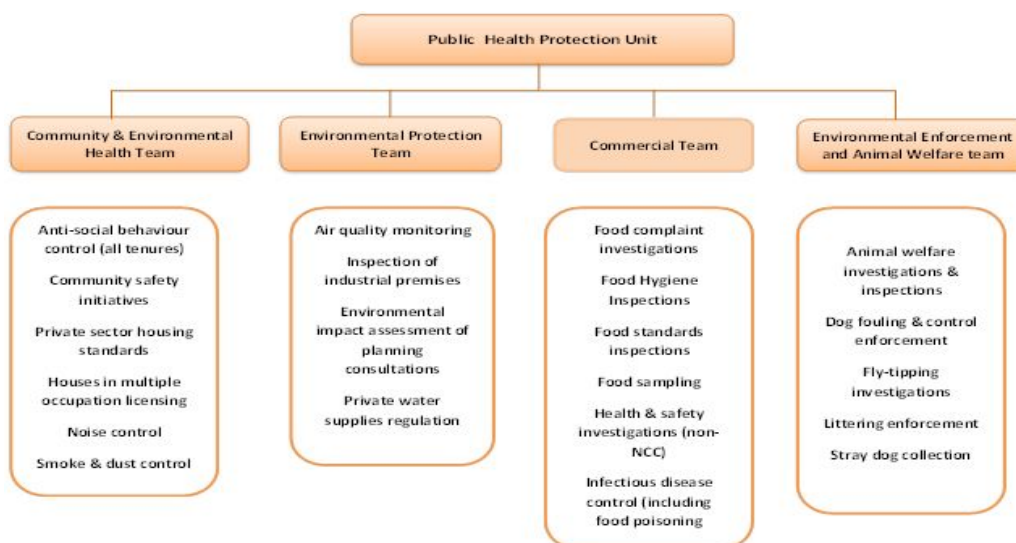
The Public Health Protection Unit responded to 12,151 service requests in 2017 from residents and businesses. It also carried out hundreds of proactive visits to protect & improve food hygiene, food standards, air quality, and water quality in private water supplies.

The Unit investigates many different types of public health & safety issues including anti-social behaviour, noise, air & land pollution, fly tipping, littering, poor housing standards, dog fouling and we take hundreds of stray dogs a year to a place of safety.

The Units activities are strongly linked to all the corporate priorities but particularly:

- We want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for (living),
- We want you to love where you live (enjoying).

The Unit comprises four teams that deliver a series of protective and/or preventative statutory functions for the Council across more than 100 pieces of legislation. The Unit seeks to protect and improve public health and safety through an approach that uses the three 'E's': education, engagement and, where necessary, enforcement.



The Unit works in partnership with a variety of other services including; Northumbria Police, Public Health England, Fire Safety, Adult & Children Safeguarding, Town/ Parish Councils, and plays an active role in the Safer Northumberland Partnership.

The Unit comprises officers with a wide range of competencies including; environmental health officers, community safety officers, environmental enforcement officers, animal welfare officers, and technical officers with a wide range of specialisms.

The Public Health Protection Unit's activities in 2017 included:

- The Public Health Protection Unit investigated 1867 noise and environmental protection complaints. 98% were responded to within 3 working days.
- The Environmental Protection Team was consulted and provided expert advice on 1,150 planning applications. For 82% of applications a consultee response was provided within 21 days.
- The Community & Environmental Health Team investigated 913 complaints concerning anti-social behaviour in 2017. 94% were responded to within 3 working days.
- The Environmental Enforcement and Animal Welfare Team investigated 1,016 fly tips and 570 waste accumulations.
- The Environmental Enforcement and Animal Welfare Team investigated 512 reported abandoned vehicles.
- The Community & Environmental Health Team investigated 522 housing standards complaints from tenants. 98% were responded to within 3 days and this ensured 188 serious housing health and safety hazards were removed.
- The Environmental Enforcement and Animal Welfare Team investigated 3,337 dog related and animal welfare service requests. We collected 407 stray dogs and took 100% of them to a place of safety within one working day. Officers issued 80 fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and other dog control offences.
- The Commercial Team carried out hundreds of proactive food safety and high risk food standards inspections of premises across Northumberland. They also investigated 318 food complaints responding to 99% in 3 days.
- The Unit continued to deliver and promote the Produced in Northumberland verification scheme that received extensive positive coverage in the media. By the end of 2017 over 80 businesses had signed up to the scheme. An increase of 27% from the previous year.
- The Animal Welfare stray dog collection service once again received the RSPCA's Gold Footprint Award.





'Produced in Northumberland' is an initiative from Northumberland County Council which recognises Northumberland food producers and also businesses that use and promote food and drink that is made in Northumberland. The core of the scheme is a source verification carried out by lead auditor trained officers of the Public Health Protection Unit. Additionally scheme members must reach a compliant food safety standard so this provides additional reassurance to the public that food produced or retailed with this branding is both safe and sourced locally.

In 2018/19 the scheme has started to reach national significance and will be part of an event at the UK Parliament on 13th June 2018. Also officers regular promote the scheme at Northumberland food festivals and the County Show.

This verification scheme is offered to local businesses with the aim of raising the profile, value and public confidence in Northumberland food & drink. With regard to helping tourism within the County the scheme also helps to add value to the visitors overall experience of Northumberland as food & drink is such an important and memorable part of their visit.

### **Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit**

The Business Compliance & Public Safety Unit (BC&PSU) brings together a diverse group of Teams with a range of specialist skills.

The Building Control Team oversees constructions in the County from plan checking to completion, covering buildings from domestic extensions up to factories, leisure centres and schools. They also have responsibility when a dangerous structure is identified, working with colleagues in the Highways Team and the Police to make the area safe for residents, pedestrians and road users.

The Licensing Team administer licences and permits for taxi drivers and vehicles, for pubs, clubs and off-licences, scrap metal dealers, zoos, street traders, bookmakers, music festivals and tattooists amongst others. In many cases they have to ensure that licence holders are fit and proper people to hold licences and that they will be able to comply with the requirements of the relevant legislation. The Licensing Enforcement Team carries out checks to ensure that these requirements are being met. The Team work closely with the Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Public Health, Environmental Health and Trading Standards,

amongst others to monitor performance by licence holders and to ensure compliance.

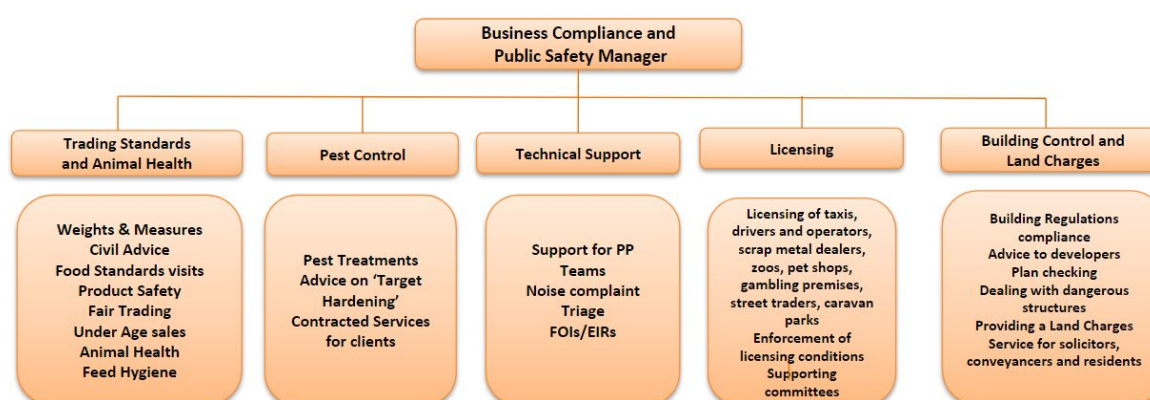
Pest Control provides a service to business and residents, eradicating pests and providing advice on protection against infestation. Their work is seasonal with insects being the main focus during the warmer seasons and rodents during the colder months. Larger organisations can contract with them for annual support. Clients include leisure centres, hospitals and social landlords, which helps to improve their offer to their tenants.

The Trading Standards & Animal Health Team focus on making sure that goods and services, including foods, and other products are safe and fairly described and traded. They make sure that all weighing and measuring equipment is giving the correct amount and that packages weigh what they say on their label. The Animal Health section focuses on preventing the spread of animal diseases such as foot and mouth. They also make sure that animal feed provided for animals is safe for them and the end consumer.

Our Technical Support Team support activity across all of Public Protection. Their services are integrated into front line activity so as to release more time for officers to work directly with clients. Without this support, front line activity would be severely reduced.

The BC & PS Unit covers a range of services. The following figures help to illustrate the diversity of activity undertaken. In the 2016-17 financial year:

- The Pest Control Team responded to 5576 requests for service with 2899 being initial requests and a further 2679 revisits to complete treatments dealing with rats, mice, fleas, wasps, ants and other pests. They also carried out 358 visits for complaints.
- The Trading Standards & Animal Health Team received 2011 consumer complaints and 705 requests for advice from businesses and dealt with issues such as counterfeit vodka, illicit tobacco, unsafe cars, rogue traders, scams, imported puppies and livestock of animals at markets.
- The Licensing Team administered 5029 permits and licences for taxi drivers and vehicles, pubs clubs and off-licences, zoos, street traders and scrap metal dealers, amongst others.
- Building Control supervised building schemes worth over £130m, carrying out 13,000 inspections to ensure that buildings in Northumberland are safe to live in, energy efficient and accessible for all our residents.
- The Technical Support Team dealt with 193 Freedom of Information requests, 1679 Health & Safety Accident Forms, 1166 Planning Applications and minuted 3 meetings.



### Summary of service resources at 1 April 2018:

Function	Number of FTE posts	Staffing expenditure	Non-staffing expenditure	Income	Capital investment
Public Health Protection	47.17	1,921,365	255,660	-188,320	0
Business Compliance & Public Safety	55.96	2,092,015	576,040	-2,393,060	0
<b>Totals for Service</b>	<b>103.13</b>	<b>4,013,3880</b>	<b>831,700</b>	<b>2,581,380</b>	<b>0</b>



## Contribution to the Corporate Plan

Public Protection supports the Vision and Values of the County Council in numerous ways across the full range of services it provides. The Service is an integral part of the County Council and recognises the key themes of a new organisational cultural strategy which include:

- Ensuring our services are customer focused
- Supporting communities and staff to embrace change and innovation
- Involving communities and staff in decisions which affect them
- Supporting communities to feel safe
- Creating a healthy and positive working environment

The Priorities identified later in this document for the period 2018-2021 focus on these Visions and Values and how this will be achieved is detailed across the document and in all service plans produced by the individual teams within the service. Links to the Corporate Visions and Values are indicated against each Priority.

Public Protection also recognises and will strive to adhere to the five key traits of the Administration: the need for **financial prudence**; being **resourceful**; the need to **listen and consider** views; to be seen as **empowering**; and to seek to **collaborate** where it is in Northumberland's interests to do so.

Public Protection has adopted an Improvement Plan for 2018-19:

Area for improvement	Proposed action	Responsible officer(s)	Target date
Performance management	Review approach to performance management	Peter Simpson/Dave Sayer	30.03.19
GDPR Compliance	Completion of the GDPR audit and development of action plan	Dave Sayer/ Peter Simpson	Comply with NCC deadlines

Scheme of Management / Delegations	Complete formal sign off of the SoM for Public Protection and consider co-development of SoM with Housing	Peter Simpson	31.03.19
Collaborative working and partnerships	Look to enhance current partnerships and development new collaborations with internal and external partner to improve outcomes and enhance service delivery	Peter Simpson/Dave Sayer	Ongoing
Agile working, IT hardware refresh	Achieve IT refresh to maximise opportunities of Google chromebooks	Peter simpson/Dave sayer	Ongoing

## External Validation

The stray dog collection service provided by the Service's animal welfare officers once again received the RSPCA's Gold Footprint award in 2017/18.

### Customer perception

The Service undertakes public satisfaction services. For most of the teams this is by means of an online questionnaire. Following a request by Members, the Commercial Team use a paper system for their food hygiene work, as do Trading Standards for their food standards visits.

As members of staff complete a piece of work, such as closing a complaint or service request, they will send the link to the survey to the client or customer. The responses are collated quarterly.

For 2017/18, the results from the 436 positive or negative responses to the comment "I received a high level of customer service" 402 indicated that they Agreed or Strongly Agreed, giving a score of 92.2%. (76% of which Strongly Agreed and 24% Agreed)

## **Benchmarking**

The 17/18 performance of the teams delivering the Food Service Plan is in the process of being benchmarked with the other NE authorities. The benchmarking is occurring through the North East Food Liaison Group. The intention is that the benchmarking will cover both food hygiene and food standards inspections, comparing performance and resource allocation.

The Building Control Team have begun implementation of the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Quality Management System and anticipate being externally audited during 2018/19.

The Trading Standards & Animal Health Team are taking part in a pilot to implement the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) Inputs and Outcomes Performance Framework.

## Priorities for 2018 - 2021

Priority area	Key milestones
<p><b>1. The delivery of the Public Health Protection Unit Service Delivery Plan 18/19.</b></p>	<p>The activities detailed in the plans will be either ongoing work which will be monitored at the end of each month or specific programmes with their own identified milestones</p>
<p><b>2. The delivery of the Business Compliance and Public Safety Unit Service Delivery Plan 18/1.9</b></p>	<p>The activities detailed in the plans will be either ongoing work which will be monitored at the end of each month or specific programmes with their own identified milestones</p>
<p><b>3. Implement a collaborative approach to Homes in Multiple Occupation in light of changes to the licensing regime.</b></p>	<p>Survey to identify potential HMOs under new licensing requirements. Public Health Protection Unit - Environmental Health and NFRS - Fire Safety Department to carry out joint inspections on any HMOs identified under new licensing requirements. Engage with partners in awareness raising events e.g. landlord forums. Amend HMO Policy in accordance with new Govt legislation.</p>
<p><b>4. Introduce a revised local community safety engagement processes via a Single Point of Contact system.</b></p>	<p>Consultation with Police. Paper to SNP strategy board for agreement. Consultation with TC/PCs.</p>

<b>5. Deliver the Produced in Northumberland Verification Scheme.</b>	<b>Including participation in a Parliament event, County Show and all 'Meet the Maker' events. Increase Lead Auditor capacity by 1 Officer through training and certification completed by 31.12.18.</b>

## Performance framework

Measure	Outturn 2016/17	Outturn as at Feb 2017/18	Target 2018-19	Target 2019-20	Target 2020-21
14. Percentage of food plan visits achieved against % expected in plan.(cumulative)	97.31%	86.78%	94.0%	N/A	N/A
15. % of service requests responded to within three days	89.88%	96.51%	90%	90%	90%
16. % of planning consultations responded to within target time	79.23%	81.14%	75%	75%	75%
17. % of pest control treatments conducted on time	99.59%	99.44%	100%	N/A	N/A
18. Number of serious private sector health and safety housing hazards removed	195	246	N/A	N/A	N/A
19. % of waste accumulations removed from private land, following environmental enforcement team action within 28 days ***	86.48%	84.79%	80%	80%	80%
20. % of land charges responses replied to within 10 working days	55.54%	80.60%	65%	N/A	N/A
21. Reported dangerous structures inspected within 1 working day of notification	100%	100%	100%	N/A	N/A
22. % of food premises with a hygiene rating of 3-5 (comparison with national average for the month)	98.44%	98.61%	N/A	N/A	N/A
22. % of food premises with a hygiene rating of 3-5 (comparison with national average for the month)	98.44%	98.61%	N/A	N/A	N/A
23. % of high priority food premises inspections completed in line with annual programme (cumulative)	100%	89.47%	98%	N/A	N/A
24. % high risk animal health visits	18.80%	24%	10%	N/A	N/A

conducted in line with quarterly schedule	30.56%	41.3%	35%	N/A	N/A
	63.20%	62.7%	65%	N/A	N/A
	99.30%		95%	N/A	N/A
25. % stray dogs collected within 1 working day	100%	100%	99%	99%	99%
26. Number of dog control fixed penalty notices served	102	75	N/A	N/A	N/A
27. % of licence applications processed within the specified timescale ***	N/A	93.03%	90%	N/A	N/A