



# Shared Regulatory Services

## Business Plan

2025/26



Gwasanaethau  
**Rheoliadol**  
a Rennir



# Foreword

It is ten years since the Shared Regulatory Service was launched, and this 2025-26 Business Plan sets out our eleventh programme of work in delivering the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing functions across the Bridgend, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Council areas.

Those ten years have been a time of significant change both globally and closer to home. Chief amongst these changes of course are the global pandemic and its aftermath, the impact of EU Exit on supply chains, and the economic shockwaves caused by the war in Ukraine and the wider cost-of-living crisis. Against this challenging backdrop, the Service has demonstrated time and again how it is able to embrace change and remain ever responsive to the needs of the partner Councils.

It is pleasing to see that the efforts of the Service in addressing long standing recruitment and retention pressures have resulted in a staffing structure that is more stable now than at any time. In addition, as we enter the new financial year, I'm delighted that the Level 4 Regulatory Compliance apprenticeship for Wales has finally launched. The apprenticeship was some five years in the making, but with the determination of SRS in leading on its development, it now presents the ideal entry pathway into careers in Regulatory Services in Wales. The apprenticeship enables apprentices to earn as they learn, and it enables councils to make full use of the apprenticeship levy in developing the Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers of the future.

As in the last few years, the continuing squeeze on public sector finances and the resultant need to deliver additional savings will put pressure on the Service in 2025-26, and while 2024-25 saw some of our very best performance, there is a need to be realistic moving forward as to the levels of service possible within a diminishing resource. This all at a time of new areas of Government legislation and enforcement falling to the Service, but with no dedicated funding associated with it.

The establishment of a number of new income streams has been under development during 2024-25, but we must do more and be more innovative in this regard in the coming year. Building on our impressive track record to date, enhanced income generation and cost recovery will play an important role in protecting and sustaining the Service.

I couldn't be prouder of our staff in all that they do to deliver first class services for residents and businesses, and safeguard the health, the safety and the economic wellbeing of the three-authority region. The achievements and planned outcomes in the pages that follow are all thanks to the talent, dedication and hard work of our staff, and I very much look forward to the actions contained in the chapters of this Business Plan being delivered in the year ahead.



**Helen Picton**  
**Head of Shared Regulatory Services**

# 1. Shared Regulatory Services

**Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) is a collaborative service formed between Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015. SRS delivers a fully integrated service under a single management structure for trading standards, environmental health and licensing functions with shared governance arrangements ensuring full elected member involvement.**

SRS operates under a Joint Working Agreement (JWA) whereby the Head of SRS reports on service provision to a Joint Committee of elected members drawn from across the three parent Councils. An officer management board has oversight of the operation of the service and provides support to the Head of Shared Regulatory Services to ensure the development and delivery of a shared vision and strategy for Regulatory Services.

The detailed delegations of policy and functions from partners to the Joint Committee and Head of Service are set out in the Joint Working Agreement which includes:

- The functions to be carried out by the joint service.
- The terms of reference and constitution of the Joint Committee, the Management Board etc.
- The terms of the proposed joint service such as staffing, the services to be provided by the host and other partners, financing and other functional issues.
- Financial Operating Model.

Consequently, the SRS works across the three Councils supporting a range of Committees and where needed, the three Cabinets, to deliver the Regulatory function. The workflow involves quarterly meetings with the officer Management Board followed by meetings of the SRS Joint Committee, details of which are then communicated to all three Cabinets. Officers meet members of the Joint Committee on a regular basis to ensure both regional and local issues are considered and managed appropriately.

Details of the SRS Joint Committee meetings are held on the websites of each Council. The Joint Committee reports depict the development and future direction of the Service.

## Key services offered

The service delivers a diverse and comprehensive range of functions that safeguard the health, safety and economic wellbeing of consumers, businesses and residents covering the main areas of environmental health, trading standards and licensing. These broad areas encompass a wide spectrum of services that deal with issues that can have a huge impact upon people when things go wrong or when there is poor compliance.



Food Hygiene and Standards

**Food Hygiene and Standards** protect public health by ensuring that the food we eat is without risk to the health and safety of consumers and is correctly described throughout the food chain. This is achieved through regular food and feed safety and standards inspections of food business and guest caterers, operating the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, providing practical advice, investigating food safety and standards complaints, carrying out food and water sampling and undertaking checks on imported food.



Fair Trading

**Fair Trading** protects consumers and businesses by maintaining and promoting a fair and safe trading environment. This area of work ensures that businesses comply with a host of consumer protection statutes including those relating to:

- Product safety;
- Age restricted sales;
- Counterfeiting;
- Environmental safety;
- Weights and measures;
- False claims about goods and services.

The Service investigates complaints, participates in criminal investigations and enforcement exercises, conducts inspections of businesses, undertakes a sampling programme, and helping businesses improve their trading practices.



Safeguarding

**Our safeguarding** work ensures we investigate cases of malpractice including rogue traders, scams and doorstep crime. We provide consumer advice to vulnerable residents and help them obtain redress.



Metrology

SRS has the only UKAS accredited **Metrology** laboratory in Wales providing calibration of weights and measures of length and capacity.



Housing Safety

**Housing Safety** protects public health by working with private landlords and owners to provide warm, safe and healthy homes for tenants. Officers ensure that Houses in Multiple Occupation are licensed through Mandatory and Additional Licensing Schemes, inspect HMO's and improve physical and management standards of privately rented accommodation. Complaints from tenants about their rented accommodation are investigated. These can include complaints about damp, mould, heating disrepair, nuisance, and student housing issues. Amenity issues associated with empty homes that have fallen into disrepair are also addressed and we lead and co-ordinate across the 3 Councils the corporate strategies in place which aim to bring vacant homes back into beneficial use.



Noise Pollution

**Pollution** also protects public health by controlling noise and air emissions into the environment. The service investigates noise complaints about issues such as amplified music, DIY activities, house and car alarms, barking dogs, and construction sites. It investigates air pollution complaints involving smoke, dust and odour and illegal burning, undertakes environmental monitoring, local Air Quality Management and regulates emissions from industrial processes.



Air Pollution



Port Health

**Port Health** prevents the import of infectious and animal disease into the UK, ensuring ships comply with international agreed public health sanitation standards and improves the safety and quality of the food chain.



Contaminated Land

**Contaminated Land** protects public health by reviewing and implementing the Contaminated Land Strategy which ensures the identification, inspection and remediation of historically contaminated sites. Private water supplies used for both domestic and commercial purposes (such as drinking, cooking, and washing) are regulated and Environmental Information Requests and Planning application consultations are responded to.



Health and Safety at Work

**Health and Safety** protects the health, safety and welfare of staff, contractors and any member of the public affected by workplace activities by working with others to ensure risks in the workplace are managed properly. This is achieved by undertaking planned inspections and targeted initiatives, investigating reported accidents, diseases, dangerous occurrences and complaints, providing advice and guidance to employers and employees and securing safety standards at outdoor events.



Communicable Disease

**Communicable Disease** protects public health by controlling and preventing cases and outbreaks of infectious disease by investigating confirmed sporadic and outbreak cases of communicable disease. The service provides and reviews advice and guidance on infection control, cleaning and disinfection, case and contact exclusions, provides training on food hygiene, nutritional and infection control, enforces health protection legislation to minimise the spread of communicable disease and contamination from radiation and chemicals that threaten health and leads on local and national communicable disease surveillance programmes.



Animal Health and Welfare

**Animal Health and Warden Services** ensure the wellbeing of animals generally. This includes ensuring feeding stuffs provided to animals are safe and that animals are transferred humanely and animal movements are monitored to prevent the spread of diseases such as Rabies, Anthrax and Foot and Mouth. Our Wardens respond to complaints about straying animals such as dogs and horses.



Licensing

**Licensing** determines applications for the grant, renewal, variation and transfer of many different authorisations which are the responsibility of the Councils. Applications for licences, certificates, registrations and permits are processed and enforcement undertaken in respect of statutory requirements such as alcohol, public entertainment, gambling, street trading, taxi licences, charitable collections and animal related licensing.



Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit

The **Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit** is one of only 4 units operating across the UK. The Unit covers all 22 Local Authority areas in Wales with the key aim of tackling the problem of illegal money lending. The Unit is both proactive and reactive in its work providing education and promotion across Wales to various social groups and highlighting the dangers of illegal lending. The Team also carries out detailed investigations with a view to prosecuting offenders and has the capabilities to act swiftly where necessary to deal with victims of loan sharks.



Working with Business

Shared Regulatory Services has adopted a more commercial approach by developing paid for services and marketing them to businesses. These commercial activities enhance and complement existing statutory services and provide income generation for the service. They include:-

- Bespoke and accredited training solutions to businesses to assist in achieving legal compliance;
- Paid for business advice visits and 'health' checks from our highly skilled and experienced officers to help and support businesses to comply with legislation;
- Developing Primary Authority partnerships for businesses that trade across council boundaries where they can enter into a legally recognised partnership with the Service, receiving an agreed package of advice and support;
- Marketing the only UKAS Metrology Laboratory in Wales providing calibration of weights and measures of length and capacity;
- Extending and reviewing training offerings to meet business needs;
- Identifying new funding sources;
- Exploring potential income generating services and developing paid for services.

**Pest Control** offers services to the Vale area for the treatment of pests and infestations. This could include, rats, wasps, mice, fleas, cockroaches etc.

**Health Protection** - The unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 outbreak saw SRS adapt and work in partnership to reduce the transmission of the virus across the region. This continues to be achieved through our Health Protection Team who work with the Health Boards and partner agencies to continue to provide support to care homes and other high risk settings in respect of Covid-19 and the wider health protection agenda.

The SRS delivers a range of statutory duties for the partner Councils and also functions where the Council has been given powers in legislation to safeguard and protect local communities. Determining the relative importance and value of council services when deciding on where to make savings or service reductions is not easy. Often the debate starts with a focus on determining whether a service is 'statutory' or 'discretionary'. Defining services as 'statutory' or 'discretionary' is perhaps unhelpful. Services that keep people healthy, well and safe; support businesses to flourish and thrive; protect and enhance our environment are essential. In this plan we have sought to clarify the legal basis for a service or how it contributes to wider council responsibilities, but many SRS functions cannot be easily defined in this way; some are extensions of 'statutory' activity whilst other services have developed over time to become longstanding, highly valued and central to the work of each council.

# Area Profile

**Shared Regulatory Services covers the Council areas of Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and serves around 650,000 residents.** Extending from St Mellons in the east to Maesteg in the west, the area encompasses Cardiff, the capital City of Wales with its array of cultural, financial and commercial organisations and the rural areas of Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan with their vibrant tourist and agricultural economies.



**Bridgend is situated on the south coast straddling the M4 corridor.** It comprises an area of 28,500 hectares and a population of over 140,000 residents. To the north of the M4, the area consists of mainly ex-coal mining valley communities with Maesteg as the main centre of population. To the south of the M4, the ex-market town of Bridgend is the largest town, the hub of the economy and its employment base. To the south west on the coast lies Porthcawl, a traditional seaside resort, with a high proportion of elderly residents, which is subject to a major influx of tourists during the summer period.

**Cardiff is the capital city of Wales.** In population terms, it is the largest city in Wales with a population of nearly 370,000. Population alone however, does not fully represent Cardiff's significance as a regional trading and business centre as the population swells by approximately 70,000 daily with commuters and visitors. Cardiff is the seat of government and the commercial, financial and administrative centre of Wales. Cardiff boasts one of the most vibrant city centres in the UK and on a typical weekend, Cardiff's night time economy can attract over 40,000 people and sometimes more than 100,000 when the City's Principality Stadium hosts international events.



**The Vale of Glamorgan is bounded to the north by the M4 motorway and to the south by the Severn Estuary.** It covers 33,097 hectares with 53 kilometres of coastline, and a population of over 130,000 residents. The area is predominantly rural in character, but contains several urban areas of note such as Barry, Penarth, Dinas Powys and the historic towns of Cowbridge and Llantwit Major. Barry is the largest town, a key employment area and popular seaside resort. The rural parts of the Vale provide a strong agricultural base together with a quality environment, which is a key part of the area's attraction. The area includes Barry Docks and Cardiff International Airport.



# Staff resources

Our organisational structure focuses upon generic working and multi-disciplinary officers, while retaining capacity to develop specialist professionals. The structure allows the deployment of people in different ways enabling the service to offer income-generating services that complement the more traditional services. The Service currently employs 175 FTE operating across 3 distinct sectors populated largely by professionally qualified Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers who focus on more complex issues, supported by Technical Officers that fulfil a monitoring and triage role. In addition, discrete specialist roles exist to support the service in fulfilling its duties.

## Our teams

**Health and Public Protection** ensures that businesses comply with a host of consumer and public protection requirements. The team ensure that the food we eat is safe through food safety and standards work; that health and safety risks in the workplace are managed properly; that a fair and safe trading environment exists for consumers; and that public health is protected by controlling and preventing cases and outbreaks of infectious disease and providing support to care homes and other high risk settings in respect of Covid-19 and the wider health protection agenda.



**Environmental Protection and Licensing** deals mainly with activities relating to residential premises or those that have an impact on the local community. The team protects public health by working with private landlords and owners to provide warm, safe and healthy homes for tenants; controlling noise and air emissions into the environment and determining and enforcing a wide range of licensable activities.



**Enterprise and Specialist Services** deals with a diverse range of activities including air quality, contaminated land, pest control (Vale), animal welfare, major investigations and safeguarding and some elements of food safety, trading standards and health and safety. The team also has a role in generating income through the delivery of training, Primary Authority partnerships and paid for advice services and managing the UKAS Metrology Laboratory. Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit also operates on behalf of other Welsh Councils and the Business Support function provides centralised administrative support to the whole service.



## 2. Service aims & strategic priorities

Shared Regulatory Services plays a key role in delivering the aspirations and priorities of Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils through the delivery of a wide range of services. We have developed a vision, supported by a suite of strategic priorities, that sets out our ambition of being a progressive and innovative organisation. This allows us to deliver high quality, customer focussed services that safeguard the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of our citizens.

Our vision is

***To be the leading provider of regulatory services that safeguard the health, safety and economic wellbeing of the region***

As a regional organisation providing regulatory services across three local authority areas, we place the corporate priorities and outcomes of the three councils at the heart of all that we do. In developing our own strategic priorities for Shared Regulatory Services, we have considered the priorities and desired outcomes of all the three authorities, together with the needs and aspirations of our partners and customers so they translate into priorities that meet local needs.



Supporting these strategic priorities, are a number of outcomes that the Service aims to deliver and which are evidenced throughout this Business Plan. Our vision and outcomes will be achieved through the following primary aims:

- Understanding the needs of our customers and placing their needs at the heart of the services we deliver;
- Developing and maintaining a flexible and agile workforce that is responsive to change and that have the right skills to deliver quality services meeting the needs of our customers and local communities;
- Maximising internal efficiencies to enhance service quality;
- Exploring opportunities to innovate and develop, and

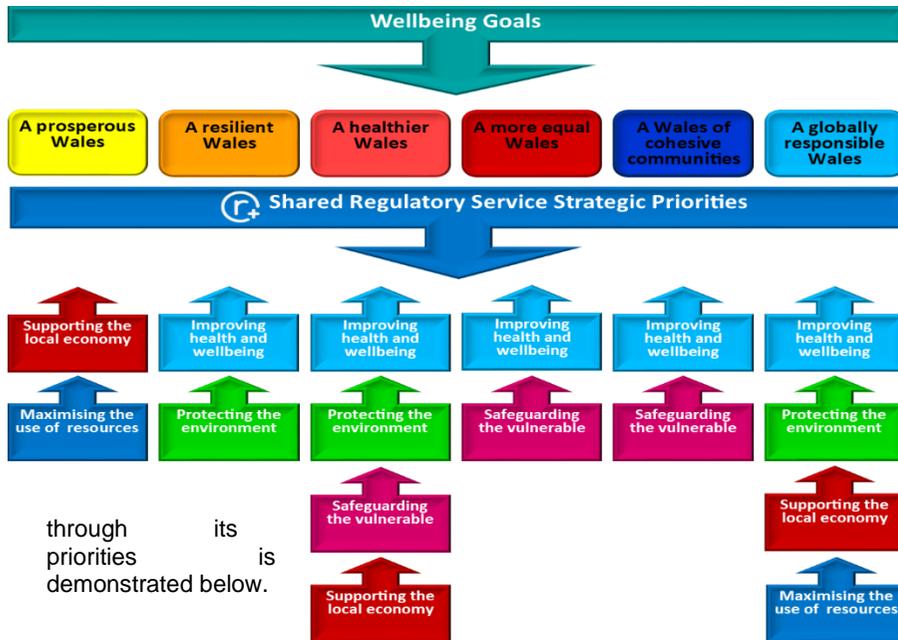
Corporate priorities and outcomes of partner Councils		
<b>Bridgend County Borough Council</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Outcomes/Aims</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A County Borough where we protect our most vulnerable</li> <li>• A County Borough with fair work, skilled, high-quality jobs and thriving towns</li> <li>• A County Borough with thriving valleys communities</li> <li>• A County Borough where we help people meet their potential</li> <li>• A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community</li> <li>• A County Borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community</li> <li>• A County Borough where we support people to live healthy and happy lives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect our most vulnerable</li> <li>• Fair work, skilled, jobs and thriving towns</li> <li>• Creating thriving valleys communities</li> <li>• Helping people meet their potential</li> <li>• Responding to the climate and nature emergency</li> <li>• Making people feel valued, heard and part of their community</li> <li>• Supporting people to be healthy and happy.</li> </ul>
<b>City of Cardiff Council</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Outcomes/Aims</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiff is a great place to grow up</li> <li>• Cardiff is a great place to grow older</li> <li>• Supporting people out of poverty</li> <li>• Safe, confident and empowered communities</li> <li>• A Capital City that works for Wales</li> <li>• One Planet Cardiff</li> <li>• Modernising and integrating our public services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiff is a great place to grow up</li> <li>• Cardiff is a great place to grow older</li> <li>• Supporting people out of poverty</li> <li>• Safe, confident and empowered communities</li> <li>• A Capital City that works for Wales</li> <li>• One Planet Cardiff</li> <li>• Modernising and integrating our public services</li> </ul>
<b>Vale of Glamorgan Council</b>	<b>Priorities</b>	<b>Outcomes/Aims</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating great places to live, work and visit</li> <li>• Respecting and celebrating the environment</li> <li>• Giving everyone a good start in life.</li> <li>• Supporting and protecting those who need us.</li> <li>• Being the best Council we can be.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating great places to live, work and visit</li> <li>• Respecting and celebrating the environment</li> <li>• Giving everyone a good start in life.</li> <li>• Supporting and protecting those who need us.</li> <li>• Being the best Council we can be.</li> </ul>

- Working together to future proof the service to meet financial challenges and future demands

Nationally the service also contributes to the National Enforcement Priorities for Wales for local regulatory delivery which highlight the positive contribution that regulatory services, together with local and national partners, can make in delivering better outcomes, i.e.

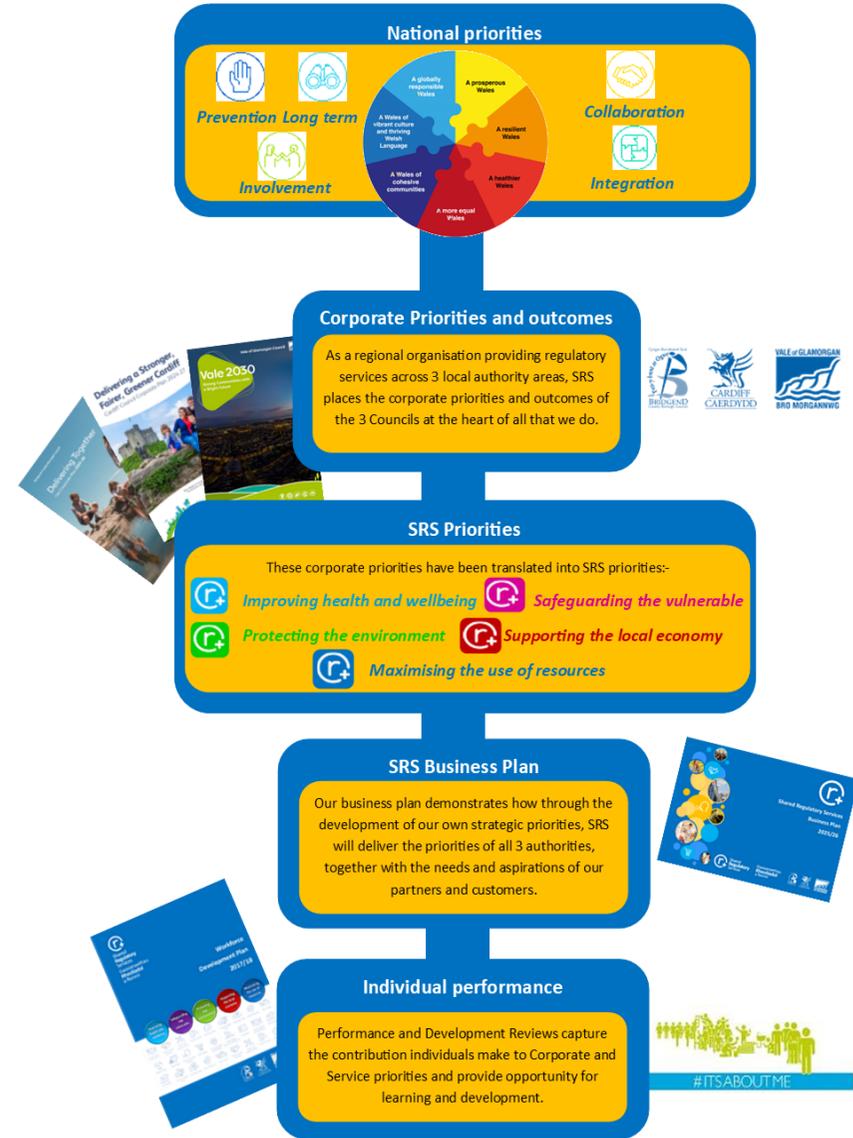
- Protecting individuals from harm and promoting health improvement;
- Ensuring the safety and quality of the food chain to minimise risk to human and animal health;
- Promoting a fair and just environment for citizens and business;
- Improving the local environment to positively influence quality of life and promote sustainability.

Furthermore, the **Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015** sets out seven wellbeing goals to which public bodies, including local authorities, are expected to maximise their contributions. The goals provide a framework for focussing work on outcomes and delivery for the long term wellbeing of Wales. Shared Regulatory Services' core business activities, outcomes and strategic priorities are inter-related and make a significant contribution to these wellbeing goals. How Shared Regulatory Services contribute to these goals



through its priorities is demonstrated below.

## Delivering our vision, aims and priorities



### 3. Challenges

Delivering a service across three local authority areas is an exciting but challenging role. In this context, we define challenges as new or demanding events that will require additional effort and determination to manage successfully; something that goes beyond our existing norms. Understanding the challenges ahead is therefore crucial to delivering the vision set out in section 2. Even after ten years, the Service continues to balance the development of a new and innovative operating model along with the expectation of delivering “business as usual”. There are many factors crucial to our success and the following information demonstrates the actions for the Service in 2025/26 and our risk management approach (Appendix 1).

**Delivering the SRS in the future** – The creation of SRS reflected the Welsh Government collaboration agenda, with one of the main drivers being to realise significant cost savings. These, and subsequent savings have been made by SRS over the years and we continue to deliver the SRS with a reducing resource. The 2024-25 SRS budget stood at £8.813 million with a full-time equivalent staffing in the region of 175 working across the three local authority areas. When compared to the 2013-14 stand-alone positions of the partner authorities, this means that 11 years on from the Atkins baseline assessment, essential statutory services that we provide are being delivered for around £1.57 million (15%) less budget and by 82 (32%) less staff. *This is despite the impacts of inflation, pay awards and similar pressures over that time.* Furthermore, over that time SRS has taken on additional responsibilities under new legislation and areas of regulation. Our move toward the Intelligence Operating Model facilitates the delivering of some services using a risk based approach to our activities, where appropriate. However, any further reductions will require the need to consider and introduce new ways of prioritising our services, or the charging for some services, as well as difficult decisions about the level of service provision. Simply put, SRS has no assets, with the service being made up of staff, so any budget savings inevitably mean reductions in staffing which the service cannot sustain without significantly impacting on service delivery. (RR1)

**Managing complex financial processes** – Managing resource in the Service is complex, but critical. Understanding the cost of providing a service funded through three local authorities is fundamental. Crucial to this is reflecting the provision of ‘core’ services that are consistently applied across all three areas and ‘authority specific’ services that are those that are specific to one or two authorities so that finances are understood. (RR3)

**ICT** – The success of Shared Regulatory Services is in part due to embracing the opportunities presented by technical and mobile working solutions. Agile

working has become the norm for the service, yet we know that better facilities now exist to support officers carrying out their duties and the SRS will work with officers and ICT Services to understand the benefits of exploiting these newer technologies to ensure that our officers can continue to operate as efficiently as possible within financial constraints. Similarly, as systems across the 3 authorities are upgraded it has become increasingly important to ensure continued access to the systems of the partner authorities to safeguard the effective delivery of services. (RR4)

**Recruitment and retention** – We have always committed to the resourcing of training to develop people within the organisation to ensure competency within their roles. Our focus however has been more toward the immediate needs of officers to enable delivery of our five strategic priorities. It is clear that a longer term strategy for recruitment and retention is needed as SRS, in common with regulatory services across Wales, experiences difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in certain roles. The cause of the problem appears to be multi-faceted, with factors such as a limited pool of qualified staff, accessibility of the professional qualifications and an ageing workforce all contributing to something of a perfect storm. SRS has been at the forefront of taking forward the Directors of Public Protection Wales ‘*Building for the Future*’ strategy, and in successfully making the case to Welsh Government for a regulatory apprenticeship in Wales. Now that the Regulatory apprenticeship for Wales is in place, the Service looks forward to embracing it as a means of creating a route into regulatory services, particularly for young people. Further refinement of our approach to recruitment and retention will be taken forward by the SRS management team during 2025-26. Ultimately, our goal is to recruit and retain our officers, ensuring that they achieve the job satisfaction that underpins service excellence. (RR2 and RR5).

**Remaining relevant to the three Councils** – The creation of SRS to deliver services across the three local authority areas resulted in the transfer of the administration of services and staff to the Vale of Glamorgan Council which acts as the host authority for the Service. The Service, although jointly funded by the participant authorities, also has a single consistent identity and branding which is not associated with any one Council. The Covid-19 pandemic and the key involvement of SRS in Test Trace Protect and the enforcement of Coronavirus Regulations has put the service very much in the spotlight during the last few years, and this area of work continues through our role in the wider Health Protection Partnership. More recently our work on the minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) demonstrates how we contribute to the climate change agenda of the partner authorities. Notwithstanding this, we recognise there is still a need to actively promote the Shared Regulatory Service and the important services we provide across the three Councils to ensure continued visibility and support. (RR8)

**New legislation** – The implementation of new legislation and any requirements imposed by such legislation can place additional burdens on the

Service. It requires, amongst other things, new processes to be developed, awareness raising to be undertaken with stakeholders, staff training and additional inspections to be undertaken. Generally, new requirements can be planned for and effectively resourced, as seen in the implementation of the Public Health (Wales) Act and the Public Health (Minimum Price for Alcohol) (Minimum Unit Price) (Wales) Regulations. However, it is not always easy to predict the impact that new legislation may have on resources, as the last few years has shown. We are prepared to adapt the Service accordingly to ensure businesses can continue to function and consumers are not disadvantaged. The great uncertainty is the quantum of change and the unknown time scales within which that change must take place. (RR6)

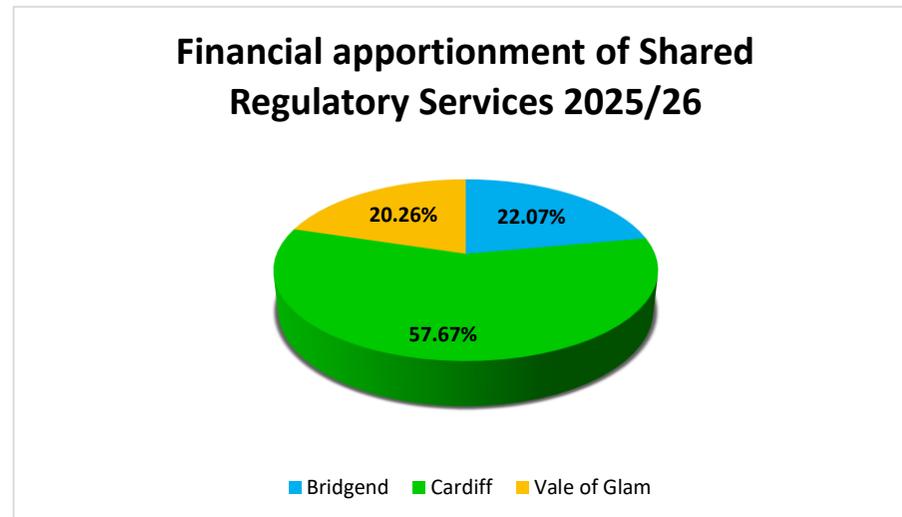
**Out of Hours** - SRS operates an “out of hours” duty rota to enable the service to respond to incidents that arise outside normal office hours. These responses include responding to nuisance calls relating to burglar alarms, food incidents, etc. To date, officers have operated the rota on a voluntary basis across the service. However, the number of officers willing to participate in the rota is reducing to the extent that the service delivery is becoming uncertain. (RR7)

**The cost of living crisis** – The harms of the cost-of-living crisis continue to be felt, and without doubt will continue to impact SRS in two broad respects. Firstly, in our role as regulator, at a time when residents are struggling to make ends meet and rogue traders will waste no time in exploiting the situation. When times are hard financially, even normally legitimate traders may feel under pressure to cut corners, for example through the passing-off of inferior products or ingredients for the genuine article. Likewise, this is a time when already struggling residents are at risk of falling into the hands of loan sharks and all the misery that illegal money lending can bring. The other concern caused by cost of living pressures has been the impact on the wellbeing of our staff. Managers will continue to be alert to the warning signs of difficulty among team members so that all available support can be provided. (RR1).

## 4. Budget

### Financial allocation

Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils fund Shared Regulatory Services jointly through an agreed formula. The Joint Committee approved the proposed Shared Regulatory Services budget for 2025-26 when it met in February 2025. The aggregate budget for the Service is £8.838m, which is effectively a standstill budget (a net increase of £25k compared to 2024-25), with the Service self-funding the anticipated 3% pay award. These savings have been found through the deletion of vacant posts, reduction of budgets attributed to goods and services expenditure, and the identification of new income streams. The methods of apportionment for operating the core service and the cost contribution percentages are set out in the Joint Working Agreement and based upon the population of each Council. This will not revise the bottom line position of the budget. There are also arrangements in place to deliver “authority specific” services to individual partner Councils.



### Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

The following table summarises the gross expenditure budget for the Service.

SRS Gross expenditure budget 2025/26			
Area	Core £'000	AS £'000	Total £'000
Bridgend	1,358	445	<b>1,803</b>
Cardiff	3,534	1,684	<b>5,218</b>
Vale of Glam	1,242	575	<b>1,817</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,134</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>8,838</b>

The budgets detailed above summarise the overall budget contribution agreed by each of the partner authorities. Each contribution consists of two elements – core and authority specific services.

Core services are those functions common to the partner authorities as they share statutory responsibility for the activity, such as trading standards. Core service costs are then pooled and recharged to the partner authorities based on the relative population split within the three authorities.

Authority specific budgets such as Licensing are unique to each partner authority and it is the sole responsibility of each authority to fund its own provision.

The approved authority specific services are as follows:-

Bridgend	Licensing Kennelling & Vets Costs Empty Homes Public health burials
Cardiff	Licensing Additional HMO Licensing at Cathays & Plasnewydd Empty Homes Night time Noise Port Health Student Liaison
Vale	Licensing Kennelling & Vets Pest Control Public health burials Port Health Empty Homes

Both core and authority specific services are recharged to partner authorities inclusive of a management charge, which incorporates management, admin and hosting costs. These include the provision of a multifunctional administration team, professional support in the form of finance, IT and HR, together with the senior management within the Shared Regulatory Service.

The budget is monitored quarterly via the Management Board and Joint Committee, and the details of such monitoring form part of the quarterly update reports, available at the websites of each partner Council.

## Maximising resources

The creation of SRS reflected the Welsh Government collaboration agenda, with one of the main drivers being to realise significant cost savings. The reshaped SRS continues to eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and to simplify processes.

Our goals of supporting the local economy and maximising resources now challenge us to operate in a more commercial and entrepreneurial way. For our business customers, we aim to deliver high quality technical services. We have created an environment that allows us to focus upon supporting local enterprises enabling them to operate successfully in an increasingly competitive business environment.

Our agile working practices allow our specialist officers to use technology to deliver improved productivity, efficiency savings and better customer service. Furthermore, these practices provide opportunities to reduce the accommodation footprint of the Service across the region, reducing operational costs.

We pride ourselves on our partnership working and the opportunities this provides to further maximise the use of resources to improve service delivery.

As we generate additional income through our paid for services, such as advice visits, training and primary authority partnerships, we are able to enhance service delivery and support to business by ensuring resilience in the SRS moving forward. With the continued pressures on public sector finances, now more than ever, the establishment of new income streams and cost recovery will play a crucial role in protecting and sustaining the service.

Understanding the costs involved in providing services is crucial. We review regularly SRS fees and charges across the three authorities to ensure we know what it costs to provide services and ensure that we recover those costs wherever possible.

We listen to our customers and stakeholders to understand their needs and expectations. We seek to develop our services so they are easier for customers to access and are as efficient and effective as possible. We believe that better engagement will help us make better decisions and consequently deliver better outcomes.

We recognise the need to understand, measure and manage our performance across the Service. We continue to refine our measures to ensure performance is managed effectively and in a meaningful way, and that we are having a positive impact on those customers that interact with us.

# 5. Workforce Development

Operating a Shared Regulatory Service across three distinct areas presents many challenges for the Service and its workforce. We aim to use our Workforce Development Plan to ensure our officers have the right mix of experience, knowledge and skills required to fulfil our goals. Our plan illustrates how we want to encourage and support our officers to develop new skills and work in different ways. Investing in people is a fundamental element of our maximising resources priority.

The Workforce Development Plan provides a framework to blend:-

- Organisational culture
- Leadership and management
- Core skills
- Recruitment, retention and progression
- Communication and employee engagement
- Employee performance management

Continued Professional Development (CPD) is actively encouraged and officers are offered opportunities to attend a wide range of training courses, seminars, meetings and briefings to help maintain competency and improve technical, legal and administrative knowledge. A number of employees have been supported to undertake post graduate training gaining Masters degrees in areas such as environmental health and leadership and management. In addition, 'in house' technical training days support cross discipline training and increase awareness of related enforcement activities. The service has continued to provide legal competence training for officers along with a number of professional development courses. While this is a cost effective way of increasing the skills base of our workforce, perhaps the greater consequence is the potential to forge a stronger team

In terms of recruitment and retention, SRS has led on the introduction of a Regulatory Compliance Officer type apprenticeship within Wales and promoted the DPPW 'Building for the future' report seeking increased investment in terms of funded public protection workforce development programmes to address capacity and resilience issues in the environmental health and trading standards professions.

We intend our workforce plan to drive our organisational development, both through preparing us for the future by being able to forecast likely challenges and by a more effective process of talent identification, identifying skill gaps, and retaining our officers within the organisation.



## 6. Emerging themes

Section 3 of this Business Plan highlighted the key challenges that face SRS as a collaborative service working across 3 local authority areas. Sitting behind these challenges are a range of issues and additional pressures that influence the ability of SRS to deliver services. These emerging issues are detailed below and encompass themes such as new legislation, national and world affairs, changes to the regulatory landscape, cost of living, climate change, recruitment and retention and ICT and infrastructure. Linking all of these is a crosscutting theme of resources and capacity, which can be severely impacted at a time when services are facing significant budgetary pressures.

### New legislation

**Public Health (Wales) Act – Special procedures** - The all-Wales licensing regime for special procedures (tattooing, cosmetic piercing, acupuncture and electrolysis) in accordance with the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 is due to be introduced in November 2024. This licensing regime will replace the existing registration scheme with a more robust regulatory system that will require a personal licence and premises approval to be renewed at 3 yearly intervals (or 7 days for temporary events), and the completion of a level 2 infection control training course before a licence can be issued.

The full impact of this new regulatory regime on resources has yet to be determined, and whilst the costs associated with administering the scheme will be recoverable to some extent through agreed, all-Wales Licensing fees, no additional Welsh Government funding will be made available for Local Authorities to fully deliver this piece of work alongside existing statutory functions. Since SRS has the largest number of registered skin piercing practitioners and premises throughout all of the Welsh Authorities, it will likely experience the greatest impact from this new legislative regime.

**Single use vapes** – From 1<sup>st</sup> June 2025, the Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) (Wales) Regulations 2024 come into force. The new law creates offences for selling or supplying disposable vapes, offering them for sale or supply, or having them in possession for sale or supply. Disposable or single-use vapes are those that either have a battery that can't be recharged, or are not refillable. The law applies regardless of whether vapes are nicotine free. With public and media expectations around the ban are high, enforcement responsibility will place a burden on trading standards teams within SRS.

**Foods high in sugar, fat and salt** – new legislation will restrict the placement and promotion of these foods in large shops in Wales, and again enforcement responsibility will sit with Trading Standards teams.

October 22, Welsh Government commenced a consultation on the review of TAN

### Regulatory landscape

**Meeting the required frequency of food inspections** – The Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice sets out the criteria that local authority food law regulatory services need to follow and stipulates the required frequency of food business inspections according to risk, with those of a higher risk requiring more frequent inspections. For example those rated as Category A, require inspections every 6 months, Category B annually and Category C every 18 months etc. While SRS successfully inspected those businesses with the highest ratings (A, B and C) during the last year, this was only made possible through the appointment of contractors to support existing Food Officers in completing these inspections which also consisted of a significant backlog of C rated inspections. There are certain unique challenges facing SRS in delivering the full food hygiene and standards programmes which result from the sheer number of food businesses within our footprint (around 20% of all those in Wales), the diverse and vibrant nature of the food scene locally, and the very frequent churn of new business start ups. A number of other factors have also emerged post pandemic which add to the challenges faced, including the significant increase in enforcement action necessary at food premises and the increase in pests, which impact Officers' ability to carry out inspections and programmed work. In addition, officers are dealing with many cases where standards have deteriorated; while an increase in new and different cuisines being offered at food businesses requires officers to research and understand these new approaches so that appropriate advice can be given and action taken if required. Given that the Food service within SRS is not adequately resourced to undertake current programmes of inspection without the aid of contractors, this presents a significant risk for SRS in balancing current budgetary pressures with the need to meet specific requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice, the failure of which could lead to the service being placed in 'special measures.

**Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Appeals and Re-ratings** – The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS) for Wales was introduced in 2013 with the purpose of allowing consumers to make informed decisions about the places they eat or shop for food, and through these decisions encourage businesses to improve their hygiene standards. SRS officers inspect the hygiene standards found in food businesses providing a Food Hygiene Rating from 0-5 together with a sticker that must be displayed in a conspicuous place where it can be easily read by consumers before they enter the establishment. Under the Scheme, food

businesses have the right to appeal against their food hygiene rating if they consider it unjust, and also request a re-rating inspection if improvements have been made following the inspection. Appeal inspections and re-rating inspections represent a significant amount of work for SRS as they sit outside the food hygiene programme of inspections and officers are required to undertake these inspections within defined timescales. Research has shown that given the sheer number of food businesses in the SRS region, the Service receives 29% of the appeal applications received across Wales.

**New Food Businesses** – Food businesses are required to register with the service if a new business is planned, the nature of an existing business changes or if there is a change of ownership following the creation of new legal entities such as a new limited company, sole trader and partnership. All new businesses are required to be inspected and the Food Law Code of Practice requires that where possible, they be inspected within 28 days of opening. This requirement places a significant impact on the resources of the Food Safety and Trading Standards functions due to the large number of applications received. These require inspections alongside the planned programme of inspections. This is further exacerbated if businesses have poor compliance on initial inspection, requiring the need for further intervention.

**Smoke free compliance in hospital grounds** – The Smoke-free Premises etc. (Wales) Regulations 2007 were introduced to protect employees and the public from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. This legislation prevented smoking in ‘enclosed’ or ‘substantially enclosed’ public places, including workplaces and vehicles. In March 2021 further changes were made to the legislation which extended the smoke-free requirements to more places such as hospital grounds, schools grounds and public playgrounds, as well as outdoor day care and child-minding settings to be smoke-free. SRS is responsible for enforcing these regulations and in doing so recognises that the requirement for all hospital sites to be smoke-free promotes healthier care environments and supports smokers using hospital services, or visiting or working in hospitals, to quit. Arrangements are being put in place to conduct awareness raising in hospital grounds in the region, ahead of enforcement of smoke-free requirements on hospital grounds to optimise staff efficiency.

**Major events** - SRS plays an important role in the successful staging of major events across the three local authority areas. In addition to dealing with any licensing matters and noise monitoring associated with a particular event, SRS plays an essential role in ensuring that food sold at these events is safely prepared, stored and labelled correctly. In the case of stadium concerts and sporting events, input may be required to assist brand holders to protect trademarked goods and safeguard against the supply of counterfeits. Major events staged through the participant Councils go through a detailed planning process via the respective Events Safety Advisory Group in Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan, and in Cardiff via the Events Liaison Panel. While summer

is traditionally the busiest time for events, we are seeing a pattern of exceptionally busy periods where events are being held back to back putting a great deal of pressure on the Service. This is due in part to the success of the City of Cardiff Council in promoting itself on the world stage as the home of successful events. This has an impact on the service in terms of meeting demand from other areas of responsibility, at a time of diminishing staff resource, and in covering weekend and evening work.

**On-line retailing** - The internet is undeniably driving change, and large retailers have responded by embracing multi-channel sales strategies. While the high street has not, as yet, been put out of business, there is a danger that traditional, physical stores will increasingly become secondary outlets to this strong online presence. It would seem inevitable that, in the longer term, the size and composition of the high street will be significantly impacted, as on-line shopping becomes a far more mainstream activity. Information technology and the fast developing digital environment are also causing a change in the way people interact, including in the way they interact commercially. Modern consumers increasingly access goods and services across the world through the tap of a phone screen or the click of a mouse. The internet presents an enormous opportunity for consumers and this became even more evident during the covid pandemic, as shops were required to close, and customers relied heavily upon the ability to shop online, whether it be to order groceries, or other consumer products. The Office of National Statistics reported that the proportion spent online soared to 37.8% in January 2021, and though this has decreased since, in March 2025, 26.3% of total retail sales were internet sales. The internet expands the size of the market and therefore gives access to more providers and more choice. It also makes it possible to compare products, suppliers and prices on an unprecedented scale. The internet is the most empowering tool consumers have ever had. A consequence of this for the law enforcement agencies like the SRS is that the “visible” high street has moved to an activity undertaken behind closed doors. Monitoring the market place through traditional market surveillance methods thus needs to change else the SRS will only be able to react to incidents and not prevent them.

**Ageing population** - On a national level, we are living in an ageing population with increasing levels of loneliness and cognitive impairments such as dementia. Nearly half of all people over 75 live alone. In addition, the Social Services and Well-Being Act 2015 creates a duty of care to protect persons at risk from financial abuse; with partnership working and cooperation at the heart of this approach.

Preventing crime, and supporting safe, confident, resilient communities, is a key aspiration that SRS shares with the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner. Shared areas of work might include scams and cyber crime, night time economy and licensing, victim support and safeguarding, general intelligence sharing and substance misuse together with underage sales,

including knife crime. This is putting further strain on already stretched resources as the potential number of victims to scams and doorstep crime increases and expectations of successful interventions rise.

Awareness raising activities are crucial to crime prevention, but they invariably increase the demand for the service. We will support South Wales Police as it delivers the Police and Crime Plan and will endeavour to enhance the protection available to the most vulnerable in our communities.

**Increase in Illegal dog breeding** – As demonstrated by the successful prosecutions carried out by SRS, the high value of certain dog breeds together with the increase in consumer demand for puppies has led to an increase in complaints to the service. On-going investigations show that a number of these cases are complex, with multi agency involvement and links to organised crime. The largest illegal dog breeding case uncovered evidence of unlicensed breeding, the over-breeding of dogs, illegal importation and mutilation. We are also now seeing incidences of cuckoo breeding where breeding bitches are left with other people, then if puppies are not up to standard, the breeders refuse to take the puppies leaving them with the person looking after them. Investigations into illegal dog breeding have highlighted a hidden industry with a particular area of concern being that of 'backyard' breeding. As a result, there appears to be an increasing incidence of unlicensed breeding and sick puppies. Officers will continue to work with partner agencies to investigate such reports and take appropriate enforcement action.

**Building Safety** – Welsh Government has repeated its commitment to introduce a new Building Safety Bill in the current Senedd term. SRS represents the Directors of Public Protection Wales group on the Building Safety Stakeholder Group which acts as a strategic, independent advisory group for Welsh Government on matters relating to the Welsh Building Safety Programme.

The Joint Inspection Team (JIT), has begun its inspection programme with several reports having been produced. The first tranche of buildings inspected has been in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham and has cut across the public and private sectors. Officers have recently met with the JIT to discuss their inspection programme for 2025, which within the SRS region, is likely to include a number of building types including local authority owned, private sector rented and student accommodation. Welsh Government has been approached on the need for additional local authority resource to work alongside the JIT, as JIT members have not been authorised with powers (including powers of entry). In parallel with the inspection programme, an evaluation of the JIT is also taking place.

Welsh Government has made it clear that it does not expect leaseholders to bear the cost of repairing fire safety issues that are not of their making and eleven of the major developers have made a public commitment to address fire safety issues in buildings of 11 metres and over which they have developed over the

last 30 years. Welsh Government continues to develop the Leaseholder support fund for those leaseholders who face financial hardship as a result of fire safety issues in their homes and are also planning further resident engagement on the various measures being developed.

There remains a great deal of work to be done in this area and SRS continues to represent the three partner authorities in the various stakeholder groups helping to inform Welsh Government and shaping the legislative programme as it moves forward.

## Cost of living

The cost of living crisis continues in the UK and across the world. We have seen food and energy prices rise markedly together with price increases of consumer goods and services. The financial pressures this puts on both businesses and individuals impacts many of the services delivered by SRS. Businesses may seek to cut corners resulting in a drop in standards, while consumers may be tempted to purchase cheaper alternatives which could negatively impact the health and safety of our communities. This inevitably places greater demands on SRS at a time when the service itself is facing budgetary pressures. The following examples highlight some of these emerging issues.

**Drop in standards in businesses** - Food businesses, for example, already struggling following the pandemic, faced with rising prices may be tempted to substitute food items for cheaper alternatives and cut corners in their food hygiene processes to save money. We are finding that many businesses are having to reconsider their trading patterns and operations with a view to cutting costs and attracting more trade. Fewer staff employed at the businesses means less ability to keep on top of cleaning and compliance procedures to meet food safety standards and we are seeing an increase in pests at food premises which has resulted in a rise in enforcement action taken.

**Increase in food banks** – The cost of living crisis has seen a significant increase in the number of food banks available to support people who struggle to afford to buy enough food to eat. These food banks are usually operated by volunteers relying heavily on donations from supermarkets, schools, churches and businesses. Like any food business, these food banks are regulated and inspected to ensure compliance with food safety requirements. Often the food donations come from supermarkets where food supplied is close to expiry of the use by date which gives food banks only a limited time to distribute the food. Food with a best before date can be legally sold, redistributed, and consumed after the date if judged to be of sufficient quality to be donated and made available to be eaten. There have been incidences of food past its use by date

being supplied by a food bank and this emerging issue has prompted greater engagement and the provision of advice to these charitable organisations.

**Consumers** finding themselves with less disposable income may be tempted to engage rogue traders to undertake work in their homes, to purchase illegal tobacco, and counterfeit goods. These risks, and that of falling into the clutches of loan sharks and scammers, could all impact negatively on the health, safety and economic wellbeing of our communities.

**Deterioration of private rental properties** – The landscape of private sector rental housing in terms of property condition appears to be deteriorating and the service is seeing an increase in complaints. While this is believed to be, in part as a result of the covid pandemic and the decline in routine maintenance due to the lack of availability of contractors, the cost of living crisis is also contributing to the issues being experienced. Tenants struggling to pay for heating, may use it less, which in turn can cause damp and mould in a property about which they complain to SRS. This becomes difficult for officers in requiring landlords to improve the heating in properties when tenants can't actually afford to put the heating on and there is a need to be mindful of both the needs of tenants and landlords.

**Economic impact on lending** - The harsh economic consequences of the Covid pandemic and the current cost of living crisis have underlined concerns about the type of borrowing undertaken by individuals. People who are struggling to pay the bills can easily fall prey to loan sharks and scammers. Research commissioned by Stop Loan Shark Wales revealed a number of key findings that indicate how the crisis is driving people to borrow money. Of particular concern is that nearly half of the respondents who borrowed money did so informally through friends, family or co-workers, increasing the risk of these financially vulnerable people falling victim to illegal money lenders. In addition, the research showed that people aged between 18-34 are most susceptible to being targeted by illegal money lenders. The results suggest that this age group are most likely to consider borrowing money to pay for essentials and are also most likely to have engaged in borrowing in the last 12 months. Research also shows that 18–24-year-olds are most likely to have already used an unlicensed money lender but are less likely to know that this type of lending is illegal, so may unknowingly borrow from a loan shark. Furthermore the research revealed that illegal lending hotspots, including Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, and Swansea, saw the highest proportions of respondents aware of potentially illegal lending in their area.

**Buy now pay later** deals have increased dramatically during recent years. This unregulated form of credit allows consumers to delay payment for goods, without interest and has gained a foothold among the under 30s and those with tight finances. Companies such as Clearpay and industry leader Klarna give online shoppers options to pay for products via instalments at the checkout and there are concerns that people are signing up for credit without fully understanding that

this is the case and that it is being made easier for consumers to buy more than they can afford.

**Dog ownership** –During the covid pandemic the UK saw a significant rise in dog ownership as individuals and families who found themselves spending more time at home, sought the companionship of a dog. There were concerns during this time, that as people returned to work, this could lead to issues with separation anxiety, and that the economic fallout from the pandemic would result in a spike of straying and abandoned dogs which owners are no longer able to look after. Currently, the cost-of-living crisis is giving further cause for concern and we are seeing a rise in the number of dogs being housed in rescue centres, some finding their way there as 'fake strays'. The ban on XL Bully breeds has the potential to add an extra layer of complexity in this regard.

## National and World Events

**Refugees and re-settlers** - Whilst recent international humanitarian emergencies have enabled SRS to welcome, and support, refugees and re-settlers into the region, it has necessitated the introduction of measures to ensure that diseases endemic in other countries are not introduced in the UK. This is particularly poignant for the importation of pets by refugees from countries where Rabies, tick and tapeworm infections, and conditions such as Brucella canis are prevalent.

Many re-settlers and refugees are also re-locating from conditions with limited sanitation; poor access to clean food and water; and over-crowded conditions. This could result in an increase of reported cases of Giardiasis; Tuberculosis and Shigella across the region that will require the service to formally exclude cases from school or work until medical clearance has been achieved; support the funding of cases to remain off work if they are required to undergo prolonged and complex medical treatment; and potentially ensure risks to public health are mitigated through the 'request to co-operate' and Part 2A Order mechanisms.

**Public health and adapting to world events** –SRS played a vital role in ensuring public health and public safety through the way in which we responded to the Covid-19 crisis and demonstrated how SRS is central to the public health agenda. It highlighted how, as a service our ability to adapt quickly and respond to emerging world events is key to delivering public health and safety, and how important it is to be able to respond in the same way going forward as issues emerge. This was also demonstrated in our response to the arrival of Ukrainian refugees into the region, which saw the Service undertake hundreds of property checks for the partner Councils under the Homes for Ukraine initiative. The Service continues to work with health boards and partner agencies providing support to care homes and other high risk settings in respect of Covid-19 and the wider health protection agenda through our Health Protection team. These

rising demand pressures, together with ongoing pandemic management support will require effective prioritisation to ensure that the capability of the service is effectively deployed and managed.

**Health Protection** - Building upon the success of the co-production approach of partner agencies throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognising the huge importance of local authorities continuing to play a central role in the health protection system moving forward, SRS continues to work with the Health Boards and partner agencies to support care homes and other high-risk settings in respect of COVID-19 infections. However, in the context of the wider health protection agenda and its funding, the work of the service in this regard is much broader than simply dealing with COVID. The service continues to benefit from the additional resource enabling initiatives to protect public health to remain within the service but it will be important to ensure that long term sustainable funding is made available for this work to continue.

**Animal Disease** – Avian influenza is an infectious disease of birds caused by the influenza A virus. Birds are the hosts for most avian influenza viruses and domestic poultry are especially vulnerable and the virus can rapidly cause epidemics in flocks. Human infections with avian influenza are rare, however, some viruses have been associated with human disease. While the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone that was in place across the UK has been lifted, keepers are expected to remain vigilant, practising stringent biosecurity to protect the health and welfare of their birds. A more recent concern in terms of animal disease is Bluetongue Virus which is an infectious vector borne viral disease affecting wild and domestic ruminants such as sheep, goats, cattle, deer and camelids such as llamas and alpacas. The disease was confirmed for the first time along the east coast of England, in November 2023, and its incidence has crept closer to Wales since that time. Farmers are urged to be vigilant for signs of the virus in animals. Bluetongue does not affect people or food safety and is transmitted by midge bites.

**South Wales Metro Construction** – During 2023-24 SRS worked closely with Transport for Wales on controlling noise from works associated with the South Wales Metro Construction. The work includes the installing of cabling for the electrification, removal/replacement of footbridges, platform alterations and the construction of the new stations and will continue during the year. As most of the work needs to be undertaken when there are no trains running, works tend to occur at night and on weekends/public holidays which are outside usual construction hours Mon-Fri 08:00-18:00, Sat 08:00-13:00, no noisy works on Sundays/Public Holidays. As a result, this requires Transport for Wales to apply for permission to conduct the work outside these hours and SRS needs to ensure that they are using the best practicable means to reduce disturbance to residents as much as possible and to ensure they are effectively communicating with

residents. Transport for Wales are providing some funding towards an officer to support this work.

## Climate change

**Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)** set a minimum energy efficiency level for domestic private rented properties requiring properties that need an energy performance certificate (EPC) to have a minimum 'E' rating on their EPC assessment, or have a valid exemption registered. If a property has an F or G rating, owners are required to improve the property's rating to E or better, or register an exemption. The cost of making improvements is capped at £3500 (including VAT), so if owners cannot improve their property to an EPC E for this amount or less, they are required to make all the improvements they can make up to that amount, then register an 'all improvements made' exemption. Although these regulations have been in place for some time, they now apply to all private rental contracts, not just those that are new. Delivering on this area of work began last year and will continue during 2024/25. It is particularly important given the need to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, but also as a result of the reduction in energy required by tenants to heat their properties at a time of such high energy price rises.

## ICT and Infrastructure

**ICT Interface with Legacy Authorities** – Since the inception of SRS, officers have been provided with access to the systems of the 3 legacy authorities of Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. This enables officers to access the essential IT systems they need to fulfil their duties for the relevant authorities. While this has worked well, more recent updates to systems and software have impacted on the continuity of current arrangements affecting connectivity and access. SRS maintains good relationships with the ICT departments of the legacy authorities to deal with issues as they arise, however it has become evident that there is a need to consolidate the long term access requirements of SRS, particularly in Cardiff, to ensure continued access and smooth running of systems in order to provide seamless delivery of essential services.

**Review of ICT and mobile working solutions** – An essential component of the operating model for SRS was the introduction of technical and mobile working solutions that enable employees to work remotely. This has contributed to the success of the service, but as agile working becomes the norm for many within the service, we are finding that the technology deployed is becoming outdated. It is clear that as technology improves, better facilities now exist which could

further enhance the work of SRS and its remote working capabilities as we move forward. SRS will continue working with staff and ICT to explore options for improving equipment with a view to introducing tablet devices for officers to conduct inspections to ensure that we deliver services to our customers both efficiently and effectively.

**Office footprint** –SRS occupies office space in Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan and it will be necessary to continue to work with these authorities to adjust to new arrangements while ensuring adequate office space is maintained and fit for purpose.

**Customer engagement** – Customer engagement is key to understanding the needs and expectations of our customers. It helps us know what we are doing well and what we could do better and informs policy development and procedural changes within the service. Within SRS we engage with customers in a number of ways via public consultations, customer satisfaction surveys, citizens panels and the monitoring of complaints and compliments. While response levels via these various mechanisms have traditionally been low, more recently we have seen a significant reduction, particularly via customer satisfaction surveys which is of concern. It is likely that this reduction is as a result of moving surveys online, as opposed to the sending out of hard copy questionnaires which whilst more cost effective for the service, requires a level of effort by customers to navigate their way to the relevant questionnaire. SRS recognises the need to improve customer engagement in this area during the coming year to maximise the important feedback we receive and will take steps to address this.

## Recruitment and retention

**Recruitment and retention** – Recruiting into certain roles has been challenging in recent years, and the shortage of applicants with the right skills, abilities and experience in the different professions has created a more competitive market. Across Wales, the Directors of Public Protection Wales has identified immediate issues of capacity and resilience along with challenges for the future as the demands and expectations on regulatory services continue to grow. The *Building for the Future* report details the key issues confronting local government regulatory services; the challenges faced in terms of workforce pressures, the need for better coordination and oversight. The recent launch of the Regulatory apprenticeship for Wales is most welcome, after being more than 5 years in the making. SRS has also considered solutions in the shorter term, including changes to job titles to properly reflect professional disciplines and therefore ensure that the advertisement of vacancies in SRS is reaching its target audience / recruitment pool.

## 7. Turning actions into outcomes

We continue to work to integrate our vision, priorities, outcomes and our performance to provide a comprehensive picture of the work the service undertakes and the positive impact it makes.

The following section of this Business Plan brings all these different elements together in order to highlight our achievements and performance during the last year together with the actions we aim to take forward in 2025-26 to deliver on the strategic priorities. This framework will be continually reviewed to ensure it remains relevant and meaningful to stakeholders.

## Priority

# Improving health and wellbeing

## Outcomes



## Outputs



In addition, our outcomes also contribute to the following wellbeing goals:-

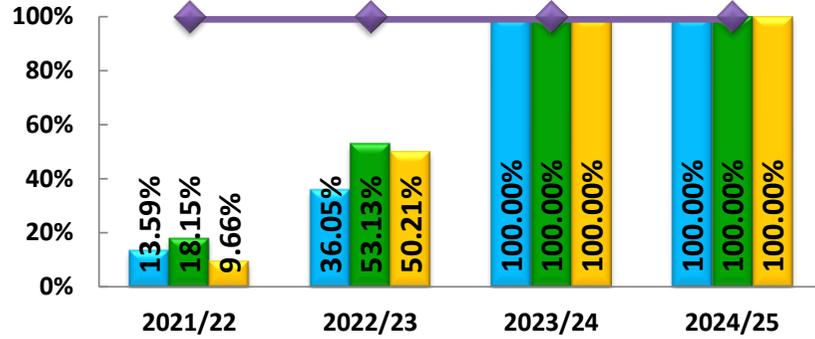


**Improving health and wellbeing** is a key priority for SRS. The Service delivers a diverse range of services to businesses, consumers and residents many of which are “taken for granted”. Their contribution toward our stated outcomes, and their impact upon communities, should not be overlooked. Work undertaken to ensure that food, from farm to fork, is safe, that infectious disease, noise and air emissions are controlled, that risks in the workplace are managed properly, allows people to live in healthy environments. Add to this our activities to ensure the quality of private rented property, the promotion of a safe trading environment and our regulation of licensed premises to ensure they operate responsibly and it is evident that the work undertaken by the SRS is hugely important to the health and wellbeing of the region.

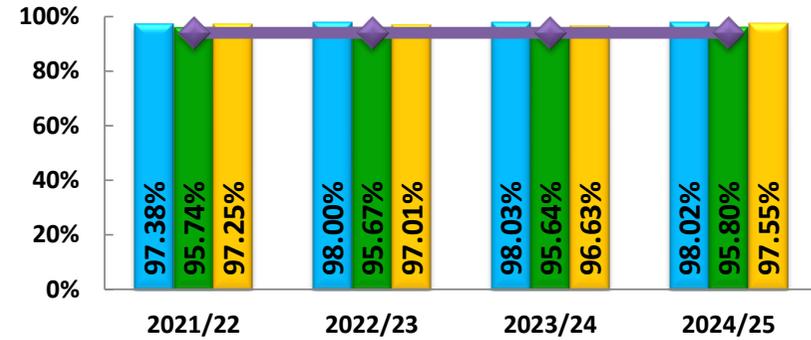
# How we performed

■ Bridgend   
 ■ Cardiff   
 ■ Vale of Glamorgan

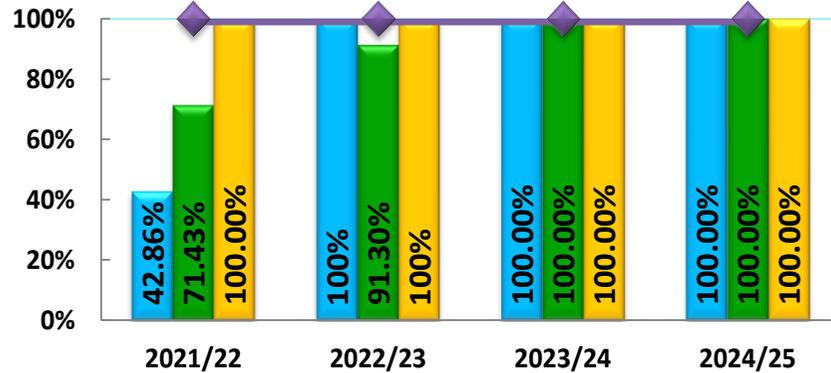
**% of high risk inspections  
Food Hygiene (A, B & C rated premises)**



**PAM 023 - % of food establishments that meet  
food hygiene standards**



**% of high risk inspections  
Trading Standards**



**% of significant breaches that were rectified for  
Trading Standards**



# What we have achieved

## The Food chain is safe and free from risks

**Food hygiene and food standards interventions** - The Food Standards Agency stipulates the required frequency of food business inspections according to risk, with those of a higher risk requiring more frequent inspections. Last year's Business Plan outlined the excellent progress made over the course of 2023-24, in clearing the backlog of food inspections that had previously existed. The backlog arose as a result of the pause on visits during the pandemic, and also as a result of the unique challenges facing SRS in recent years, most notably the sheer number of food businesses within our footprint (around 20% of all those in Wales), the diverse and vibrant nature of the food scene locally, and the very frequent churn of new business start-ups. It is pleasing to report that during 2024-25, this excellent progress continued, resulting in the best SRS performance in respect of food intervention. This saw performance targets achieved for completion of all high risk food hygiene and food standards inspections due. In addition, targets were achieved for the first time in respect of visits to new food businesses (both hygiene and standards). This was achieved through the hard work of our Food Officers, supported by the appointment of additional resource in the form of contractors, to meet the requirements of the Food Law Code of Practice.

**Businesses that are broadly compliant** - The number of food businesses with a food hygiene rating of more than 3 continues to remain at a high level with 98% in Bridgend, 96% in Cardiff and 97% in the Vale of food businesses being broadly compliant. The results have shown a positive upward trend, year on year, consistently exceeding targets and highlighting the growing number of businesses that are improving their standards, which can be attributed to the success of the intervention programme for food businesses. The programme ensures that any food safety issues identified are followed up by either enforcement, advice or training and subsequently revisits to ensure compliance with food safety law.

**Food Standards Agency Audit** - The Food Standards Agency (FSA) audited the Service in February 2025. The purpose of the audit was to assess service planning and delivery interventions following the end of the FSA COVID 19 Recovery Plan. Over the course of two days, the auditors looked in detail at the Food Hygiene, Food Standards and Port Health functions by reviewing premises files, officer authorisations, officer training records, prosecutions and other enforcement interventions, complaints and service requests.

The audit report recognises the significant progress the Service has made in delivering on the Food Hygiene programme, and to this end, the assessment of assurance received was Moderate. Moving forward, the focus of the Service is to echo its success in transforming Food Hygiene delivery, to achieve similar success in the Food Standards sector.

**Prosecutions** – SRS is committed to enforcing the laws we are responsible for and pursues legal proceedings against those businesses or individuals that flout the law. During 2024/25, the service concluded a number of successful prosecutions against individuals/businesses in relation to food safety and standards offences. In total 8 cases against 19 defendants were concluded in the year, resulting in fines of £38,957 and costs of £8,943. The following examples showcase the impact and value of this work.

8  
Successful  
prosecutions of food  
businesses  
concluded

**Cardiff Restaurant fined over £10,000 for food hygiene offences** – This investigation arose as a result of a September 2023 food hygiene inspection of a Cardiff restaurant during which officers found a significant and active mouse infestation. The Officers' findings were such that the premises were closed by voluntary agreement to allow the necessary cleaning and pest proofing work to be carried out. The legal Food Business Operator at the time of the offences was a limited company, the sole Director of which ran the food business on a day-to-day basis. While Officers took the necessary actions to protect the public from harm, the sole company Director and his staff subjected them to abuse, apparently borne of frustration that the voluntary closure agreement meant the business wouldn't be trading.

When interviewed under caution, the Director complained that it was the fault of the Council, in not properly maintaining adjacent land, that had resulted in the mouse infestation at the restaurant. He also explained that his young daughter was unwell at the time in question which necessitated a hospital stay, and he had been unable to give his full attention to the running of the business. The failings identified at the restaurant were not the result of a sudden event however, but the result of a longstanding failure by the business to pest proof the premises. This was clearly documented in the findings of the pest control contractor between November 2022 and August 2023. Time after time, the business was urged to act to pest proof the premises, culminating in the contractor advising in his visit report at the end of August 2023 - '*You must block up gaps around outside vents, mice are using this for access, also gaps around inside vents + burrow under upstairs floor*'

In sentencing, the Judge commented on the 'considerable' extent of the mouse infestation at the premises, and the defendants' limited efforts to resolve it. Much more should have and could have been done, but it was clear that profit was being put before customer safety. The Judge believed that the custody threshold was passed and warned the company Director that he had neglected his responsibility, and should he stand before the court again, an immediate custodial sentence would be appropriate. However, having taken all submissions into account, the Judge fined the company £10,000 and its sole Director £2,000, with an additional £1,377 to pay in respect of costs.

**Fine for mobile catering vehicle operating in the Vale of Glamorgan** – Significant food hygiene failings were identified during Officer visits to a mobile catering vehicle operating at

a popular Vale of Glamorgan seaside location. In the initial inspection, the Environmental Health Officer issued a Remedial Action Notice (RAN) in respect of food being stored in a broken-down fridge. The items of food, which included meat and fish, were meant to be kept chilled (at a temperature of less than 8°C) but were being stored in the fridge at temperatures between 17.5°C and 19.6°C.

A string of other failings was identified during a follow up visit in May 2023, and these cut across multiple aspects of food safety (including cleanliness, unsafe food storage, and lack of training for staff) indicating a disregard for the significant responsibilities associated with running a food business. As a result of the Officer's concerns, a second RAN was issued, this time to prohibit the handling and storage of raw foods. Despite extensive advice and support from the Investigating Officer, the Food Business Operator (a limited company) and its sole Director showed a disregard for the safety of customers, and the seriousness of the failings in this case is reflected in the ZERO Food Hygiene Rating Scheme score awarded to the business as a result.

Further visits (both announced and unannounced) took place between June and September 2023, during which multiple food hygiene non-compliances continued to be observed. In addition, the business failed to display its ZERO food hygiene rating sticker, and this resulted in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

The defendant entered guilty pleas for a total of 17 food hygiene charges. In sentencing, the Judge took into consideration the 'glowing references' for the company Director, the lack of previous convictions and certain personal circumstances that weren't disclosed to the court. The Judge made it clear however that had the defendant's personal circumstances been different, he would have been facing a substantial fine, and this should act as a deterrent for any future offending.

**Health Protection Partnership** – SRS continues to actively engage with partners in the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board through its Health Protection Partnership Team (HPPT), a separate team of Clinical Leads and Health Protection Officers uniquely funded to support the regional Integrated Health Protection Partnership. The work of the HPPT during 2024-25 has included:

- Continuation of support to care home providers to protect vulnerable members of the population and mitigate the potential for widespread transmission of acute respiratory illness, including COVID-19.
- Engagement with residential care home providers via over-the-threshold visits, and distribution of fully funded IPC training workbooks, to improve operational efficiencies and support the development of a workforce experiencing post-pandemic recruitment and retention challenges.

- Maintenance of a COVID-19 surveillance system that is accessible to partners across SRS, Public Health Wales and Local Authority Commissioning Teams. The system enables agencies to rapidly identify situations that may present a significant public health concern and instigate appropriate mitigation and support measures in a timely manner.
- Preparedness work for future pandemics of acute respiratory illness alongside partners as part of a multi-disciplinary Health Protection Team
- Bolstering regional resilience by upskilling HPPT staff in areas of work not normally managed by the Local Authority – Measles training was completed during 2024-25
- Active collaboration with regional partners to identify opportunities to share resources across services to support the 'One Health', all hazards approach to health protection.
- Representing SRS at the Health Protection Operational Readiness Group (HPORG), Health Protection Partnership meetings, Welsh Government Monitoring meetings, Care Homes IPC Group, Support to Care Homes for Infectious Disease Management and Control meetings, and the Integrated Health Protection Partnership workshops.

It is pleasing to note that the funding for 25-26 has been confirmed with some enhanced funding arrangements for the CTM Health Board.

## Risks in the workplace are managed properly



**Survey on Health and Safety management in independent warehouses** - Analysis of accident data produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified storage and distribution warehouse premises, and a number of the work activities undertaken by this sector, as a priority for investigation

Earlier work carried out by SRS in 2023-24 identified that independent duty holders in micro and SME businesses performed poorly in respect of health and safety at work, when compared to national companies with multiple outlets. The recent survey work therefore focused on independent storage and distribution warehouses with a single premises in the SRS region. In May 2024, a total of 30 warehousing businesses were selected, 10 from each local authority area. Each was sent a letter advising that the survey would be taking place, the reason for the intervention, and the paperwork that officers would

require when visiting their premises. Over the course of the summer, all 30 premises were visited and 27 found to be in scope for the May survey.

While the survey findings were broadly encouraging, 7 Improvement Notices under section 21 of the Health and Safety at Work Act had to be issued. The failure of one business to comply with 3 of these improvement notices was subject to further investigation.

Based on the recent findings, the survey report concludes by recommending that future interventions target the following themes in independently run warehouse storage facilities:

- Mezzanine safety focusing on edge protection and safe working loads
- Racking safety – installation, inspection and provision of safety features
- Safe systems of work associated with pallet collapse
- Maintenance of electrical systems to prevent danger
- Duty to manage asbestos.

5269

Communicable  
disease cases  
notified to SRS

#### Business prosecuted for health and safety failings is fined £57,000

– When two employees arrived at work early one morning in March 2018, they opened the main gates to the premises as normal. This particular morning was like no other however, as one of the gates failed, falling off its hinges and onto one of the employees. The gate struck her in the head, and she fell backwards onto the ground. She was knocked unconscious, and the 180kg weight fell on top of her, leaving her stuck under the gate, bleeding from her ears, nose and mouth. On arrival at hospital, she was diagnosed with a bleed on the brain, skull fractures and a fracture of the orbital roof. As a result of these injuries, the employee was affected mentally and financially as well as physically.

Upon investigating the circumstances that led to the accident, SRS Officers established that there were no risk assessments for the security gates and no routine inspection or maintenance programme for the gates had ever existed. Of particular concern was the fact that the company had been aware of previous issues with the gates, nevertheless only makeshift repairs were ever carried out. Subsequently, charges were brought under section 33 of the Health and Safety at Work Etc., Act 1974.

In sentencing, the Judge stated that he gave appropriate credit for the guilty pleas by both defendants. He considered that culpability was high, and the victim's injuries were serious. He stated that there had been a clear history with the gate and these matters could have been picked up with regular inspections. The company fell far short of the appropriate standard by failing to put any measures in place, and by failing to carry out any risk assessments or inspections despite numerous reports of the gates failing and this should

have been a red flag. This was an accident waiting to happen. Fines totalling £57,000 were imposed, together with costs amounting to £22,794.

## Infectious Disease is controlled and prevented

**Infection Control Training for Special Procedures** – The long-anticipated Special Procedures licensing regime went live on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024, when the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Order 2024 brought into force certain provisions of Part 4 of the Act as well Schedule 3 to the Act. The new licensing rules apply across Wales for the following special procedures:

- Acupuncture (including dry needling)
- Body piercing (including ear piercing)
- Electrolysis
- Tattooing (including semi-permanent makeup and microblading)

A person who performs any of the four designated special procedures, must apply for a special procedure licence. This applies to all individuals who were previously registered to perform such procedures and all new applicants. The purpose of the licensing scheme is to:

- Improve hygiene and safety standards
- Ensure such standards are consistent across Wales
- Help protect the health of clients
- Support them to choose licensed individuals operating from approved premises and vehicles

The new licensing scheme made provision for a period of transition, allowing practitioners and businesses who were previously registered under the old registration scheme to continue to practice in the short term. Individuals were required to submit their application form under the new scheme by 28 February 2025. This resulted in teams being incredibly busy processing applications and undertaking the necessary checks to ensure compliance and the correct standards of infection prevention and control. SRS Officers have led on local authority engagement on the topic through the Environmental Health Wales Health & Safety Expert Panel to ensure consistency of approach and regulation.

By year end across the SRS region, 190 personal applications had been received, of which 99 had been granted. In respect of premises approvals, 96 applications had been received with 56 certificates granted. Licensing teams have faced a high demand from the sector, with some applications having been deemed invalid due to errors in submission. Officers continue to provide support and assistance to applicants as resources allow.

**Communicable Disease** – The Communicable Disease Team is responsible for protecting public health by controlling and preventing cases and outbreaks of infectious disease. The team were at the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, acting as the Regional Response team, which saw the focus of the team almost entirely shift to tackling Covid 19 during that time. Recent years, however, has seen the team return to 'business as usual'. During 2024-25, the team dealt with a total of **5,269 cases** of communicable disease that were notified to SRS. Laboratory confirmed cases accounted for 94% of these (4,977 cases), whilst unconfirmed gastrointestinal illness (suspected food poisoning) accounted for only 6% (292 cases).

Significant outbreaks across the SRS region were managed, including sickness and diarrhoea associated with an outdoor recreational water-based activity, confirmed cases of Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* (*STEC*) *0145* associated with the consumption of raw milk, and confirmed cases of *Clostridium perfringens* associated with the consumption of pork-based products at a food festival.

## Noise and Air Emissions are controlled

**Noise Pollution** - Noise nuisance can have a negative effect on people's quality of life, affecting their health and wellbeing, and our officers deal with thousands of complaints each year. Analysis of the SRS website reveals that advice on noise complaints consistently receives the most 'hits' of all the services that we deliver. Where serious nuisance is identified SRS will take appropriate enforcement action.

## Licensed premises operate responsibly



**Firework storage inspections** - Retailers of fireworks are required to register with the local authority in order to ensure safe storage. Premises registered for the storage of fireworks are inspected by officers of the service to ensure that the conditions imposed by the registration are complied with, that the storage is safe and the business operates in a safe manner. In the run up to 'bonfire night' each year, all premises across the region licensed for the storage of fireworks are inspected by SRS officers. to ensure the

safety of firework sale and storage. Only minor non-compliances tend to be found in this largely well regulated sector.

In contrast, the last year has seen an increase in individuals openly offering fireworks for sale on social media. In the run up to bonfire night 2024, SRS Officers were able to track down a number of these individuals, resulting in the seizure of large quantities of fireworks from unlicensed premises including domestic dwellings and a van. The investigations now

concluding have identified unsafe and unlicensed storage in domestic dwellings and in vehicles. Recommendations will be made as to the most appropriate course of formal action in response to such reckless behaviour.

## A safe trading environment is maintained

**Illegal vapes**– Nicotine inhaling products such as vapes are a regulated product that should comply with the Tobacco and Related Products Regulations 2016. These restrictions include a limit on the capacity of the refillable tank of the device which must not be more than 2 ml; that there is a nicotine limit of 20 mg per ml in nicotine containing liquids or containers; that products should contain prominent health warnings; and that all vapes and e-liquids are required to be notified to the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency before they can be sold. In response to continued high levels of intelligence and complaints received, SRS officers undertook several exercises to identify the availability of such products during 2024-25. As a result, 45 test purchases were attempted and 26 premises were found to be selling them. 3793 illegal vapes were subsequently seized by officers with an estimated retail value of over £38,000. Retailers identified as selling these products received a written warning and advice and were subject to follow-up inspection.

**Unsafe cosmetics** – Strict safety standards apply to the labelling and supply of cosmetic products in the United Kingdom. On finding non-compliant cosmetic products at a local business premises, SRS Officers provided the business owner with detailed advice on what needed to be done to comply with the law and to trade safely.

Nevertheless, this advice was ignored and non-compliant product lines continued to be stocked. The offending in this case links to the significant failings of the business in two regards. Firstly, it continued to trade in cosmetic products that are not permitted in the UK. Falling into this category is the range of skin whitening and other products it had imported and then supplied, the ingredients of which mean that use is restricted to prescription-only access (and not over the counter sales). The presence of the banned bleaching agent hydroquinone in the skin whitening products gives particular cause for concern as its composition is based on the benzene ring.

Secondly, the business imported and supplied products that failed to comply with UK / EU consumer safety law on account of their totally inadequate labelling, the most worrying of these failings being the lack of ingredients labelling complying with the International Nomenclature for Cosmetics Ingredients (INCI). Reliance on the INCI is the means by which purchasers are able to assess with confidence, whether a product is suitable for them, and most crucially, they are able to determine whether it contains any ingredients to which they are allergic. In contrast, customers of this business were left not knowing what the products

contained; or were unable to recognise the nature of the ingredients, either way putting those susceptible to allergic reactions at risk (potentially of anaphylactic shock).

During the investigation, officers seized a quantity of cosmetic products from the business. Other products on sale at that time were actually medicinal products that can only be legally sold or supplied to the public through a registered pharmacy premises or by or under the supervision of a pharmacist. In addition, some product lines had no labelling or ingredients list on the packaging. The decision was made to prosecute the business and the defendant pleaded guilty to 13 offences under the Cosmetic Products Enforcement Regulations 2013, The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 and the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008.

When sentencing took place in August 2024, the court was advised that the business was no longer trading, and the defendant has been struggling with his health and financial circumstances. As a result of the defendant's dire financial circumstances, the District Judge fined him a total of £440, ordered him to pay costs of £500 and a court surcharge of £176.

Proceedings were brought against all parties, and while the landlord entered guilty pleas, the case against the letting agent and its directors had to be heard in their absence. They were found guilty. The Magistrates fined the landlord £440, while the two company directors were fined a total of £19,854 each, making the total amount of fine payable in this case £39,248.

## The quality of private rented property is improved



### Bringing private rented property into compliance –

During 2024-25, five prosecutions were successfully concluded in cases where tenants had been living in unsafe and often unsanitary conditions. The five cases resulted in eight defendants being fined a total of £49,966.

### Cardiff landlord and management company fined a total of fined £39,248 –

After a tenant complaint was received back in 2023, officers carried out an inspection of a 2 storey House Multiple Occupation, configured as bedsits for 5 tenants with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Significant hazards were found at the property. These included fire doors that were incomplete or defective and

fitted with mortice deadlocks, structural fire separation was inadequate, the fire alarm was defective, the annex lounge ceiling had collapsed, the kitchen facilities were inadequate and unsafe and there was a cockroach infestation.

The landlord used a letting agent, and it became clear that culpability for the serious failings at the property, and also the failure to comply with notices under the Housing Act and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, rested not only with the landlord but with the letting company and its two directors.

# What we plan to do next

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

## Improving health and wellbeing

Lead  
Responsibility

### The food chain is safe and free from risks

Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Food and Feed Law Enforcement Plan 2025/26. \*\*\*

C Hill

Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Port Health Plan 2025/26.

C Hill

### Risks in the workplace are managed properly

Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out in the Health and Safety Enforcement Plan 2025/26 \*\*\*

C Hill

Implement enforcement and public awareness raising measures in respect of smoke-free requirements on hospital grounds

C Hill

### Noise and air emissions are controlled

Review and explore options for future proofing the Duty Officer Rota.

W Lane

Continue to work with Transport for Wales in minimising noise disturbance to residents from works associated with the South Wales Metro Construction.

W Lane

### A safe trading environment is maintained

Undertake seasonal product safety projects, for example in respect of Halloween and Christmas goods and novelties-

C Hill

Conduct inspections to ensure that fireworks being supplied to the public meet relevant safety standards, are safely stored in appropriately licensed premises, and are subject to adequate policies to prevent underage sales

C Hill

### Licensed premises operate responsibly

Review the Cumulative Impact Assessment adopted by Bridgend Council-

W Lane

### The quality of private rented property is improved

Drive up standards in the private rented housing sector by undertaking robust enforcement action to deal with rogue agents and landlords letting and managing properties. \*\*

W Lane

Continuing to work with Welsh Government and stakeholder organisations in the development of their Building Safety Programme for medium and high-rise buildings in the private sector. \*\*

W Lane

## Infectious disease is controlled and prevented

Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Communicable Disease and Health Service Plan.	C Hill
Continue to input into the implementation of both the national and local health protection framework by collaborating with Cardiff & Vale and Cwm Taff Morgannwg Health Boards by working in partnership on community Infection Prevention and Control	C Hill
Continue to assist businesses transitioning to the Special Procedures licensing regime, including through delivery of the RSPH Level 2 Infection Control Training course for Special Procedures.	C Hill/J Bale/W Lane

## What we will measure

Performance Measures 2025/26	Target
% of food businesses meeting food hygiene standards (broadly compliant).	94%
% of high risk businesses (category A & B) that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected for food hygiene.	100%
% of high risk businesses (category C) that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected for food hygiene.	90%
% of high risk businesses that were liable to a programmed inspection that were inspected for trading standards.	100%
% of significant breaches rectified by intervention during the year for trading standards.	N/A
The number of private rented sector properties where significant hazards (Category 1 and 2) have been removed following intervention by SRS.	Varies depending on authority

## Priority

# Safeguarding the vulnerable

## Outcomes



Children are protected from harmful substances and products



Older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous traders & scams



Vulnerable people are not subject to exploitation, slavery and trafficking



Illegal money lending activities prevented



Taxi provision is safe and fair.

## Outputs

Undertake underage test purchases

Monitor supplies of tobacco, alcohol & harmful products

Help vulnerable consumers obtain redress

Provide support to those targeted by scams, doorstep crime & rogue traders

Hold awareness raising events on scams, consumer rights & financial capability

Protect people from illegal eviction

Undertake criminal investigations of fraud

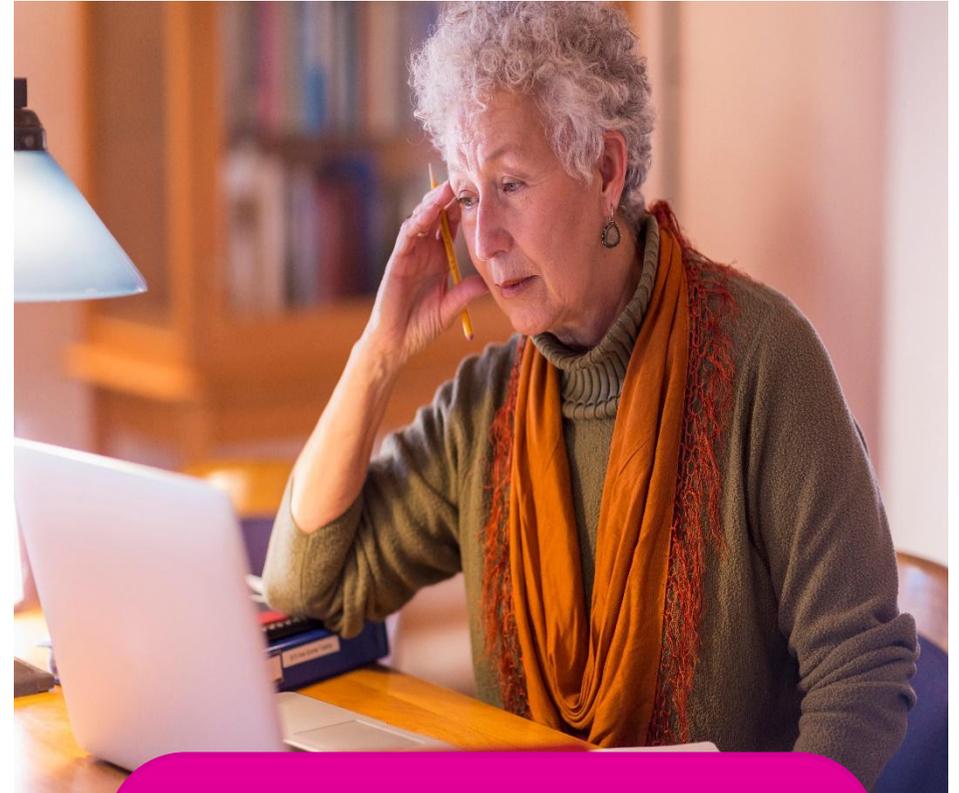
Investigate cases of illegal money lending across Wales

Provide support to those targeted by illegal money lenders

Monitor the fitness and propriety of licence holders

License taxi drivers and vehicles

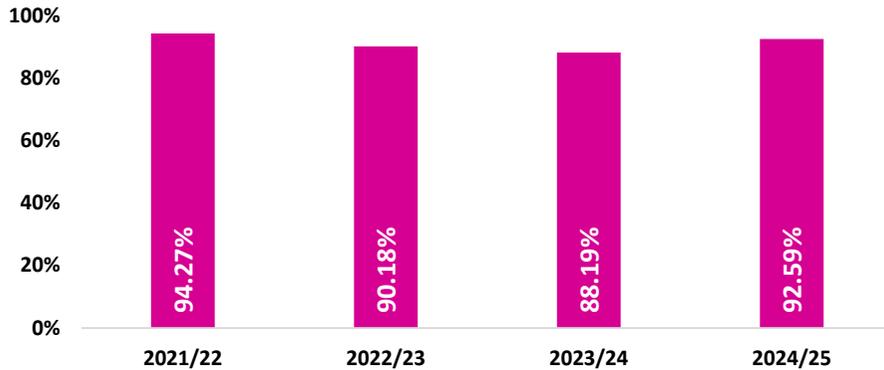
In addition, our outcomes also contribute to the following wellbeing goals:-



Our safeguarding work seeks to ensure that children are protected from harmful substances and products, that older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous individual and traders, that illegal money lending activities across Wales, are challenged robustly and that the public feel safe when using taxis as public transport. We will do this in partnership with our Council colleagues and other agencies to help people who need our support. Safeguarding the vulnerable is a central theme to many of the activities undertaken by SRS.

## How we performed

% of reported scams and doorstep crime incidents prevented or resolved through intervention



£

**479**

Cases, enquiries, and referrals received or dealt with by SRS Safeguarding Team.

£

**19**

Victims of doorstep crime and scams identified. This work included 30 visits to customers and 8 rapid responses.

£

**£241,000**

Value of redress obtained by Safeguarding Team, contacting victims' banks advising of Fraud

## What we achieved

### Older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous traders and scams

**Rogue traders, Doorstep Crime and Scams** – SRS responds to instances of rogue trading, doorstep crime and scams, supporting the victims and families where possible. Often individuals are elderly and vulnerable, and these crimes can have a devastating effect on the emotional as well as the financial wellbeing of residents.

During 2024-25 SRS dealt with some 175 scams and assisted 130 scam victims. The year also saw 168 doorstep crime cases being identified, which represented an 11% increase on 2023-24. On 8 occasions, the SRS rapid response protocol was deployed, ensuring an immediate visit to the homes of residents affected by doorstep crime.

There was a significant increase in the number of vulnerable civil cases dealt with by SRS, with 32 cases in 2024-25, compared with 20 in 2023-24 (an increase of 60%). Officers obtained a staggering £240,827 redress for residents during the year. This included £67,094 for one victim, £5,500 for another and £2,300 for a third, all through the efforts of officers making contact with the victim's banks, setting out the facts of the fraud under investigation in each case, and requesting reimbursement for the customer.

In another example, officers raised the case of an elderly lady pressured and misled into buying multiple lots of gold coins by instalments (rather than paying upfront as she had wished to). After an investigation by the business concerned, it was concluded that there had been a lack of clarity and professionalism from the account manager involved in this case, and as a result, changes to process were made and staff were retrained. As a result of SRS taking up this resident's case, they received a £5,000 refund from the company.

Once again, Officers have investigated a number of significant **rogue builder** or **doorstep crime** cases. Sitting behind each of these cases is a story of residents, often vulnerable, being defrauded of large sums of money, sometimes their life savings. The cases show a pattern of little, or no, work being done, and where work has been carried out, it will have been to a very poor standard.

During the year, all three partner Council Legal Services teams prosecuted rogue builder / doorstep crime cases (one in Bridgend, two in Cardiff and one in the Vale). The outcome of these cases is significant, with the four defendants receiving a total of **11 years and 9**

months in immediate prison sentences, as well as in one case a 10 year **Criminal Behaviour Order**. Proceeds of Crime applications are in progress in three of the four prosecutions, and it is hoped that as a result of this, compensation for the victims in those cases will be possible. The following examples illustrate the impact of this offending on local residents:

**Bridgend Rogue Builder sentenced to imprisonment** - The victims in this case suffered significant financial loss, amounting to over £200,000. The residents also endured months of distress as they fought to get their home improvement projects completed or to get their money refunded.

Presenting himself as a competent businessman, the truth behind that image was quite different. The builder engaged in misleading and fraudulent trading practices in his dealings with customers, and using classic rogue trader practices, he 'robbed Peter to pay Paul' by continuing to take money from new clients in order to do at least some work for existing customers. Using a string of trading names, he created a web of deceit, including starting a new company when one went into liquidation and later using a completely different trading name to distance himself from the growing number of poor Trustpilot reviews being left by customers.

The witness statements in this case illustrate in detail the misery brought on the residents over many months, through for example jobs started and not finished, goods not ordered despite specific payments having been made for them, poor workmanship, and failure to obtain necessary Planning and Building Control consents. He relied on a façade of stock images from Pinterest and other websites and passed them off as examples of his previous work.

The defendant finally pleaded guilty to 11 counts of fraud, 1 count of fraudulent trading and 1 count of unfair commercial practice. He was sentenced to 43 months in prison (3 years, 7 months).

**Cardiff Rogue Builder sentenced to imprisonment** – This case had been in the court system for a considerable time, and saw the defendant face 13 charges for offences under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and the Fraud Act 2006. The case arose as a result of him:

- grossly overcharging for his work,
- exaggerating the severity of the work needing to be done on the victims' properties,
- advising for work to be done on properties which was not needed in the first place, and
- any work done being to a very poor standard.

The total loss caused to the victims by the defendant's criminal behaviour was £175,000, with one of the victims being a 93-year-old lady. The court heard how he had targeted vulnerable individuals to commit his fraud, leaving them emotionally, physically and financially burdened.

He was sentenced to 5 years and 2 months in prison and a Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) was sought to restrict his ability to offer and provide building and home improvement services in the future. Worded as follows, the CBO was imposed for a period of 10 years, meaning that his activity will be restricted long after he leaves prison.

***'The defendant is prohibited from obtaining, undertaking or doing anything whatsoever designed to lead to the obtaining or undertaking of work of any nature, including building, maintenance and gardening work at the home of any individual in the UK, whether on his own, or another's behalf, or instructing others to do so'***

**Vale Rogue Builder sentenced to imprisonment** – The defendant in this case contracted with residents to undertake landscaping works. The customers had been taken in by the competitive prices quoted and by the almost immediate start dates offered, but things took an unpleasant turn when the cost of the jobs spiralled, in one case to more than £20,000. Multiple excuses were given for the increasing price, and for the poor progress of work, including inflation and the cost of materials. The defendant also cited various personal challenges including the death of his own mother (who, it was later established, was alive and well).

He pleaded guilty to multiple offences under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations and was sentenced to 9 months in prison.

The above outcomes do little to convey the sheer hard work involved in conducting these often-complex investigations while at the same time supporting the victims of rogue builders, doorstep criminals and scammers who are suffering financially and emotionally as a result. The following excerpts illustrate how much the work of officers is appreciated by residents

- *'I am writing to you today because I would really like to thank you so much for your perseverance and help with regard to the scam. It was a devastating thing to happen and one I have never experienced in my life. Owing to your experience and help .... it has ended well and enabled me to feel much better and to restore my faith.*

*I am 92 years of age and have found it hard to believe that hurtful things such as these scams take place. I shall remember you in your work which is so valuable and thank you again for all your experience, kindness and thoughtfulness to myself and my small family'.*

And

- *'There are not powerful enough words to let you know how eternally grateful I am that chance meant I was to come across you and your colleagues and boss at a time of absolute despair in my life. I know that it is the work that you do but the marvellous and always swift communication and guidance, along with the support you gave were outstanding and so appreciated.... (The outcome has brought) release of the stress and above all the justice that happened for us, all because of your hard and unrelenting work'*

**Call blockers** can put an end to nuisance or malicious calls. They can be installed at the homes of residents being repeatedly targeted by scams and once fitted, prevent all calls coming through other than those from recognised friends and family numbers. Over the last 10 years, SRS has installed a total of 70 call blockers to protect older and vulnerable people and each of these devices is estimated to block up to 5 nuisance or scam calls a day. By the end of 2024-25, 53,581 calls have been blocked and an estimated 86 scams prevented. The associated savings for residents as a result of these call blockers having been fitted now stands at an estimated £637,417.

The feedback received from residents using the call blockers, and their families, is particularly powerful, for example

*"This made a huge difference and enables my mother to live in her own home for longer",*

*"My mother no longer gets anxious and agitated. I cannot impress on you the positive impact this has made",* and

*"Thanks for making my phone my friend again".*

## Children are protected from harmful substances and products

**Underage sales operations** – During 2024-25, SRS received 95 complaints or intelligence logs regarding underage sales of alcohol, tobacco, vapes, fireworks and knives. With the assistance of young volunteers, Officers responded by staging a total of 73 attempts to purchase a range of age restricted products during the year. 9 of these attempts to purchase resulted in a sale (12%) of either alcohol, vapes or fireworks. The circumstances of each case were fully investigated, and appropriate enforcement action taken. While the Service will always recommend a stepped approach to enforcement, over the course of 2024-25, three cases concluding in court saw the successful prosecution of three businesses for underage sales of alcohol, vapes or fireworks.

One underage sales prosecution case concluded in court in 2024-25, with a number more still in the court process. A summary of the case is given below

**Cardiff Convenience Store fined for underage sale of vapes** - In April 2024, a sixteen year old volunteer was served with a SKE Fizzy Cherry nicotine inhaling product (vape). The illegal sale took place as part of a Trading Standards test purchase exercise that was prompted by complaints, or other intelligence, alleging that people under the age of 18 were able to buy vapes at the store.

This was not the first time the store had failed a test purchase attempt for vapes – underage sales made previously resulted in an informal warning letter in respect of a December 2022 sale. A further underage sale in July 2023 resulted in prosecution. Throughout this whole time, SRS officers provided the business with detailed advice on compliance with underage sales law.

The case was brought against the limited company running the store, its sole Director and also her husband who was acting the capacity of the store manager. In sentencing, the Judge ordered each defendant to pay a £320 fine, together with costs of £284. It was made clear to the defendants that they must take more care, as this was not a simple mistake but a crime. If they continue to offend, the Judge would have no hesitation in continuing to double each fine they receive.

## Taxi provision is safe and fair

**Compliance with the law** – A number of 'mystery shopper' exercises were carried out across the region as a means to reality checking the extent to which taxi drivers and operators are fulfilling their responsibilities. In both Bridgend and the Vale exercises were carried out with an assistance dog to test compliance with the Equalities Act, with all approaches being fully compliant. In Cardiff, mystery shopper exercises were carried out with the assistance of Police volunteers, in respect of the fares charged by hackney carriage drivers. One such case concluded in court as follows:

**Cardiff Taxi Driver fined for overcharging** – The driver in this case failed to use a Hackney carriage taximeter to calculate the fare on a journey. Three volunteers got into the taxi after the driver agreed to take them to their destination. Once inside the taxi, the volunteers could see that the taxi meter wasn't in operation for the fare to be properly calculated, and they described how, during the journey, when asked how much the fare would be, the driver replied 'just a tenner'. The maximum fare that should have been charged was £6.34, meaning that the £10 charged by the driver for the 0.91 mile journey equated to a 37% overcharge. The driver claimed in court that the offence occurred as a

result of a momentary lapse in judgement. He was fined a total of £600 and ordered to pay costs of £150.

**Vale private hire operator fined for using an unlicensed driver** – the defendant in this case was a private hire operator who knowingly recruited an unlicensed taxi driver to do airport pick-up runs. The driver was stopped during a spot-check by Police at Bristol airport, and when later questioned by SRS officers, the private hire operator tried to blame others for the offences, claiming that he had been told that drivers only used for airport runs didn't have to be licensed. It became clear at the interview that the Operator was more concerned about the smart appearance of the driver in this case, than whether they were licensed and subject to a DBS check. The Operator pleaded guilty to two offences, namely being a proprietor allowing an unlicensed driver to drive a vehicle and operating an uninsured vehicle.

## Illegal money lending activities are prevented

**Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit (Stop Loan Sharks Wales)** – We know from experience that illegal money lenders, more commonly known as loan sharks, seek to exploit people during times of crisis and it is apparent that there has been an uptick in offending while cost of living pressures continue to be felt. Dealing with the personal and 'social' fallout linked to the criminality of illegal money lending is difficult to quantify. Reporting rates are often low, and victims are sometimes unwilling to name the lender for fear of reprisal. During 2024-25, twenty pieces of intelligence were received about illegal lending and eleven lenders were investigated as a result. Linked to these investigations, 110 victims have been supported, with 105 having had their debts written off.

While no further prosecution cases against loan sharks concluded in the 2024-25 financial year, a number are currently in the court system and will be reported on in due course. In addition, a number of loan sharks are currently under investigation. During the year, officers seized nearly £40,000 in cash from illegal lenders, and the estimated value of assets restrained under the Proceeds of Crime Act was in the region of £400,000.

**Illegal Money Lending Education and Training** – The WIMLU works closely with other public agencies, including housing providers and third sector organisations whose position on the 'front line' means that they encounter the victims of loan sharks through their daily activities. These relationships provide the Unit with crucial intelligence of illegal lending. To exploit this and to encourage reporting, WIMLU proactively seeks opportunities to present to these organisations on the work of the team and receives

frequent requests for information and training of frontline staff and community-based public facing support services. In 2024-25 training was delivered to 11 different organisations from all over Wales drawn from different aspects of local government, and the housing, advice and charitable sectors. These training sessions were attended by a total of 249 colleagues from within these sectors.

**Illegal Money Lending raising awareness** – In addition to education and training, a number of Stop Loan Sharks Wales events have taken place throughout the year throughout the year to raise awareness of illegal money lending and promote the assistance available from the team. In addition, during 2024-25 the Unit benefitted from extensive national and UK-wide media coverage.

# What we plan to do next

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

## Safeguarding the vulnerable

Lead  
Responsibility

### Older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous traders and scams

Consider how SRS could engage more with Elected Members regarding areas of concern and safeguarding for the public, such as rogue traders, scams, illegal money lending and doorstep crime.

H Picton

### Children are protected from harmful substances and products

Work in partnership to safeguard the vulnerable to ensure that children are protected from harmful substances and products, older people are protected from rogue traders and scams and vulnerable people are not subject to exploitation. \*\*\*

All OMs

Conduct intelligence led underage sales exercises in relation to the sale of tobacco, alcohol, vapes, knives and other age restricted products.

C Hill

### Illegal money lending activities are prevented

Raise awareness of illegal money lending and support individuals to access responsible lenders and debt advice, rebuild their finances and make a sustainable transition to legal credit. \*\* & \*\*\*

J Bale

Trialling of a victim support referral programme in the context of illegal money lending, in conjunction with Cambrian Credit Union. This to support victims who find themselves excluded from access to financial services.

J Bale

### Taxi provision is safe and fair

Undertake enforcement exercises with the taxi trade including mystery shopper exercises to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act, vehicle and licensing standards and fare refusals for short journeys .

W Lane

Review the Statements of Licensing Policy adopted by Bridgend and Cardiff Councils

W Lane

Review the Statement of Gambling Principles adopted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council

W Lane

## What we will measure

Performance Measures 2025/26	Target
• % of reported scams/doorstep crime incidents prevented /resolved through intervention.	80%
• No. of people reached through education or training on scams and doorstep crime.	500

## Priority

# Protecting the environment

## Outcomes



The environment is protected from harmful emissions to land, air & water



People will use energy efficient buildings and products



Communities are protected from nuisance and are safer



Animals are treated humanely

## Outputs

Remediate contaminated land and undertake water sampling

Monitor air quality

Regulate industrial processes through environmental permitting

Operate market surveillance programmes on energy efficiency

Bring empty homes back into use

Respond to noise and air complaints

Work with partners to improve student safety & their impact on the community

Enforce taxi licence conditions

Control stray dogs and horses

Inspect overloaded vehicles

Contribute to the planning process

Respond to environmental information requests

In addition, our outcomes also contribute to the following wellbeing goals:-

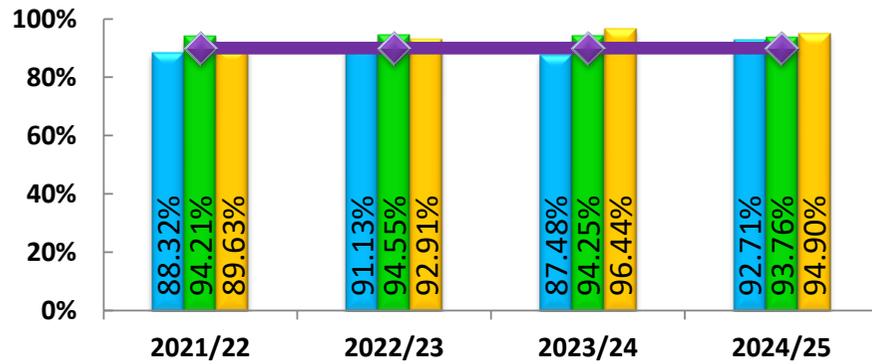


Protecting the environment is a core strategic priority of SRS. Many of the activities listed here such as water sampling, monitoring air quality, and remediating contaminated land contribute toward promoting a better environment which in turn means better long term prospects for the health and wellbeing of our communities. However, the work in protecting the environment goes further, we ensure communities are protected from nuisance and are safer by investigating noise complaints, dealing with stray dogs and horses. We have a key role to play in the wider climate change and future generations agendas through our enforcement role on energy efficiency controls on properties and products. The impact of these activities is less apparent in the short term for communities, but has an important role for future generations.

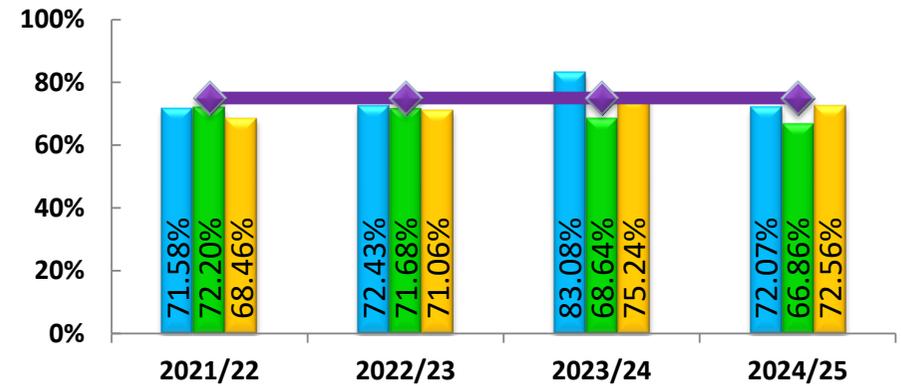
# How we performed

■ Bridgend   
 ■ Cardiff   
 ■ Vale of Glamorgan

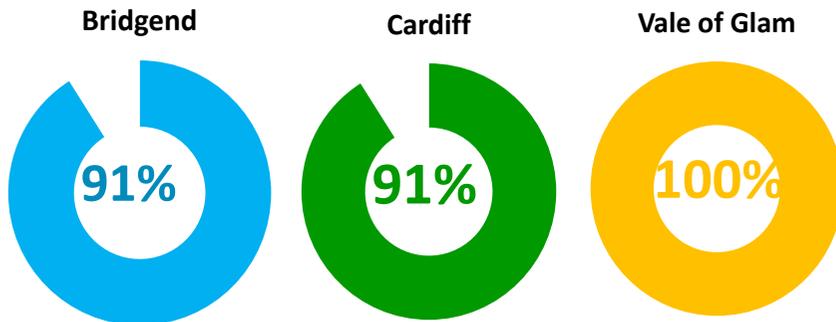
**% domestic noise and air complaints responded to within 3 working days**



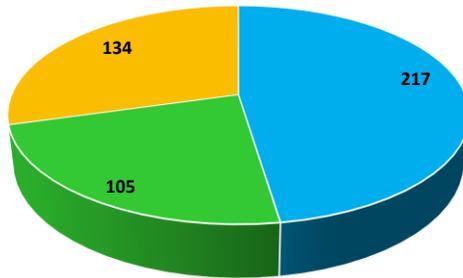
**% commercial and industrial noise and air complaints responded to within one working day**



**% of alarm complaints responded to within one day 2024/25**

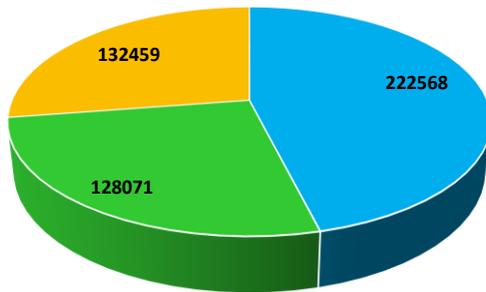


**Reduction of CO2 produced from properties as a result of improved EPCs**



*Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>*

**Reduction on KWh in energy used for heating in properties as a result of improved EPCs**



*KWh of energy*

## What we have achieved

### The environment is protected from harmful emissions to land, air and water

**Air Quality** - The issue of Air Quality is never far from the headlines and the impact of poor air quality on health is well documented. Indeed air pollution continues to be the largest environmental risk linked to deaths in the population with long term exposure (over several years) contributing to a reduction in life-expectancy primarily due to an increased risk of mortality from cardiovascular and respiratory causes.

During 2024-25, SRS ensured that Bridgend, Cardiff, and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils met their statutory duties under Part 4 of the Environment Act 1995 by producing the 2024 Annual Progress Reports (APRs) detailing the results for the previous year's (2023) data for each area and reporting these to the respective Cabinets. Failure to produce these reports can lead to the receipt of a Welsh Government direction under Section 85(3) of the Environment Act 1995.

In **Bridgend** the 2024 APR demonstrated that only two sites, both located within Park Street Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) still exceeded the air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide NO<sub>2</sub> as prescribed in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000 and the Air Quality (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002. All other locations within Bridgend County Borough continued to meet all other relevant air quality objectives. The recorded NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at these locations in 2023 were 43.3 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and 42.9 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. This represented a reduction in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations of 12% and 17% at these locations.

The 2024 APR also provided an update to Cabinet members on the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for the AQMA on Park Street. which was approved by Cabinet in April 2024. As detailed at the time of approval of the AQAP, Cabinet agreed to retain measures in the plan, to allow an assessment as to whether there is sufficient downward trend of NO<sub>2</sub> levels on Park Street as compliance has been modelled to be achieved by 2026. If exceedances show upward trends or other concerns identified, then an assessment on the necessity to consider implementation of the retained measures in AQAP will be undertaken in 2025-26.

In **Cardiff**, the 2024 APR demonstrated that out of the 135 non-automatic monitoring locations across the entire City, no monitoring sites recorded exceedances of the annual average objective set for NO<sub>2</sub> of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

The APR provided an overview of the concentrations within each of the 4 AQMAs in Cardiff. Monitoring in the AQMAs demonstrated that compliance was being achieved in each of them. Concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> at one location within the Llandaff AQMA have been found to be close to the annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> Air Quality Standard (40µg/m<sup>3</sup>) in recent years. However, NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at this location in 2023 have improved when compared to 2022 and are currently within 10% of the annual mean NO<sub>2</sub>. When examining average NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at non-automatic diffusion tube sites across Cardiff, pollutant concentrations across Cardiff are now lower than those experienced during the pandemic.

The APR also gave a further update on the ongoing work on Castle Street in relation to the Welsh Government Air Quality Direction. The report confirmed that approval of the Final Plan and preferred option for Castle Street had been provided by the Deputy First Minister on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

In the **Vale of Glamorgan**, the 2024 APR demonstrated that there were 53 specifically allocated non-automatic monitoring sites across the Vale of Glamorgan which monitored levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). From the 53 locations monitored throughout the Vale with the use of passive diffusion tubes, no sites breached the national NO<sub>2</sub> annual objective of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> or the NO<sub>2</sub> 1-hour objective (200 µg/m<sup>3</sup> not to be exceeded more than 18 times per year). Overall, the Vale of Glamorgan has seen a downward trend in NO<sub>2</sub> levels since before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report also provided an update on a successful application to the Local Air Quality Management support fund from Welsh Government, for funding to upgrade and enhance the current real time air quality monitoring capabilities within the Vale. As a result of this, three new monitors were installed in Barry, Dinas Powys and Cowbridge in Q3, the locations being decided using a risk-based approach in line with relevant technical guidance.

**South Wales Metro Project** – The South Wales Metro Project will lead to huge improvements to the railway infrastructure in South Wales. The project will increase services on many lines as well as introducing new stations in areas such as Cathays, Cardiff Bay and East Cardiff. There is however a significant amount of construction work needed to be undertaken, including the electrification of the railway lines, upgrading of station access, and replacing footbridges. In order to keep essential public transport operating, much of these works needs to be completed outside usual working hours, at night and on weekends which requires consent from SRS.

**Environmental Sampling** – SRS completed the assessment and sampling of all statutory private water supplies across the region and ensured statutory returns were supplied to the Drinking Water Inspectorate as required. This involved 56 visits across the region to take water samples at private water supplies. 5 Compliance Notices were served for private water supplies improvements. Water samples were taken at 8 events across the region.

## Animals are treated humanely

**Illegal dog breeding** – Once again, officers have been involved in a number of animal welfare investigations, linked to unlicensed, illegal dog breeding. Several of these cases are pending in the court system, and it is clear that this unlicensed activity continues to operate across some sophisticated criminal networks, being seen as profitable business model where the risk of punishment is perceived to be less than that associated with other illegal supply chains. Ongoing intelligence and complaints received suggest that this trend is set to continue for some time.

Faced with the appalling conditions in which breeding dogs and puppies are being found, officers have no choice but to act on Veterinary advice and seize animals to remove them from further harm. While cases are dealt with as quickly as possible, seizures unfortunately result in significant costs for the Service in boarding and caring for the dogs pending the courts granting ownership to the Council. It is only at this point in proceedings that the rehoming process can begin. The reality is that at the conclusion of a case, costs may not be awarded in full, if at all.

While a number of these prosecution cases remain in the court system, two were concluded in the 2024-25 financial year. Following complaints from neighbours in the first of these cases, officers attended a residential property in Cardiff and found six Kangol dogs (a large breed) living in extremely poor conditions. The defendant was charged with offences under the Animal Welfare Act and also under the Veterinary Medicines Regulations for being in possession of drugs not authorised for use in the UK, and administration of a drug other than under the direction of a Veterinary Surgeon. This was the second time in a matter of months that SRS officers had attended the property in response to intelligence that illegal dog breeding was taking place. On the previous occasion, it had been necessary to seize a total of 38 dogs and puppies from the house and that particular case (involving other defendants) is awaiting trial.

The second of the illegal dog breeding cases to conclude during 2024-25 also presented as a result of neighbour concerns that dog breeding was taking place in 'inhumane conditions' at a residential property in Cardiff. On arrival at the property, the Investigating Officer was confronted with the dreadful conditions in which dogs were

being kept by the unlicensed breeder. A Veterinary Surgeon reviewed the wellbeing of the dogs and offences under both section 4 and section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act were established. The defendant was prosecuted and sentenced at Cardiff Crown Court to one month imprisonment (to run concurrently with the prison sentence he was serving for another matter). He was also disqualified from keeping, or being involved in the keeping, of dogs for a period of 6 years.

The dogs seized in both of the above cases were subject to successful section 20 proceedings to give ownership of the animals to the Council, allowing them to be rehomed.

**SRS recognised in the RSPCA PawPrints Awards** – Each year, the RSPCA recognises exceptional contributions and unwavering commitment to protecting, promoting, and enhancing animal welfare through its PawPrints awards. The aim of the organisation in giving these annual awards is to shine a light on the organisations that have ‘gone the extra mile’ for animals, and entries are judged by an external panel of animal welfare experts. Once again, SRS has been recognised in three categories, namely Stray Dog Services, Animal Licensing Activity and Kennelling.

The hard work of our Animal Wardens and Animal Health and Welfare Officers throughout the year resulted in the following being awarded in 2024:

- **Stray Dog Provision: Platinum**
- **Animal-related Licensing: Gold Award**
- **Kennelling: Gold Award**

This builds on SRS success in 2023 when Gold Awards were received in each of the above categories. The Platinum Award is a new development to acknowledge those organisations achieving the Gold standard in a category for at least 5 years. This is the first and only time Platinum status has been achieved in Wales.

## People will use energy efficient buildings and products

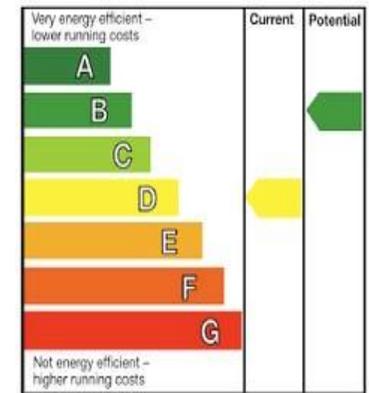
**Empty Homes** – In **Bridgend** SRS have collaborated with Bridgend Council to ensure progress in relation to enforcement against properties that have been identified in the Empty Property Action Plan. This has resulted in the demolition of dangerous properties with the site being cleared for redevelopment. Works in default are ongoing

at a number of other properties, the costs of which will be supported via successful bids made to the Welsh Government Empty Property Enforcement Fund and considered for enforced sale. A further property has been identified as being suitable for Compulsory Purchase. In terms of enforcement work, SRS successfully prosecuted a property owner on 2 occasions for failing to provide documentation and comply with enforcement notices.

In **Cardiff**, SRS has continued to focus on tackling private sector empty homes across the city. This has included responding to complaints and enquiries and working proactively to engage with property owners providing assistance via site meetings, advice regarding property standards and rental requirements, referrals and signposting to other departments and avenues of financial assistance. This work has been further assisted with a corporate focus achieved through an empty homes working group. Good progress is being made with long term vacant properties identified in the action plan agreed with Welsh Government and discussions are currently ongoing to draw down funding from Welsh Government to support enforcement activities against the most challenging long term vacant properties. As a consequence of this work the number of properties brought back into use continues to increase year on year, with a total of 113 properties or dwellings brought back into occupation during the last year.

In the **Vale of Glamorgan**, following the appointment of an Empty Property Enforcement Officer as a result of additional funding received via the Council Tax Premiums work has begun to assess what actions SRS can assist with in relation to the Vale’s Empty Property Action Plan. A number of property owners of long term empty commercial buildings have been engaged with to encourage development and conversion to create residential units.

The **Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations** set a minimum energy efficiency level for domestic private rented properties requiring properties that need an energy performance certificate (EPC) to have a minimum ‘E’ rating, or have a valid exemption registered. By the end of 2024-25, a total of 164 properties had been sufficiently improved to take them out of the F and G energy efficiency rating to become E rated or better. Also as a result of SRS interventions during the year, some 365 previously unrated private rented properties now hold Energy Performance Certificates, having achieved ratings ranging from C to E. This work has resulted in an estimated reduction in carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions of 456.5 tonnes together with a reduction of 483,098 kWh in energy needed for heating across the SRS region.



## Communities are protected from nuisance and are safer

**Straying horses and dogs** - Our Animal Health and Welfare team has continued to work proactively across the area to reduce the instances of straying horses and associated welfare issues. Regular patrols have been carried out and stray dogs and other animals picked up, while at the same time, officers have taken every opportunity to work with residents across the region to improve responsible ownership.

**Student Liaison** –The Student Liaison Officer (SLO) is a role that sits in the Cardiff Student Community Partnership (CSCP) and is jointly funded by the universities in Cardiff and by Cardiff Council. The role focuses on facilitating work between Higher Education Institutions, the Local Authority, Police and Health Board including initiatives to address student-community issues and to collaborate with elected Members on strategic ambitions for the city. As a result of Shared Prosperity funding, Cardiff Council has been able to make additional resource available in the form of the temporary Student Recycling Outreach and Communication Officer. With the changes to recycling rules introduced in the Cathays and Plasnewydd wards in October 2024, this new role has proved invaluable by assisting in the development, implementation and delivery of waste minimisation, recycling campaigns and initiatives targeted at Cardiff students. As a result of the recycling changes, the 2025 student move-out period is expected to be challenging, and the new role, albeit temporary, has been welcomed.

# What we plan to do next

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

Protecting the environment	Lead Responsibility
<b>The environment is protected from harmful emissions to land, air and water</b>	
Undertake local air quality assessments and review the data to ensure that national air quality objectives continue to be achieved.***	J Bale
Ensure good air quality by reviewing real time air quality data to assess and identify trends in pollution to assess further interventions that will further reduce air pollution. **	J Bale
<b>People will use energy efficient buildings and products</b>	
Work with homeowners and landlords to return empty properties back into use through engagement, support, consideration of varying the Council Tax premium scheme, and where necessary taking appropriate enforcement action to deal with the worst long term derelict empty homes. **	W Lane
Engage with landlords and lettings agents to improve the energy performance ratings of private rented properties under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations. ** & ***	C Hill
<b>Animals are treated humanely</b>	
Engage with Welsh Government regarding animal welfare concerns associated with unlicensed dog breeding and sales.	J Bale
<b>Communities are protected from nuisance and are safer</b>	
Engage with students and residents during Freshers Week in Cardiff providing community advice on housing, environmental and social issues.	W Lane

## What we will measure

Performance Measures 2025/26	Target
• % of domestic noise and air complaints responded to within 3 working days	90%
• % of commercial and industrial noise and air complaints responded to within one working day	75%
• % of alarm complaints responded to within one day.	90%
• % of empty private sector properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the local authority .(Cardiff only)	7.7%
• Number of additional dwellings created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use. (Cardiff only)	30
• The number of private rented properties where energy efficiency has been improved through direct action from SRS.	Varies between authorities

## Priority

# Supporting the local economy

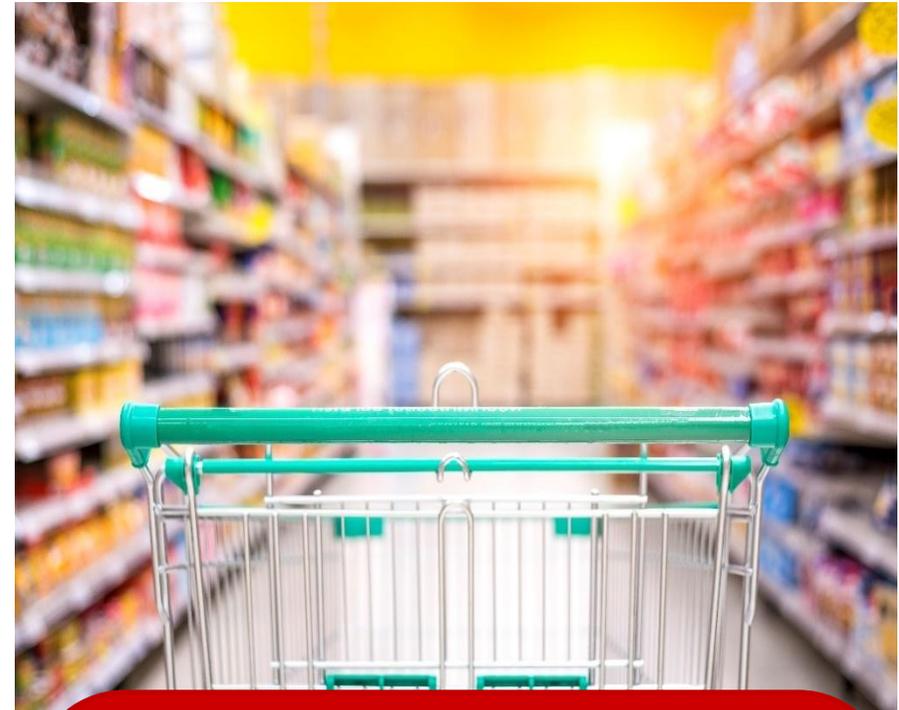
## Outcomes



## Outputs



In addition, our outcomes also contribute to the following wellbeing goals:

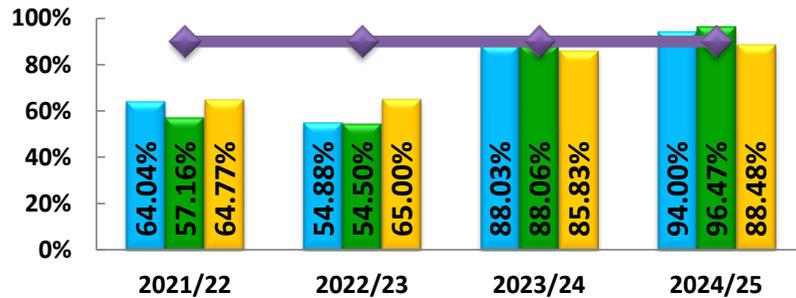


**A strong local economy** is a key component in the quality of life experienced by local people. The work of SRS has a significant, but often unseen, impact upon the local economy. The provision of timely advice and guidance on regulation can benefit the economic viability of businesses resulting in improved business practices; our growing role in the field of Primary Authority is testament to this assertion. Much of our market surveillance activity focuses upon maintaining balance in the “marketplace”; the equitable enforcement of regulations helps businesses to compete on equal terms ensuring a fairer trading environment. Our role as regulator also extends to information and education to support consumers to enable them to become better informed and confident. In an age where people can purchase goods and services without leaving home, the importance of the principle of “*caveat emptor*” has never been more relevant.

# How we performed

■ Bridgend   
 ■ Cardiff   
 ■ Vale of Glamorgan

**% of new Food Hygiene businesses identified and visited**



# What we have achieved

## A fair trading environment is maintained

**Trading Standards Impacts and Outputs** - Since the launch of the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) Impacts and Outcomes framework back in 2018, the impacts and outputs of Trading Standards work is reported annually as a means of demonstrating the vital contribution of these services in England and Wales in

- tackling detriment and preventing harm
- supporting the local economy, and
- promoting health and wellbeing

The latest report highlights the work of local authorities in Wales during the 2023-24 financial year. Across Wales as a whole that year, over £38 million of detriment was prevented through Trading Standards actions. This is the equivalent of **£12.13 saved for every £1 spent**.

It is pleasing to see the significant contribution of Shared Regulatory Services to Trading Standards outcomes in Wales. For example, across Wales in 2023-24, some **46 years** of prison sentences (or suspended prison sentences) were handed down as a result of concluded prosecutions in Trading Standards cases. In the same period, the equivalent figure arising from SRS Trading Standards cases was **14 years** of prison sentences, or **30%** of the total across Wales.

**Illicit tobacco** – Illegal tobacco (i.e. counterfeit, or non-duty paid) continues to present a very real problem in our communities. Research indicates that at least 15% of all tobacco and tobacco products supplied are illegal, however, many smokers appear to be comfortable in purchasing illegal tobacco, presumably under the misapprehension that the only impact of its widespread use is the loss of revenue to HM Treasury. This thinking ignores the most serious harms caused by illegal tobacco. At around half the cost of legitimate product, illegal tobacco removes the price incentive for smokers to quit the otherwise expensive habit. In addition, the way in which illegal tobacco is supplied means that mainstream tobacco control measures such as minimum age of purchase and the tobacco display ban are undermined. It is also important to remember that widespread availability of illegal tobacco undermines the viability of legitimate retailers selling genuine product, for it is not just the revenue from tobacco products that they are losing. Customers purchasing illegal tobacco elsewhere will also tend to purchase other goods elsewhere, for example the bread, milk and other essentials they pick up at the same time as their cigarettes.

SRS officers carry out regular exercises with partner agencies and the assistance of tobacco detection dogs to locate illegal product (which will usually be concealed) whilst on site. During 2024-25, **86,540 illegal cigarettes** and **30kg (600 pouches) of illegal hand rolling tobacco** were seized during SRS operations. The equivalent street value of that haul was £110,500. Supply chains for illegal tobacco are invariably linked to wider criminality, and such is their sophistication that retail premises are able to restock almost immediately after the seizure of illegal product.

While seizures of this kind remain a useful disruption tool, tackling the widespread availability of illegal tobacco requires a more targeted approach along the supply chain. With this alternative approach in mind, some years ago Officers began a major investigation into the supply of illegal tobacco. While originating in Cardiff, the case also involved outlets in both the Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan Council areas.

When the case, code named Operation USK was brought to court, its complexities, multiple defendants and sheer size meant that it had to be divided into two separate Crown Court trials. Ultimately all 11 defendants were found guilty or had changed their pleas to guilty in respect of supplying illegal tobacco and nitrous oxide cannisters. Sentencing was finally completed in July 2024, with the following results:



- 6 of the defendants received custodial sentences totalling **27 years, 4 months**
- 5 of the defendants received suspended sentences totalling **9 years, 2 months**, with a requirement to undertake a total of 500 hrs unpaid work
- A Proceeds of Crime hearing will follow

**Premises Closure Order** – In March 2024, the Service was successful in its first application to close a retail outlet under the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, this being in response to the harm caused in the community arising from the supply of illegal tobacco (and this first case, nitrous oxide). After hearing of the harm caused in the community as a result of the supply of illegal tobacco and vapes from this outlet, the Magistrates Court imposed a 3-month closure order on the retail shop. This was subsequently extended through a further application to the Court which resulted in this particular outlet remaining closed for a total of 6 months concluding in September 2024.

Also during 2024-25, a further two retail outlets were successfully closed in this way, each for a period of 3 months. This new approach is proving to be a highly compelling and impactful enforcement tool, and applications are being considered in respect of other problematic premises.

## Improved business practices and operation

**Training provision** - The Service has continued to expand its training offer to cater for the needs of business, while at the same time consolidating its excellent reputation as a training provider. During 2024-25, 49 training courses/ qualifications were delivered, covering a wide range of themes including Levels 1-3 Food Safety in Catering and food safety refresher training, allergens, Weights and Measures, and the Level 2 Award in Infection Prevention and Control in Special Procedures. In addition, 4 webinars were given to newly qualified tradespeople on how to comply with consumer protection law. Hundreds of individuals have now received this training, all of whom are likely to set up their own home improvement companies, and as such, the reach of this training continues to be significant.

**96%**  
Of delegates felt that the training received will benefit their business

In new developments in 2024-25, SRS has delivered training on Allergens for businesses in other areas, in partnership with the relevant local authorities. In addition, officers have worked with both Cardiff & the Vale and Cwm Taff Morgannwg Health Boards, as well as big Fresh Catering, to reach the most vulnerable consumers (healthcare settings and schools). Training has also been given to Youth Volunteers to teach the importance of preparing safe food.

The feedback from the delegates on the training received has been extremely positive, with 95% indicating they feel the training they receive will help them improve standards of compliance in their business, and 96% indicating the training will benefit their business. As a further measure of the success and popularity of the business training provided by SRS, the income it generated in 2024-25 was double that two years before in the 2022-23 financial year.

## Accessible services responsive to business needs

**Primary Authority** - The Primary Authority scheme enables a business to enter into a statutory partnership with a local authority through which it can receive assured advice. Provided this advice is followed, the Primary Authority (PA) is able to challenge intended enforcement action by other local authorities. SRS now has some 35 Primary Authority partnerships in place with both local and national businesses and is able to charge for the work done as part of these arrangements on the basis of full cost recovery.

35  
Primary  
Authority  
partnerships

**Buy with Confidence scheme** – [Buy with confidence](#) was created by a partnership of Local Authority Trading Standards Services in response to concerns about 'the practices of rogue traders. The scheme provides consumers with a list of businesses which have given their commitment to trading fairly. Before being admitted into the scheme, each business must undergo a series of detailed checks by Trading Standards professionals .

The 'Buy With Confidence Trading Standards Approved' stamp helps residents in making the right choice of tradesperson while at the same time giving member businesses the seal of approval that allows them to 'stand out from the crowd'. Membership also gives businesses access to invaluable advice from qualified Trading Standards personnel, on consumer protection and contract law.

SRS now runs the Buy with Confidence scheme for a total of 9 local authorities in Wales, with a total business membership of 30 with new applicants progressing through the approval process.



Oes gan eich busnes chi yr hyn sydd ei angen i gael cymeradwyaeth y Safonau Masnach?  
Am ragor o wybodaeth ac i wneud cais, ewch i:  
[www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)



Does your business have what it takes to be Trading Standards approved?  
To find out more and to apply simply visit:  
[www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk)

## Informed and confident consumers

As part of its Safeguarding role, the Service provides assistance to residents identified as being vulnerable in resolving difficulties encountered as a result of marketing scams and also more straightforward 'shopping' problems. In providing this service, the aim is not only to resolve the immediate difficulty facing a resident but to equip them as well as their families and carers with the knowledge and awareness to avoid similar issues arising in the future. This Plan has highlighted several prosecutions undertaken by SRS against rogue traders that have scammed individuals of money for work not completed and these examples demonstrate where SRS has been able to make a real difference to the lives of residents needing assistance to resolve problems of this type. With the investment of officer time to provide tips on avoiding similar problems in the future, the legacy of these interventions is one where even our more vulnerable residents and their families are far better equipped to make informed decisions.

# What we plan to do next

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

Supporting the local economy		Lead Responsibility
<b>A fair trading environment is maintained</b>		
Conduct intelligence led operations to investigate and disrupt businesses selling illegal vapes and tobacco products and raise public awareness of how to report it.		C Hill
<b>Informed and confident consumers</b>		
Continue to promote the 'Buy with Confidence' (responsible trader) scheme and seek to expand coverage of the centralised scheme for Wales under SRS administration		J Bale
<b>Improved business practices and operation</b>		
Explore options for extending training provision by developing and marketing courses meeting the needs of business, adopting a Learning Management System to streamline bookings.		J Bale
<b>Accessible services responsive to business needs</b>		
Continue to review the primary authority framework to ensure the advice and support requirements for our current Primary Authority partners are appropriate.		J Bale

# What we will measure

Performance Measures 2025/26	Target
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of new businesses identified which were subject to risk assessment visit or returned a self-assessment questionnaire during the year for food hygiene.</li> </ul>	90%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of new businesses identified which were subject to risk assessment visit or returned a self-assessment questionnaire during the year for Trading Standards</li> </ul>	80%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of businesses who felt that interaction with SRS has helped them improve standards of compliance in their business.</li> </ul>	85%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of individuals who feel that the training they received through SRS will benefit their business.</li> </ul>	95%

## Priority

# Maximising the use of resources

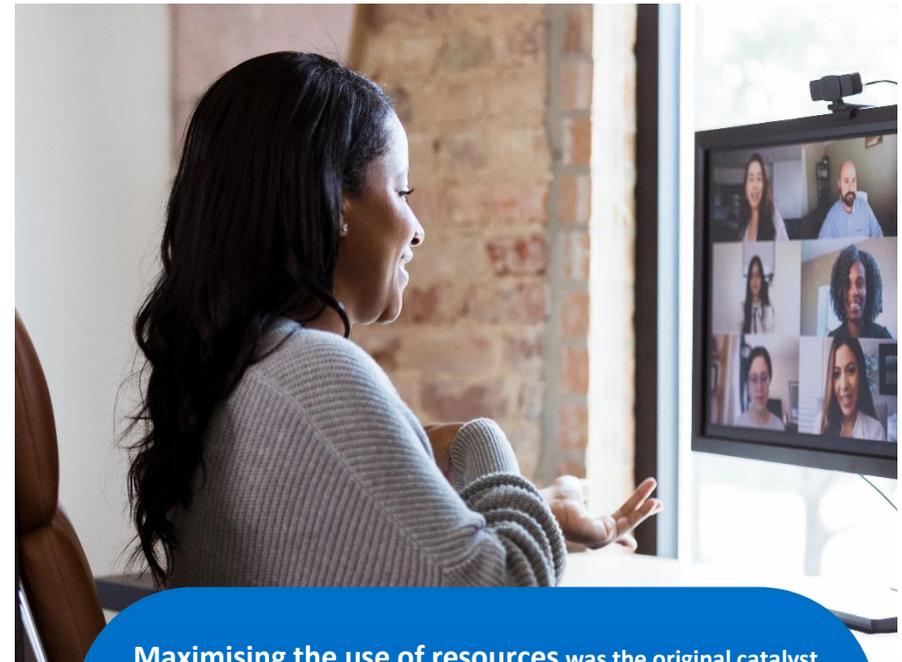
## Outcomes



## Outputs



In addition, our outcomes also contribute to the following wellbeing goals:-



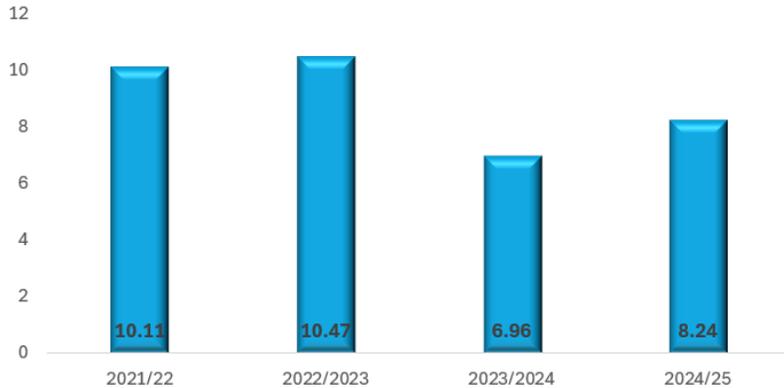
**Maximising the use of resources** was the original catalyst for creating SRS, and our work in this area continues. Reducing “triplication” of effort, introducing better processes, making our systems work without constant intervention, improving access into the service will all benefit our business and increase customer satisfaction.

We are generating income, where possible, to underpin service delivery; activities like marketing our metrology laboratory, offering paid for advice services, building Primary Authority partnerships and extending our training provision to business are examples of our more “commercial” culture.

Above all, we recognise that crucial to the success of SRS are the people who work within the service. We will ensure that our officers are effective in their roles by investing in learning and development opportunities, by engaging them fully in the development of the service, and by fostering an environment where people are encouraged to think, lead and innovate.

## How we performed

No. of Days Sickness Absence per FTE



## What we have achieved

### SRS operates effectively and efficiently across all 3 areas

**Customer Satisfaction** – SRS delivers a diverse range of regulatory services on behalf of Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils and we place great importance on receiving customer feedback which enables us to understand what we are doing well and what can be improved. As well as monitoring customer satisfaction through surveys, the results of which can be found throughout this plan, we also receive specific feedback from individuals or groups that we have helped expressing their gratitude for our intervention. During the last year, we received a number of such compliments, a selection of which can be found below-

*“I just wanted to say a huge thank you for all your support and time spent dealing with this matter. I am extremely grateful. As you know the incident was really affecting our quality of life, my son felt very apprehensive and fearful leaving the flat and this caused*

*me a great deal of distress and worry as his parent. Since your visit to the neighbour, we have not experienced another incident so I know your intervention has worked and this has had a huge impact on my son and I, he now feels safe to leave home and go to school independently and I am more at ease knowing this. I think the awareness raising was also needed to prevent such re-occurrences which, in my view, had the potential to cause lasting damage and injury to both my son and the dog in question. Thank you also for your professional, proactive and empathetic approach and for taking the time to check in. It is clear to see that you take great pride and effort in what you do - it has not gone unnoticed.”*. Service user of Animal Warden service.

*“...When I said that we had rats in our communal bin area he said whilst he was here he'd go down and put traps in there. He came back up and said he's found out where they were coming from. He went above and beyond what he was supposed to do, when many employees wouldn't have. The worker is absolutely fantastic”*. Service user of our pest control service.

**Tablet devices** - In making the best use of its resources, SRS looks for opportunities to streamline how things are done in all areas of the Service. With this in mind, work continues to pilot the use of handheld tablet devices to replace the paper system currently being used to record the results of food inspections. It is hoped that this approach can be mainstreamed across the Food Service in 2025-26 to bring benefits such as the direct uploading of information onto the database avoiding the need for officers to spend time scanning multiple documents and the resulting delays in the uploading of information; reduction in the consumption of paper and lower printing costs; and less travel time for officers in having to pick up and drop off paperwork.

### Public and stakeholders are able to access our services

**Access to SRS services** – The ease with which the public and stakeholders are able to access SRS services is extremely important for SRS and the use of technology to highlight and promote our services is utilised wherever possible.

The following examples show how SRS ensures access to services.

- **SRS website** – Further improvements have taken place over the last year in order to ensure the best possible customer journey. During 2024-25, the SRS website had 167,498 page views. Once again, our noise and air pollution web pages continue to receive the most page views of all areas.

- **Social Media** – Since its launch in 2017, the SRS Twitter account has been a valuable tool in communicating with residents and businesses. Following the changes to the platform since its rebranding as X, however the Vale of Glamorgan Council decided at the end of the financial year that the corporate account should close. In line with this approach, the SRS account has been closed with followers signposted to the other channels utilised by the Service, namely Instagram and LinkedIn
- **Noise app** – This app can be downloaded by customers making a complaint about noise enabling them to record short bursts of the disturbance and submit to the service to determine if a nuisance has occurred. This app enables complaints to be triaged, reducing the need for officers to visit homes to monitor disturbances.

## Income generation underpins sustainable service delivery

**UKAS Accredited Metrology Laboratory** - The Metrology laboratory based in Cardiff undergoes regular audits by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to maintain its accreditation. The metrology laboratory was first established in 1995, but since the creation of SRS there has been a drive to enhance the income generating capacity of the laboratory. Calibration work has been undertaken for a broad range of businesses, the majority of whom are regular and returning customers. These businesses represent sectors including avionics, food, pharmaceutical and medical where accuracy and confidence in their weighing equipment is fundamental to their operations.

The provision of calibration services to business clients is well established and has been expanded over time as new markets have been identified. One recent development is the provision of paid-for metrology courses for officers working towards their statutory weights and measures qualification and for qualified officers seeking refresher training. As the facility is the only UKAS accredited local authority metrology laboratory in Wales, this formal 2 day course is proving popular. Additional 'lab days' will also be offered to provide students the opportunity to practise what they have learnt in advance of their statutory Metrology practical and oral examinations.

**Income generation** – A key priority for SRS, is the further development of our commercial approach by increasing our 'paid for' services and marketing them to business. These commercial activities are aimed at complementing existing services whilst also providing income generation. We do this by developing Primary Authority partnerships with businesses of which we currently have 35 in place. The Service also provides accredited training in areas such as food safety, health and safety and allergens. SRS was the first training centre in Wales to deliver the RSPH Level Two Award in Infection Prevention and Control for Special Procedures Practitioners. Income is also generated via our UKAS accredited Metrology Lab services and we are expanding our environmental services with an increase in Air Quality Monitoring Services/Local Site Operator Licences. As a result during 2024-25 the income generated by SRS was £166,192, a 33% increase on the same measure in 2023-24.



## Staff are effective in their roles

**Investing in Staff Learning and Development** – SRS is committed to developing staff to ensure they are effective in their roles. Learning and development can take many forms from traditional study to the taking up of secondments. During the last year, the service has invested in a number of learning and development activities to support the business including the following examples:-

SRS continues to encourage SRS officers to engage in further study leading to recognised, higher level qualifications. For the past few years, support has been offered to a small number of staff by way of match funding, who have successfully demonstrated the benefits their desired qualification would bring to the service and to them personally. In the autumn of 2024, a further 3 members of staff received match funding support to begin further qualifications, with all of them studying towards the MSc in Environmental Health. This is in addition to the 3 members of staff currently concluding their studies towards the same qualification, and the 2 members of staff who have successfully achieved additional qualification through match funded study. The qualifications attained since 2017 include:-

- Eight achieved the MSc in Environmental Health
- One achieved the MSc in Health and Public Services Management
- One achieved the MSc in Leadership and Management
- One achieved the MSc in Public Sector Leadership
- One achieved the MSc in Public Health.

The success of the initiative is evident, not only in demonstrating how SRS values its staff and supports their development, but in equipping the service with the necessary skills and behaviours to shape future leaders. All but two of the eighteen staff supported to date remain with the service. In the run up to the new academic year, expressions of interest will again be sought for opportunities for further match funded study. Of necessity, opportunities will be scaled back moving forward given the continued financial pressures facing the Service, with applications considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the performance review process.

Secondments provide development opportunities for both the employee who is seconded and the employee who fills the empty position. Within SRS we now have one team manager seconded to a different stakeholder which has enabled their role to be filled on a temporary basis by an existing employee. The ability to 'act up' provides valuable development opportunities and experience for officers, whilst also contributing to the effective management and resilience of the service.

Looking to the longer term, the Service continued to work closely with Cardiff Metropolitan University offering a number of work placements for Environmental Health degree students during the year. This relationship has been further enhanced by the establishment of two annual academic awards in memory of the SRS Environmental Health professionals who very sadly passed away in service in 2022. Awarded for the first time in June 2023, the Zoe Pieris Award recognises the highest achieving final year degree student by exam grade, and the Rachel Stickler Award recognises the student who best exemplifies the values of the Environmental Health profession through their commitment, drive and positive attitude.

The lack of a Regulatory apprenticeship in Wales has been a cause of frustration for the Service, particularly in the context of the recruitment and retention pressures and an ageing workforce as highlighted above. For the last five years, SRS has led on the development of a Level 4 Regulatory Apprenticeship for Wales. This has been a long journey, but one that has arrived at its destination with all the necessary components now in place, namely the necessary qualification, the apprenticeship pathway, funding values and Training Provider to deliver the course materials.

In a major step forward in May 2024, the necessary qualification was designated by Qualifications Wales as the Level 4 Diploma in Regulatory Compliance (see the [Agored Cymru Level 4 Diploma in Regulatory Compliance](#)).

Later in the year, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024, the apprenticeship framework was published (see <https://acwcerts.co.uk/web/framework/regulatory-compliance>), and finally the apprenticeship funding value was agreed. All of this meant that a Training Provider could commit to delivering the course materials to students across Wales and by the end of 2024-25, arrangements were being put in place for the initial cohort to begin the

Regulatory Compliance Apprenticeship in Wales. This initial cohort beginning in the summer of 2025 comprises existing staff working in Regulatory Services across Wales, but without a recognised qualification. SRS looks forward to recruiting two Apprentices under the new scheme ready for the next intake by the Training Provider, scheduled for the end of September 2025.

Apprenticeships can work well for all involved. Apprentices will now be able to 'earn while they learn' as they begin their careers in Regulatory Services, without the need to run up a student debt. For employers, apprenticeships mean that they are able to play an active role in the development of their staff, making sure that they are job-ready and that each is an asset to the organisation.

After 5 years in the making, the launch of the Regulatory Apprenticeship for Wales is a hugely positive development, particularly in the currently very difficult recruitment landscape. There is no time to stand still however, and thought now turns to the development of Level 6 apprenticeships to sustain the Environmental Health and Trading Standards professional qualification pathways well into the future.

## What we plan to do next

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

### Maximising the use of resources

Lead  
Responsibility

#### SRS operates effectively and efficiently across all 3 areas

Explore options for introducing newer technologies that ensure officers can operate more efficiently and where possible reduce operating costs, for example strengthening the ICT interface between the partner authorities and introduction of mobile devices for inspections. \*\*\*

J Bale

Review all future service delivery options in light of the ongoing year on year financial pressures. \*\*\*

H Picton

Explore options to improve electronic payment options for SRS customers.

J Bale

Further develop the Intelligence function and extend the scope of the Intelligence Operating Model across further SRS services

J Bale

Explore opportunities to provide digital forensic services to external organisations and assess feasibility of obtaining full accreditation.

J Bale

Engage with partner authorities on accommodation requirements as a result of hybrid working arrangements and changes to partner Council office space footprints .

H Picton

Identify a clear process through which any significant reprioritisation of SRS services would be decided by partner Councils including how such an exercise would be communicated and consulted upon, as part of the process through which a final decision is made.

H Picton

Undertake a review of the SRS website and social media presence to optimise ease of access and user experience

J Bale

Develop staff of the future by embracing the newly available Level 4 apprenticeship for Wales

H Picton

#### Public and stakeholders are able to access our services

Improve engagement and consultation with stakeholders including service users and residents and review the effectiveness of current mechanisms used to access Shared Regulatory Services. \*\*\*

All OMs

#### Staff are effective in their roles

Complete the PDR process with all SRS employees.

All OMs /TMs

Produce a workforce development plan for the service that addresses recruitment and retention pressures, incorporates the identification of staff learning and development needs and other HR approaches. \*\*\*

H Picton

Review mechanisms for engagement with staff to seek their ideas about the future delivery of services and opportunities to further improve staff wellbeing. \*\*\*

All OMs

Improve internal communication mechanisms to ensure staff are kept up to date on developments	H Picton
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## Income generation underpins sustainable service delivery

Maximise options for cost recovery and income generation to ensure this approach underpins sustainable service delivery.***	J Bale
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Undertake a marketing campaign for Metrology Laboratory Services including training provision to increase income generation opportunities.	J Bale
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Implement a Learning Management System to streamline the booking process for the full range of SRS training courses	J Bale
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## What we will measure

Performance Measures 2025/26	Target
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Average days sickness per FTE.	8.00
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% of SRS investigations resulting in prosecution that were successfully concluded.	95%
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# Appendix 1 – Risk Register

Possible Impact or Magnitude of Risk	Catastrophic	4 <i>MEDIUM</i>	8 MEDIUM/HIGH	12 HIGH	16 VERY HIGH
	High	3 <i>MEDIUM/LOW</i>	6 <i>MEDIUM</i>	9 MEDIUM/HIGH	12 HIGH
	Medium	2 LOW	4 <i>MEDIUM</i>	6 <i>MEDIUM</i>	8 MEDIUM/HIGH
	Low	1 VERY LOW	2 LOW	3 <i>MEDIUM/LOW</i>	4 <i>MEDIUM</i>
<small>Low 1-2 Low/Medium 3 Medium 4-6 Medium/High 8-10 High 12-16</small>		Very Unlikely	Possible	Probable	Almost Certain
Likelihood/Probability of Risk Occurring					

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
RR1: Insufficient resources, and capacity to deliver planned services will result in loss of service provision and reduction in performance.	4	3	High 12	The creation of SRS generated significant cost savings at its inception and the service continues to deliver services with a reducing budget across 3 local authority areas. These, and the latest budget savings together with other factors, such as new and emerging legislation, the cost of living crisis, the rise in infringements and recruitment and retention pressures are all severely impacting our ability to deliver planned services. To mitigate this, the Service is examining new ways of prioritising some services and using risk based approaches to	4	3	High 12

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
				activities in line with reduced resources, and through the recruitment of temporary staff and graduates. Serious concerns, do remain however in relation to the delivery of planned services as we enter the new financial year.			
RR2: Inability to recruit professional officers to vacant posts.	4	3	High 12	Recruiting to vacancies, particularly to those roles that require professionally qualified officers continues to be challenging. The shortage of applicants with the right skills, abilities and experience in the different professions has created a more competitive market due to the traditional supply of professional officers from universities being greatly reduced, and it now taking longer to qualify. SRS has instigated the introduction of two mitigating measures in this regard, during 2024-25. The first of these is the change in job titles to reflect professional disciplines (for example Environmental Health Officer rather than Neighbourhood Servies Officer), which will ensure future vacancies better reach the target audience / recruitment pool. The second development during 2024-25 is the introduction of the much-anticipated Level 4 Regulatory Compliance Apprenticeship for Wales. This now offers an entry level route into Regulatory Services, and provides increased visibility of the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing professions, bringing them to a new audience.	3	3	Medium/ High 9
RR3: The complexities of resource allocation may	3	3		Dedicated accountant appointed for the Service. Governance arrangements in place to address lack	2	2	Medium 4

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
result in a lack of understanding and misalignment of resources.			Medium/ High 9	of understanding. Review and standardisation of financial processes ongoing.			
RR4: The loss of critical ICT systems and appropriate support will be detrimental to working as a single service unit and the ability to work smarter and more efficiently.	3	3	Medium/ High 9	The service utilises a web based database that facilitates remote working and all staff have been issued with laptops and mobile devices which enables more agile working. There is however a need to improve our remote working capabilities together with the IT interface between the SRS and the partner authorities. Progress is being made in Cardiff to migrate across to a new way of accessing Cardiff systems and a pilot has commenced within the Food Team to utilise tablets to undertake food business inspections which will enable the service to deliver services more efficiently and effectively across all 3 areas.	2	2	Medium 4
RR5: Failure to identify and resource staff learning and development to address changes in roles together with the immediate needs and long term goals of the service, could result in staff capability issues which would affect the SRS ability to deliver services.	3	3	Medium/ High 9	SRS is committed to the resourcing of training to develop people to ensure competency and the corporate appraisal process <i>#it'saboutme</i> ensures performance reviews are undertaken annually and learning and development opportunities identified. A match funding offer to staff for personal development has resulted in a number of officers being supported in further development studies however this is likely to be unsustainable given the latest budget savings.	1	3	Medium/ Low 3
RR6: Implementation of new legislation may create additional demands on service delivery.	4	3	High 12	Whilst workloads are reviewed and monitored and processes are in place to regularly report to partner authorities, it is not always easy to predict the impact that new legislation may have on	4	3	High 12

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
				resources, particularly when no additional funding accompanies its introduction, and recruitment and retention pressures still exist.			
RR7: An inability to recruit officers to the Duty Officer regime may result in inadequate cover and failure to deal with emergencies out of hours.	3	2	Medium 6	The Duty Officer regime operates on a 24/7 basis over 365 days a year providing a single point of contact out of office hours dealing with SRS emergencies. Cover is provided by officers on a paid voluntary basis however there can be periods where it is difficult to recruit officers resulting in shortage of cover. This has required managers to step in at short notice. While the policies and procedures have been reviewed and training provided for new officers to the rota there is still a lack of resilience with no further action that can be taken.	2	2	Medium 4
RR8: The positioning of Shared Regulatory Services under a host authority, together with unique branding may result in the Service becoming divorced from its constituent Councils or marginalised.	2	2	Medium 4	The Service remains relevant to all 3 authorities through links into the Corporate Plans of 3 authorities, attendance at the various Council/Executive meetings and maintaining strong links with members and senior officers within each legacy authority with opportunities to promote successes taken where possible. The Covid-19 pandemic saw the critical involvement of SRS in the Test, Trace and Protect and the enforcement of Coronavirus regulations bring about greater attention and recognition from the 3 authorities we serve. We continue this approach with our work on minimum energy efficiency standards which contributes to the climate change agendas of the partner authorities.	1	2	Low 2

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
RR9: Failure to sustain the shared regulatory services partnership.	2	3	Medium 6	As a collaborative service SRS provides a diverse range of services to Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan under a single management structure with shared governance arrangements. The partnership generated significant cost savings at its inception while providing greater resilience to the important services SRS provides across all 3 areas. To break up the partnership would therefore be hugely detrimental to the delivery of these services and have significant financial implications for the partners. In terms of mitigating measures, SRS maintains links into Corporate Plans of 3 authorities, attendance at the various Council/Executive meetings and has strong links with members and senior officers within each legacy authority with opportunities to promote successes taken where possible.	1	3	Medium/Low
RR10: Failure to align agendas and objectives with key partners and remain relevant to all.	2	3	Medium 6	SRS operates under a Joint Working Agreement (JWA) which sets out the functions to be carried out by the joint service, the terms of reference and constitution of the Joint Committee, the Management Board etc., the terms of staffing and services to be provided by the host and other partners, financing and other functional issues and the financial operating model. The Service aligns its objectives with those of the partner authorities. Recent budget savings however requested of SRS from the partners suggest possible disparities emerging which will make the delivery of services across SRS difficult to balance. The service however will continue to remain relevant to all 3	1	3	Medium/Low

Risk Description	Inherent Risk Score (April 2024)		Risk	Comments What SRS are doing to mitigate risks	Residual Risk Score		Risk
	Likelihood	Impact			Likelihood	Impact	
				authorities through links into Corporate Plans of 3 authorities, attendance at the various Council/Executive meetings and maintaining strong links with members and senior officers within each legacy authority with opportunities to promote successes taken where possible.			

# Appendix 2 – Action Plan

\*\* - Cardiff Corporate Plan \*\*\* Vale Service Plan

Improving health and wellbeing	Lead Responsibility
<b>The food chain is safe and free from risks</b>	
Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Food and Feed Law Enforcement Plan 2025/26. ***	C Hill
Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Port Health Plan 2025/26.	C Hill
<b>Risks in the workplace are managed properly</b>	
Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out in the Health and Safety Enforcement Plan 2025/26 ***	C Hill
Implement enforcement and public awareness raising measures in respect of smoke-free requirements on hospital grounds	C Hill
<b>Noise and air emissions are controlled</b>	
Review and explore options for future proofing the Duty Officer Rota.	W Lane
Continue to work with Transport for Wales in minimising noise disturbance to residents from works associated with the South Wales Metro Construction.	W Lane
<b>A safe trading environment is maintained</b>	
Undertake seasonal product safety projects, for example in respect of Halloween and Christmas goods and novelties-	C Hill
Conduct inspections to ensure that fireworks being supplied to the public meet relevant safety standards, are safely stored in appropriately licensed premises, and are subject to adequate policies to prevent underage sales	C Hill
<b>Licensed premises operate responsibly</b>	
Review the Cumulative Impact Assessment adopted by Bridgend Council.	W Lane
<b>The quality of private rented property is improved</b>	
Drive up standards in the private rented housing sector by undertaking robust enforcement action to deal with rogue agents and landlords letting and managing properties. **	W Lane
Continuing to work with Welsh Government and stakeholder organisations in the development of their Building Safety Programme for medium and high-rise buildings in the private sector. **	W Lane

## Infectious disease is controlled and prevented

Protect public health through the delivery of actions set out within the Communicable Disease and Health Service Plan.	C Hill
Continue to input into the implementation of both the national and local health protection framework by collaborating with Cardiff & Vale and Cwm Taff Morgannwg Health Boards by working in partnership on community Infection Prevention and Control	C Hill
Continue to assist businesses transitioning to the Special Procedures licensing regime, including through delivery of the RSPH Level 2 Infection Control Training course for Special Procedures.	C Hill/J Bale/W Lane

## Safeguarding the vulnerable

Lead Responsibility

### Older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous traders and scams

Consider how SRS could engage more with Elected Members regarding areas of concern and safeguarding for the public, such as rogue traders, scams, illegal money lending and doorstep crime.	H Picton
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### Children are protected from harmful substances and products

Work in partnership to safeguard the vulnerable to ensure that children are protected from harmful substances and products, older people are protected from rogue traders and scams and vulnerable people are not subject to exploitation. ***	All OMs
Conduct intelligence led underage sales exercises in relation to the sale of tobacco, alcohol, vapes, knives and other age restricted products.	C Hill

### Illegal money lending activities are prevented

Raise awareness of illegal money lending and support individuals to access responsible lenders and debt advice, rebuild their finances and make a sustainable transition to legal credit. ** & ***	J Bale
Trialling of a victim support referral programme in the context of illegal money lending, in conjunction with Cambrian Credit Union. This to support victims who find themselves excluded from access to financial services.	J Bale

### Taxi provision is safe and fair

Undertake enforcement exercises with the taxi trade including mystery shopper exercises to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act, vehicle and licensing standards and fare refusals for short journeys .	W Lane
Review the Statements of Licensing Policy adopted by Bridgend and Cardiff Councils	W Lane
Review the Statement of Gambling Principles adopted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council	W Lane

## Protecting the environment

Lead Responsibility

### The environment is protected from harmful emissions to land, air and water

Undertake local air quality assessments and review the data to ensure that national air quality objectives continue to be achieved.\*\*\*

J Bale

Ensure good air quality by reviewing real time air quality data to assess and identify trends in pollution to assess further interventions that will further reduce air pollution. \*\*

J Bale

## People will use energy efficient buildings and products

Work with homeowners and landlords to return empty properties back into use through engagement, support, consideration of varying the Council Tax premium scheme, and where necessary taking appropriate enforcement action to deal with the worst long term derelict empty homes. \*\*

W Lane

Engage with landlords and lettings agents to improve the energy performance ratings of private rented properties under the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations. \*\* & \*\*\*

C Hill

## Animals are treated humanely

Engage with Welsh Government regarding animal welfare concerns associated with unlicensed dog breeding and sales.

J Bale

## Communities are protected from nuisance and are safer

Engage with students and residents during Freshers Week in Cardiff providing community advice on housing, environmental and social issues.

W Lane

## Supporting the local economy

Lead  
Responsibility

### A fair trading environment is maintained

Conduct intelligence led operations to investigate and disrupt businesses selling illegal vapes and tobacco products and raise public awareness of how to report it.

C Hill

### Informed and confident consumers

Continue to promote the 'Buy with Confidence' (responsible trader) scheme and seek to expand coverage of the centralised scheme for Wales under SRS administration

J Bale

### Improved business practices and operation

Explore options for extending training provision by developing and marketing courses meeting the needs of business, adopting a Learning Management System to streamline bookings.

J Bale

### Accessible services responsive to business needs

Continue to review the primary authority framework to ensure the advice and support requirements for our current Primary Authority partners are appropriate.

J Bale

## Maximising the use of resources

Lead  
Responsibility

## SRS operates effectively and efficiently across all 3 areas

Explore options for introducing newer technologies that ensure officers can operate more efficiently and where possible reduce operating costs, for example strengthening the ICT interface between the partner authorities and introduction of mobile devices for inspections. ***	J Bale
Review all future service delivery options in light of the ongoing year on year financial pressures. ***	H Picton
Explore options to improve electronic payment options for SRS customers.	J Bale
Further develop the Intelligence function and extend the scope of the Intelligence Operating Model across further SRS services	J Bale
Explore opportunities to provide digital forensic services to external organisations and assess feasibility of obtaining full accreditation.	J Bale
Engage with partner authorities on accommodation requirements as a result of hybrid working arrangements and changes to partner Council office space footprints .	C Hill
Identify a clear process through which any significant reprioritisation of SRS services would be decided by partner Councils including how such an exercise would be communicated and consulted upon, as part of the process through which a final decision is made.	H Picton
Undertake a review of the SRS website and social media presence to optimise ease of access and user experience	J Bale
Develop staff of the future by embracing the newly available Level 4 apprenticeship for Wales	H Picton

## Public and stakeholders are able to access our services

Improve engagement and consultation with stakeholders including service users and residents and review the effectiveness of current mechanisms used to access Shared Regulatory Services. ***	All OMs
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## Staff are effective in their roles

Complete the PDR process with all SRS employees.	All OMs /TMs
Produce a workforce development plan for the service that addresses recruitment and retention pressures, incorporates the identification of staff learning and development needs and other HR approaches. ***	H Picton
Review mechanisms for engagement with staff to seek their ideas about the future delivery of services and opportunities to further improve staff wellbeing. ***	All OMs
Improve internal communication mechanisms to ensure staff are kept up to date on developments	H Picton

## Income generation underpins sustainable service delivery

Maximise options for cost recovery and income generation to ensure this approach underpins sustainable service delivery. ***	J Bale
Undertake a marketing campaign for Metrology Laboratory Services including training provision to increase income generation opportunities.	J Bale
Implement a Learning Management System to streamline the booking process for the full range of SRS training courses	J Bale