

# Trading places

Business insight for local authorities

**LBRO**  
Better Local Regulation



Trading  
Places

New Perspectives on Compliance

# Introduction

Greater understanding between local authority regulatory services and the businesses they monitor brings benefits for both parties. This removes cultural barriers to communication, strengthens working relationships, encourages mutual trust and promotes a partnership approach to achieving compliance.

Officers now have the opportunity to step into their customers' commercial shoes via Trading Places. Study visits arranged at UK companies of all sizes offer great practical learning experiences, plus valuable insight into how businesses are run and the challenges they can face.

Trading Places was launched in March 2009 after extensive testing and evaluation, and is endorsed by the organisations shown. We believe it can make a significant positive impact on the way in which the local regulatory system works in practice.



"BHF Group welcomes the concept of Trading Places, and members taking part have valued the opportunity to get their views heard and understood. We will continue to encourage members to take part in Trading Places, and anticipate seeing positive action at a local and national level to address our concerns."

**Alan Hawkins, Chief Executive,  
British Hardware Federation Group**



# What is Trading Places?

Trading Places is an opportunity for environmental health, fire safety, licensing and trading standards officers to gain valuable insight into how businesses deal with regulation. In response to demand, this two-way learning experience is now provided in two formats.

Two-day format (suitable for larger businesses) – Day one gives a strategic overview of the business concerned, extending to its key functions and in particular the management of compliance. Day two is spent at the sharp end, looking at how customers are served and involving a range of practical activities.

One-day format (suitable for smaller businesses) – A group session for a number of businesses is coordinated by their trade association or representative body. It involves short presentations designed to encourage discussion of experiences of regulation, as well as exploration of ideas. It is followed up with learning visits to participating businesses at mutually convenient times.

By bringing together people from the private and public sectors, and through the involvement of national regulators, both formats promote shared learning. All the participants

have a great opportunity to appreciate alternative perspectives to business compliance, develop closer working relationships and find out more about the challenges and constraints both companies and local authority regulatory services face. Participants are encouraged to make advance preparations to get the most out of Trading Places, and afterwards to identify how their experiences can be applied to their future working practices.

“Trading Places has real potential to enhance the level of dialogue and understanding between business and those who enforce regulation at a local level.”

**Matthew Fell, Director of Company Affairs, Confederation of British Industry**

“I had the pleasure of meeting the participants on the first Trading Places pilot and I am immensely pleased that LBRO is launching this initiative to break down barriers to build a new relationship between regulators and the regulated, and make our regulatory system work better for all concerned.”

**Sir Philip Hampton, Chairman, Royal Bank of Scotland**

# Benefits for regulators

By assisting council officers in their efforts to become more attuned to the needs and concerns of businesses, Trading Places helps them to target support when and where it is needed, using resources more effectively. The open and frank dialogue bridges communications gaps and fosters a partnership approach to compliance.

Participation in Trading Places also addresses the common assertions that local regulators do not appreciate how seriously companies take compliance, nor the demands of a fast-moving commercial environment.

As well as being a great practical learning experience, Trading Places carries continuous professional development points for members of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Trading Standards Institute, recognising its role in career progression.

“Reducing health risks for communities and organisations without over-burdensome regulation remains at the heart of our work, so Trading Places is a good way to build on knowledge and understanding for environmental health practitioners and businesses.”

**Graham Jukes, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health**

“It’s important that regulators and businesses understand each other’s problems, as really we’re all in the same game and should be working towards economic recovery and health.”

**Ron Gainsford, Chief Executive, Trading Standards Institute**



“Taking part enabled me to assess just how consistent and robust a company audit process could be and whether it would lead to a reduced number of regulatory visits in future.”

**Philip Davies, Head of Public Protection, Carmarthenshire County Council**

# Benefits for business

By forging stronger relationships with local regulators, Trading Places enables businesses to obtain more targeted advice and support from councils, ultimately contributing to their prosperity. It also promotes a partnership approach to achieving compliance.

Through the reduction of burdens for compliant companies, more resources can be deployed to tackle the rogue traders who undermine legitimate competition.



“Trading Places is a good starting point to help regulators begin to understand the difficulties and concerns that businesses have with the way that they are inspected by the local authorities.”

**Sara Higham, Policy Adviser,  
Federation of Small Businesses**

“Trading Places fosters a better relationship between businesses and regulators. With increased understanding between the two, compliance should be improved with fewer headaches.”

**Adam Marshall, Director of Policy,  
British Chambers of Commerce**

“Trading Places offers an opportunity to develop a trusted partnership. Both parties get a better understanding of how each works and an insight into the practicalities we all face on a daily basis. This is the best basis for working together; after all, satisfied consumers are the mutual goal of our brand and of regulators.”

**Sukh Gill, Chief Food Law Adviser,  
Müller UK**

# Register now

All staff working in environmental health, fire safety, licensing and trading standards regulatory service functions in local authorities can take part in Trading Places, as can businesses from any sector.

To register your interest, visit [www.lbro.org.uk](http://www.lbro.org.uk) and follow the link on the home page.

If you represent a council, we will suggest potential options and dates. If you represent a business, we will discuss how to get maximum value from your involvement as a host. Either way, we will be in touch!

At the outset, all we ask is that you agree to the terms and conditions, and complete a confidentiality agreement to protect commercially or operationally sensitive information on all sides.

“The Trading Places experience showed me that big businesses operate in very different ways to local government. If the company has a proactive health and safety culture, it may be more appropriate to act informally in certain cases, where works may be done quicker than if notices had been served.”

**Ben Stockley, Senior Environmental Health Officer, New Forest District Council**



“Not all businesses are the same and consequently there are big differences in the ways they approach legal compliance. We certainly found that people who came to Tesco as part of the Trading Places pilot left with a much better understanding of how a large retail business manages its activities.”

**David Pearce, Head of Legal, Trading Law and Technical, Tesco Stores Ltd**

The Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) helps councils to improve the way they implement environmental health, fire safety, licensing and trading standards regulations. It is our responsibility to ensure that these vital public services are consistent, targeted, accountable, transparent and proportionate to risk.

We reduce unnecessary red tape for law-abiding businesses, to allow greater focus on targeting the rogue traders who harm vulnerable people and damage our communities. By making it easier for councils to advise on and apply the rules, and simpler for companies to understand them, we help to ensure that local regulation delivers both prosperity and protection.

Our duties include managing the Primary Authority scheme, advising central government on local regulation, providing statutory guidance and best practice to councils, and updating the list of national enforcement priorities for local government.

LBRO was established under the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 as a non-departmental public body, accountable to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) through the Better Regulation Executive.

We are governed by an independent Board and operate across the United Kingdom from our base in central Birmingham.



**For further information about Trading Places, please contact Jenny Nobes at [jenny.nobes@lbro.org.uk](mailto:jenny.nobes@lbro.org.uk) or on 0121 226 4000.**

**Alternatively, visit [www.lbro.org.uk](http://www.lbro.org.uk)**



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