

## Improving the provision of second-tier advice and intervention

### **Consultation with Local Authority Trading Standards Services (TSS)**

Between June and August 2007, the OFT consulted with TSS on a proposed shared vision for the provision of second-tier consumer advice and intervention (referred to in the consultation paper as 'consumer intervention') and possible ways that the vision could be facilitated.

#### **The shared vision**

As a result of the consultation, the following OFT-TSS shared vision has been agreed.

Second-tier consumer advice and intervention that:

- is accessible to all consumers free at the point of delivery
- is impartial, effective and fair in its approach and delivery
- is delivered by TSS in partnership with other advice and support services where these are available and appropriate
- where possible, empowers consumers to take action and to solve problems and seek redress on their own behalf
- prioritises more in-depth assistance to those consumers whom the TSS assesses as needing it most and as having the greatest potential to benefit
- provides information for intelligence-led, targeted enforcement action and education campaigns
- makes appropriate use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and
- helps businesses comply with the law.

#### **Raising Local Authority awareness of the benefits of second-tier consumer advice and intervention**

The consultation also identified ways in which the OFT and TSS can work together to facilitate achievement of the vision.

One of these is to raise awareness among councillors of the benefits of providing second-tier consumer advice and intervention in order to increase political support for provision of this service. This is the purpose of the fact-sheet and covering letter.

Other ongoing work to help TSS achieve the vision includes ensuring that, so far as is possible, the fair trading performance indicator (included in the new Local Government Performance Framework) and associated guidance materials support the provision of second-tier advice and intervention by TSS.