



MARKET REGULATIONS AND QUALITY STANDARDS

INTRODUCTION

Stockton-on-Tees Markets operate across Billingham, Stockton and Thornaby Town Centres.

Stockton-on-Tees Markets has grown from modest beginnings in 1710, into an important part of the Borough’s economy and heritage.

Today, the markets continue to serve as important spaces for trade, connections and community spirit. Each market day is unique, with a vibrant atmosphere, history and diverse mix of traders and visitors.

Effective market regulation is essential to the continued success of Stockton-on-Tees Markets.

This document outlines the rules and expectations that guide how Stockton-on-Tees Markets operate. It aims to support a safe, welcoming and well-organised environment for market traders, customers and the wider community..

Market Regulations and Quality Standards

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1. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Registration

If you wish to trade on any of our markets, you must be registered with the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council markets team.

To register with us, you must be eligible to work in the United Kingdom as a trader in compliance with the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, and provide evidence to support this.

You must also complete and submit the relevant application form, along with all relevant supporting documents.

We will only consider valid applications that are completed in full, providing all the supporting documents and received within any prescribed timescales.

Food businesses must be registered with the local authority from which they are based and must have a score of 3 or above on the Food Standards Agency Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). Certificates must be provided, and these will be cross referenced against the FHRS national website. If businesses are exempt, they must provide contact details of their local authority environmental health department in order for this to be confirmed.

For further information on the requirements for food businesses, please see additional document 'Food Safety Guidance for Market Traders' a copy of which can be obtained from the market staff.

Stalls or pitches in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council operated markets are for traders to use as a concourse for buying and selling, and the Council will not permit use of the stalls or pitches in the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council operated markets for political parties and/or lobbying groups.

We will process your application and notify you of the outcome as soon as possible, but at the latest within the timescales detailed within the application guidance.

Stockton-on-Tees Markets reserves the right as the market operator to approve or decline applications dependant on individual circumstances. We also reserve the right to stop a person(s) working on the markets, that may bring the reputation of the market into disrepute. If an application is refused or a person(s) is/are stopped from working on the market(s), a valid reason will be provided in writing, upon request. This will be at the discretion of the Town Centre Manager. There will be a right to appeal this decision. The trader must appeal in writing to the Service Manager for markets within 5 working days of the refusal to trade outcome letter. Details of how to appeal will be confirmed in the letter of refusal.

You must notify us in writing within 14 days of any changes to the information you have registered with us and provide any documents we request as evidence of this change.



1.1 Legislation

It is your responsibility to ensure that you and your employees comply with all current legislation in respect of your business and provide any relevant documentary evidence when we request to see it. For example, the employment of children not over compulsory school age, including where they may provide assistance without receiving monetary gain.

When applying to register with us, you must provide the required documentary evidence to show that you are eligible to work in the UK.

When applying to trade on our markets you must provide documentary evidence of your home address.

If you change your address, then you must provide documentary evidence of your new address as soon as reasonably practical.

Examples of proof of address include:

- Mortgage statement (must be less than 12 months old)
- Gas or electricity bill (must be less than three months old)
- Phone bill (must be less than three months old)
- Water bill (must be less than 12 months old)
- Council tax bill (must be less than 12 months old)

1.2 Insurance

When you register with us you must provide proof of insurance with a minimum cover of £5,000,000 against third party and public liability for trading on British markets.

In order to maintain your registration and occupancy you must maintain this level of insurance and provide evidence of the insurance cover when the policy is renewed or amended and when we request to see it.

You must provide adequate insurance for all your employees, vehicles, stock, fixtures and fittings and any other valuables you bring onto the market.

You must indemnify the Council from all claims, injury, damage, loss, expenses and costs howsoever caused, including those sustained through explosion, fire and theft, or the cessation, interruption or alteration of the market, unless negligence on our behalf is shown.

You are responsible for the cost of repairing or making good any damage made by you, your employees, assistants, or agents to fixtures and fittings or other market property.

You must comply with all the terms and conditions authorising the use of the trading and storage spaces and the market facilities. Failure to do so may result in the termination of the market licence or casual trading arrangements. This is at the Town Centre Managers discretion.

2. STOCKTON-ON-TEES MARKETS OPERATING TIMES AND LOCATION

Regular Traders must ensure that their stalls are set up and trading between the following hours:

Stockton

Stockton's iconic market 'The Queen of the North' is held every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday on the High Street. It boasts a multitude of independent stalls that sell a large range of quality goods and fresh produce.

It's positioned between the Shambles and the Town Hall and from the fountain area north up to B&M.

Regular Traders must ensure that their stalls are set up and trading between the following hours:

Wednesday, Saturday: 9am – 4pm

Friday: 9am – 3.30pm

Billingham

Billingham Market is centrally located within Billingham Town Centre. A dedicated market square has been created that sees the market laid out from the Customer Service Centre and Library up to the raised grass and flowers beds outside Asda. There are several market pitches available without vehicle access from the bandstand to Greggs. Regular Traders must ensure that their stalls are set up and trading between the following hours:

Monday, Friday: 9am – 3.30pm

Thornaby

Thornaby Market can be found nestled within the Pavilion Shopping Centre. The stalls span from Farm Foods at the north of the Town Centre up to Subway.

The majority of the market can be accessed by vehicles but the pitches from Boyes to Subway are restricted with no vehicle access apart from lightweight trailers. Regular Traders must ensure that their stalls are set up and trading between the following hours:

Thursday: 9am – 3.30pm



3. MARKET OPERATION

The operation of Stockton-on-Tees markets is a key component to ensure that users have a safe and enjoyable experience. It is essential that traders and the Market team adhere to conditions set out in this section of the regulations to ensure the markets are delivered to the highest of standards.

3.1 Movement of Vehicles

- Vehicles must not enter or remain in the market area after 09.00, and must not return to or enter the market area until 16.00 at Stockton on Wednesdays and Saturdays and 15.30 at all other markets.
- The Markets Officer may at his entire discretion permit vehicles to enter a market area before the above allocated times, if in his opinion circumstances warrant such a decision.
- Vehicles must be driven in a safe manner, below 5mph and where required assistance given by a member of staff, fellow traders, or market staff if the situation could affect the safety of others.
- Traders or any staff associated with their market operation who bring their vehicles onto the market, or leave their vehicles on the market, outside of the above nominated times may face disciplinary action or receive penalty notices if parked in restricted areas.

3.2 Attendance, Holidays and Absence

The attendance, holidays and absence will be documented separately to the market regulations. This is so any changes to the rents, holidays or absence on the markets can be done easily without the need to change the full regulations document. The economic climate we work in is ever changing and as such, we need to be able to adapt to these changes.

3.3 What you can sell, store & display

- You can only use the trading space for the buying, selling and storage of authorised commodities and goods. Authorised commodities and goods are those included in your application form, licence agreement; or as agreed by the Town Centre Manager at the time of daily casual allocation.
- To request a change to the authorised commodities and goods you must submit a written request to a member of the market staff.
- The Market team reserve the right to request a trader remove any commodities or goods that may be deemed as prohibited with immediate effect. If necessary, the Market team will contact Trading Standards, Cleveland Police, Environmental Health or other regulatory services as required.
- You are not allowed to display, sell or store the commodities or goods prohibited by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council or that breach trading standards legislation. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to, the list below:
- Counterfeit or fake goods.
- Any form of 'legal highs'. Details are listed on the the Gov.co.uk website.
- Any drugs or anything related to drugs whether pharmaceutical or otherwise.
- Swords and knives (including any that are replica and/or ornamental but excluding kitchen knives).

- Firearms and ammunition (including any that are replica and/or ornamental).
- Explosive materials (including fireworks).
- Anything pornographic or what may be deemed as offensive.
- Any clothing that represents or promotes gangs, violence, drugs, firearms and ammunition.
- The sale of alcohol is restricted and only allowed where we have given written permission, following proof of compliance with alcohol licensing laws.
- The sale of tobacco is not allowed.
- Vapes and associated Vaping equipment/products/liquids/pens/cartridges must conform to trading standards legislation.
- The use or sale of gas or gas appliances is restricted and only allowed where we have given prior permission, following proof of compliance with Gas Safe regulations and any other relevant legislation.
- You are responsible for ensuring that all electrical goods or equipment you store, display or sell at the market are fit for purpose and satisfies all relevant legislation.
- You must not use the trading space for pitching or selling through use of a microphone or shouting unless we have given you permission to do so.
- Second-hand goods must be agreed by the Market team and must be of reasonable quality and presented to a high standard.
- You must ensure that the sale, storage and handling of food and drink comply with the relevant legal legislation and standards– See additional document 'Food Safety Guidance for Market Traders' a copy of which can be obtained from the market staff.
- During the prescribed trading times, you must display all relevant permits, passes, certificates and other legal documents, including your trading name and market reference number. This must be displayed in a prominent position and clearly visible to the public within your trading space.
- You must keep all commodities and goods within the perimeter of the space allocated to you. Traders who extend passed their allocated space without prior consent of the Markets may incur extra charges depending on the amount of extra space taken. This is at the discretion of the Town Centre Manager.
- Excess commodities and goods within your allocated trading space must be stored tidily and not visible to the public.

3.4 Balance of Trade

- The three markets at Stockton, Thornaby and Billingham, are varied in their layout and size. At Stockton's Wednesday and Saturday markets, the Market team will endeavour to keep similar trading lines four stalls apart from each other where possible.
- For the smaller markets at Stockton on a Friday, Thornaby Thursday and Billingham both Monday and Friday, the Market team will endeavour to keep one stall per trading line on the market. However, the decision on the set up and balance of trade is at the discretion of the Town Centre Manager.
- The above is advisory and not an official regulation, however this process will be followed where possible. The Market team's decision is final.

3.5 Cleansing and Refuse

- Anyone attending the market is responsible for the proper use of the market facilities.
- You must dispose of any waste created in the operation of your stall or business properly and use the provided waste disposal facilities. Recyclable materials are to be put in the provided recycling bags with general waste being deposited in the refuse bins.
- You must not bring items or refuse onto the market specifically for disposal or abandonment. Any trader found to be doing so will face disciplinary action. As part of the disciplinary process the use of council CCTV is permitted and will be used as evidence.
- Any waste that you take from the market must be disposed of under the appropriate legislation.
- You are responsible for the cleanliness of your allocated trading space and the immediate surrounding area.
- You must clean up any spillages and/or items that can cause staining to the paving immediately or notify a member of the Market team so plans can be made to deal with the issue at the earliest opportunity.
- You must keep everything within and around the trading space in a clean and tidy condition and free from refuse.
- At the end of the market operating times, you must remove all your goods and equipment from the trading space.
- All food traders must comply with any specific requirements relating to the storage and disposal of waste and the cleaning of equipment and premises. See additional document 'Food Safety Guidance for Market Traders' a copy of which can be obtained from the market staff.
- Costs may be levied to any Trader who doesn't responsibly adhere to the above stipulations, and which affects the work schedule of the cleansing staff.

3.6 Electric, Heating and Generators

- The Town Centre Manager will determine the power loads. Where you are permitted to use the power, you must ensure that you do not exceed the maximum power load, details of which are available from the Market team.
- Electric leads and sockets must be connected to desired junction box and then led to stall/trailer in a safe and responsible manner.
- The Market team will decide on what is acceptable and their decision is final and binding.
- You are responsible for ensuring that any electrical goods or equipment you use or provide on the trading space satisfies relevant legislation.
- When requested to do so, you must provide evidence of Portable Appliance Test certificates for all electrical goods and equipment within the trading space.
- You must not make any alterations to the electric wiring and fittings provided by us.
- Before making any electrical installations to your allocated space, you must obtain our permission.
- Any electrical work on personal equipment must be undertaken by a competent electrician who is appropriately certificated (NICEIC), evidence of which you must provide for us on request.
- You must not use any heating apparatus or anything with a naked flame, except where we have permitted you to do so.

- Generators are not permitted on Stockton Market unless authorised by the market management team. Generators can be used at Thornaby and Billingham Markets. The market management team will agree beforehand, with the trader, whether the noise level of the generator is acceptable. Any trader using a generator that exceeds the prior agreed acceptable noise level will be requested to remove it immediately.
- Authorised generators must be fit for use, regularly serviced and positioned within the confines of the allocated trading space so they do not cause obstruction, a hazard, or impede the operation of the market.
- The use of Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) /Pressurised cylinder(s) will not be permitted without the prior authority of the markets team.
- All LPG/Pressurised if approved for use must be stored outside any stall, vehicle or building and connected to the appliance via a securely fixed metal pipe or armoured flexible piping. All such cylinders must be stored upright in an open airway away from sources of ignition with suitable signage as to comply with the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. All such cylinders must also have fitted a pressure relief valve positively secured in the upright position. The Market team will request to see a valid gas safety certificate before approval can be given.

3.7 The following are basic guidelines which should be adhered to when fitting electrical items in and around market stalls.

- All cables should be installed in a safe manner either at height out of reach or were run on the ground protected by approved matting to offer protection to the cable and prevent tripping hazards.
- All lighting equipment should fall within the space of the stall and be fit for purpose.
- Cables and apparatus must be checked prior to use to ensure they are free from any damage.
- Cables shall be appropriately secured to the stalls with either plastic market stall clips or PVC cable ties.
- Before connecting to the underground GIFAS boxes or electrical feeder pillars, the protection device (RCBO) should be tested for operation by pressing the test (T) button.
- Any damage caused by clear misuse to any Council owned equipment will be charged back to the trader who has caused the damage. Any repair work to be charged back to the trader will be accompanied by an official invoice and payment details agreed with the Town Centre Manager. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary proceedings being instigated.



4. HEALTH & SAFETY

You are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of yourself, your employees and anybody who uses your stall.

- You must take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of all others attending your trading and storage spaces.
- You must make sure that there is no trip or slip hazards and that all equipment and goods are secure and not at risk of falling.
- You must always consider the safety of others while moving goods, equipment and refuse around the market, and wherever possible restrict such movements to outside the market opening times.
- You must ensure that you do not cause any obstruction at the market, and access for emergency services must be always maintained.
- All vehicles used at the market must be roadworthy and appropriately insured and taxed, and all drivers must be legally eligible and insured to drive the vehicle and any trailer or item attached to the vehicle.
- Any trailers or storage containers that are brought onto the market must be fit for purpose and the movement of them, managed in a safe manner by the trader or team member.
- Drivers must move safely around the market, considering the safety of others.
- Vehicles must only use the designated access ways, loading areas and parking spaces at the market.
- Vehicles must be loaded and unloaded immediately, and not left unattended.
- All vehicles (except those used as part of the trading space, e.g., catering vehicle or refrigerated vehicle) must be removed from the market during the market opening times.
- We reserve the right to remove goods and equipment displayed or deposited beyond the boundary of the trading and storage spaces that in our opinion is causing a nuisance, obstruction, or hazard.
- The goods shall be either placed within the boundary of the trading space or removed altogether.
- The use or attachment of anything likely to cause damage to our floors, buildings, vehicles, fixtures, or fittings is strictly prohibited.
- All stalls, gazebos or trailers must be of solid construction and be strong enough to withstand weather and other events that may affect its structure.
- The 'shouting off' of goods on the market is permitted. This will be at acceptable noise levels and only one person to shout at any given time. Acceptable noise levels will be at the discretion of the Market team.
- All stalls, gazebos or trailers must be of solid construction and be strong enough to withstand weather and other events that may affect its structure.
- All stalls, gazebos, trailers, or market associated equipment must be weighted or anchored appropriately to ensure the safety of all users of the markets.
- Please report to us anything you see at the market that you think is unsafe.

4.1 Closure or Cancellation of Markets on Health and Safety Grounds or Other Reason

- Market Closure– The Market Management reserve the right to cancel or close a market if it is considered necessary on the grounds of public safety. This is entirely at the discretion of the Market team and the decision is final and binding.

4.2 Adverse Weather Prior to Market Day

- In the event of adverse weather being forecast this will be the process to determine if the market is cancelled or not:
- The Market team will notify traders no later than 24 hours prior to the day of the next market that there is adverse or inclement weather forecast and that traders should be aware of this and there is potential for cancellation.
- The Market team will monitor the forecast and weather warnings across several channels and if required cancel the market and notify traders no later than 6pm on the day before the market.
- The decision of the Market team is final.
- Any trader who sets up their stall on the market after cancellation will be suspended indefinitely whilst an investigation is carried out.

4.3 Adverse Weather During Market Hours

If adverse or inclement weather occurs during the market day the following process will be used:

- The Market team will monitor the weather during the day and also monitor the condition and set up of market stalls.
- Wind will be monitored using an anemometer at intervals of between thirty minutes and one hour depending on severity.
- If required individual traders may be requested to remove stalls and leave the market area on grounds of safety.
- If the market is cancelled during the operating hours on that day the traders will be notified the market is cancelled and expected to start removing their stall and stock with immediate effect.
- Traders must be clear of the market area in no longer than two hours from the time of cancellation.
- The decision of the Market team is final.
- Any trader who refuses to remove their stall or are still on the market after the two-hour window may go through the disciplinary process if deemed appropriate and may be suspended whilst an investigation is carried out.

5. CONDUCT AND PRESENTATION OF MARKET STAFF

In seeking to achieve excellence in customer care we will:

- Allocate stalls/pitches to all market Traders as quickly and as efficiently as possible, on each market day.
- Treat every market Trader fairly and courteously according to their needs and in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality guidelines.
- Support and consult with market Traders and value the contribution they make to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Councils markets.
- Maintain open and transparent communications with all Traders on Stockton's markets, listen and respond to their views and keep them informed of Council led changes and developments.
- Ensure that the market areas provide a clean, pleasant, and safe environment for our customers and our market traders.
- Improve our service by welcoming any comments, compliments and complaints and respond in an open, proactive, and constructive way.
- Aim to increase internal and external awareness of our services through communication, promotion, and marketing.
- Improve the customer experience by developing a customer care culture.
- Learn from the very best practice in the private and public sector.



6. QUALITY STANDARDS

This information is designed to help you understand the quality standards required while trading on our markets, including the design and fit-out of the trading space, product display and customer service.

6.1 Market Stall Appearance– Canopy & Stall Dressing standards

Stockton-on-Tees Markets take great pride in having a unique and bespoke appearance. This is to ensure the markets that we operate always look professional and stand out from other markets. First impressions often form the basis of a positive customer experience and the look and set up of stalls is vital to ensure that the first impression is the best it can be. It is also vital that traders take great care and attention to the upkeep of the market canopy sets provided to ensure they not only look clean and presentable but also last for a minimum of twelve months. The below sets out how the market canopy sets should be set out and maintained. Market canopy sets will be provided by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council on an rolling 12 month basis. Any trader that requires any new canopy sets within the 12-month period will be liable to pay 25% towards the replacement canopy or associated items.

- Canopies are to be blue and white vertical stripes.
- Side sheets are to be blue and white vertical stripes on bottom half and clear at top half unless otherwise allowed by Town Centre Manager.
- Front and side skirts are to be blue and white vertical stripes.
- Any trader that purchases a new canopy within the 12-month period and pays 25% towards the cost will be supplied with an invoice and payment to be made no longer than 14 days after receiving the new canopy. Failure to comply will result in a disciplinary investigation being instigated.

6.2 Canopy fitting

- Canopies are to be fitted to stall with clips and will have leather covers to protect the canopies.
- Canopies need to be set out straight and pulled tight with minimal overhang (not rolled up and clipped to stall).
- Side sheets need to be set out straight and clipped top and bottom to avoid sheets blowing into aisles.
- Front/side skirts need to be attached to relevant display table/box etc, set out straight and cover the display but not trailing on floor and secured so they don't blow around into the aisles or stall.



- When putting canopies on and taking them off, traders must ensure that they are not pulled or dragged with force causing them to rip or tear. An example of how canopies should be put on or taken off is by folding eye to eye or every other eye and laying them over canopy bars and pulling them out.
- Market canopies and associated items should be folded neatly and not crumpled up in the back of vans, this is to ensure they look presentable when put on a stall.
- The market canopy sets provided are for use solely on Stockton-on-Tees markets and should not be used on any market that is not operated by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
- Canopies are to be kept clean at all times.
- Any damage is to be reported to Market staff immediately.
- Gazebos used for seating area's should be blue or blue and white if possible and agreed for use by the Market team. Any other colour will be need approval by the Market team.
- Any attached side and back sheets must be of same design as canopy or alternatively supplied by the Market team on request.

6.3 General Design Principles

- Tables and chairs are to be stainless steel with design specification agreed by the Market team prior to setting up. The below image is a basic example of how a catering unit tables and chairs should look.
- Catering traders with seated areas should strive to provide equal access and services to individuals with disabilities. Under the Equality Act 2010, catering traders must make reasonable adjustments to ensure their premises are accessible to everyone.
- We will review, discuss and agree the quality standards with you, considering the details provided in this document and taking into consideration the individual trading requirements and conditions.
- Where we have issued a Market Licence, the Market team will be responsible for ensuring that these standards are maintained.





- Consideration should be given to the quality of the design and presentation of the market, including the trading spaces, and the infrastructure must be fit for purpose and create a welcoming environment, thus providing a distinctive and warm shopping experience.
- The principles presented in this document have been identified as key success factors to provide appealing, good-quality trading space designs and effective product displays.
- The effect of these principles is to maintain quality standards throughout the market, thus providing an overall pleasant shopping environment.
- The aim is to ensure the design creates an effective retailing environment that suits the customer's shopping experience. You should consider the following general principles:
- First impressions count.
- Keep it simple- allow your product range to speak.
- A sense of volume adds impact- make use of variations in height.
- A strong visual message is essential- appeal to all the senses.
- Signage is an integral part of the customer experience- use it to make a statement for branding, labelling and promotions.
- Branding your trading space through the positioning of signage in different areas of the trading space can have a powerful effect.
- Think about materials that will wear well and can easily be cleaned, and which complement your product range to the best advantage.
- Using colour adds to the interest and excitement of the experience. If you have a colourful stock portfolio, a neutral backdrop may be more appropriate and have a longer life than ornate or colourful backdrops, which may date as your product offer changes.

7. USE OF MARKET SPACES

- The use of market space for catering and food outlets is linked and covered in the “street cafe guidance” document, a copy of which can be obtained from the Market team.
- The quality standards and expectations highlighted here apply to all.
- Where we feel that the quality standards presented do not meet the acceptable level, remedial action will be taken to agree the improvements necessary to achieve the required quality standards.

7.1 Product display

- How you display your goods will contribute significantly toward the success or otherwise of your business.
- Product display is generally the first thing the customer will see and based on the quality, they will then decide whether to come in and browse or walk away. It is therefore essential that you use an effective trading space display to add quality to the goods and services on offer.
- When considering the presentation of your range of goods, clarity, and the concept of ‘less is more’ are important. Ensure that the presentation of your stock, as well as its labelling and accessibility, sends a clear positive message to the customer.
- These examples indicate our quality aspirations, with the aim of clearly presenting goods in a visually appealing way that helps the customer to find what they are looking for with relative ease.

7.2 Space layout

- The layout of the trading space is important in promoting a pleasant and customer-friendly shopping space.
- You can enhance your business through effective separation of the space into sales areas, display regions and customer browse points.
- The overall atmosphere needs to provide a sense of space, and avoid being cramped, as this will promote a comfortable area for shoppers to browse and interact with the products or services, increasing the likelihood of completing a sale.
- Careful consideration should be given to the colour and materials used, which should be fit for purpose, reflect the overall quality and image of the product or service, and complement the product range (in terms of design, colour and texture).
- The individual materials and colours combined with the product range should create a wow factor.

7.3 Point of sale

- Successful point of sale will improve your potential sales. It can promote your business beyond the demise of your trading space and can often draw attention from your competitors.
- Effective signage can produce immediate interest and get the attention of passing shoppers.
- Good-quality point of sale enhances the quality of the products and services you provide. However, the opposite is also true, and bad point of sale is worse than none at all.
- Point of sale can specifically be used to identify bargains and discounts, sale periods, value products, unique products/services and selling points, and impulse buys.
- It is clear that promotion through social media is an effective tool to promote your business and goods. See the Market team for tips and pointers on how to promote your business on social media.



8. CUSTOMER SERVICE

- We always highlight the importance of exceptional customer service. This is crucial when it comes to our customers having confidence in who we are and making purchases with us.
- Good customer service continues to be highlighted as the key to any successful business, and feedback has been obtained from our customers and those within the industry to highlight the successes evident.
- Customer service includes the entire shopping experience a customer can expect. To inspire confidence in shopping with us and to attract repeat business we should create a warm and friendly shopping experience.
- Customer service begins at the point a customer visits the market and your trading space and continues even after a customer may have made a purchase and left.
- The main areas that need to be considered relate to what the expectations of our customers are and what will encourage them to feel comfortable making purchases of any commodity we have for sale.

8.1 Customer expectations

- Friendly and knowledgeable staff are a key part of our business and there is a need to ensure that they understand the importance of their role.
- Customers want to have the opportunity to browse freely without constant interruption.
- As and when support is required you will be the first to know and it is important that staff can provide full details of the products they are offering to sell.
- Customers may wish to know how products work, the key features and benefits, differences between products, and in some cases where the products are sourced.
- Having the knowledge of these areas can ensure that a purchase will result in repeat business.

8.2 Complaints handling

- It is imperative that customer dissatisfaction, however small, is dealt with in a proper manner.
- A customer who has a bad shopping experience will share their experience with many others.
- Given the impact of social media, this may be shared with hundreds and thousands of other people.
- It is always good to have a complaints procedure that is displayed at your trading space.
- This does not need to be extensive but should highlight how to report a complaint, what will happen next, potential outcomes and the time frames involved. Returns policy/faulty goods
- Statutory rights and obligations dictate that where items are to be returned or are found to be faulty, this should be resolved to a satisfactory standard.
- By having a policy displayed at your trading space, customers will feel much more confident making purchases with you, irrespective of the value of the goods.
- A good policy will include the reasons permitted for a return, the expected outcome (eg. repair, refund, exchange) and any time frames involved (eg. the number of days within which an item can be returned when you will resolve this)

9. TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Stockton-on-Tees Markets are adapting to the challenges that markets and retail face across the country. For those traders thinking of retiring or stepping down, we actively encourage you to bring in new traders to take up your space and we are committed to making the transfer process simple and transparent. This is the process for transferring ownership of a pitch or stall:

- Any trader that does want to give up their pitch for whatever reason needs to contact the Market team and provide details of the person(s) who they propose to take over the stall.
- The Market team will then arrange contact with the person(s) proposed to take over the stall.
- The Market team will endeavour to make sure the person(s) taking over will do so on the pitch occupied by the current market trader.
- It would be preferred if person(s) taking over the pitch sells the same goods. However, if appropriate and no clash of trader occurs with nearby traders then other lines or goods may be sold.
- Once a market trader has transferred his licence into the new trader's name, the licence will be provided to the new trader who will then take over responsibility and be expected to trade within the condition set out in the market licence and the market regulations and quality standards document.
- The decision on whether a new trader is accepted onto the market, and in which location is at the discretion of the Market team and their decision is final.

10. DISCIPLINARY RULES AND PROCEDURES

Stockton-on-Tees Markets expects high standards of conduct and behaviour from all its traders. If a trader does not meet those standards, this can be called misconduct. Disciplinary action may occur because of a breach of market regulations. Stockton-on-Tees Markets have in place a thorough disciplinary and investigation process with the aim of:

- maintaining high standards of conduct and behaviour
- encouraging improvements in trader conduct and behaviour
- ensuring that a fair, transparent, and consistent approach is adopted in dealing with all traders
- maintaining positive relations with traders whilst seeking to resolve issues on the market as quickly as possible.

The following is not an exhaustive list but examples of misconduct which could potentially lead to disciplinary action:

- Infringement of any of the market license conditions or the market regulations.
- Failure to follow reasonable instructions properly given by a member of the Market team or any other appropriate council official.
- Improper use of or wilful damage to the marketplace and any equipment or assets provided.
- Disregard of safe working practises.
- Mistreatment of members of the public and/or customers.
- Theft or other allegations of dishonesty.
- To undertake any duties associated with the market operation whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Use of offensive or abusive language towards the Market team, public or any other council official.
- Fighting, physical assault or threatening behaviour.
- Discrimination against any employee, Council Officer, member of the public, other traders on the grounds of their colour, race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age or religion.
- Use of social media to other public forums to abuse, threaten or discredit members of the Market team.
- Use of social media or other public forums to discredit or bring into disrepute the reputation of Stockton-on-Tees Markets in general.
- Have friends, family members or associates make threats or intimidating behaviours towards any member the Market team, a member of the public or any other council official.
- The Council will refer any serious allegation of misconduct to the police for investigation.

10.1 Informal Intervention

Informal intervention may often be a more satisfactory method of resolving rather than instigating the formal disciplinary process, if it takes the form of a discussion with the objective of encouraging and helping the traders. Problems dealt with early enough can be nipped in the bud. In many cases the 'right word' at the 'right time' and in the 'right way' may be all that is needed, and cases of minor misconduct, unless persistent, are usually best dealt with informally by the Market team.

10.2 Formal Intervention

Where informal action fails to deliver the necessary sustained improvement, or the misconduct, behaviour or attitude is considered too serious to be classed as minor, the formal process should be followed. Preliminary Investigations should always be carried out in the first instance. Preliminary investigations should take the form of fact-finding questions to establish whether a formal investigation is necessary.

If it is felt that a formal investigation needs to take place the Markets Manager will be the Investigation Officer, unless the Markets Manager is in some way involved with the misconduct/incident to be investigated. In these circumstances, an alternative investigation officer will be appointed by a Senior Manager with responsibility for markets.



10.3 Investigation Process

The Investigation Officer will carry out a full investigation into allegations of misconduct. They will write to the trader, prior to the investigation meeting providing the following information:

- an outline of the allegations.
- a copy of the market regulations
- time, date, and venue of the investigation meeting (considering any special needs of the parties) and details of who will be in attendance
- The trader will have the right to be represented by his relevant Trader's Association or a fellow trader

It may be necessary for the Investigation Officer to obtain statements from witnesses or other relevant persons for information or clarification purposes.

On completion of the investigation, the Investigation Officer will determine the way forward and notify the trader in writing of their decision, which could be:

- No further action is required
- Advice and guidance are needed
- Referral for consideration of disciplinary action

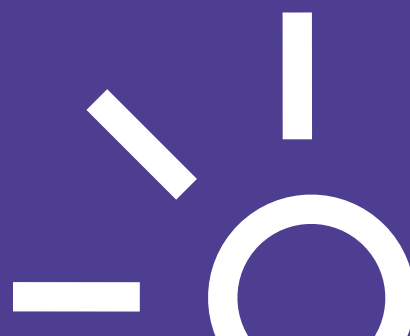
10.4 Suspension

If the matter to be investigated is thought to involve serious misconduct, consideration may need to be given to suspending the trader from the markets, without prejudice, whilst an investigation is undertaken.

Suspension should only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the trader's continued presence in the market/s:

- to avoid a repetition of the alleged misconduct.
- could impede the investigation or tamper with evidence; or
- represents a serious risk to the safety of others or themselves; or
- seriously undermines the reputation of the Council

A decision to suspend a trader can be initially made by the Town Centre Manager. This will be with immediate effect, and the decision to suspend can be given verbally to the trader. Initially this suspension can be for no longer than 7 days and it will be confirmed in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. Should a suspension be required for a longer period pending an investigation into alleged misconduct, the matter will be referred to the Assistant Director for Town Centre Development to decide whether to continue the suspension. This decision will be confirmed in writing as soon as reasonably practicable. Suspensions can be lifted anytime with the approval of the Markets Manager, within the first 7 days of the suspension, or the Assistant Director thereafter. During suspension the trader should not contact anyone associated with the case.



10.5 Disciplinary Action



Disciplinary sanctions are:

- 12 month written warning; and/or
- Suspension from the markets for a disclosed period ranging from one week to twelve months
- Indefinite suspension from the market
- Removal of market license

If the investigation Officer deems it necessary to refer the case for disciplinary action, the Investigation Officer will provide a report of the findings and refer this to the Town Centre Development Manager for consideration. If the Investigation Manager is the Markets Manager, he will have the authority to give 12 month written warnings. If any other sanction is deemed necessary, he will refer the case to the Town Centre Development Manager to decide on the appropriate sanction.

The trader will receive confirmation of the sanction in writing.

If a disciplinary sanction is given, the trader will have a right of appeal against this decision. The trader must appeal in writing to the appointed Appeals Officer within 5 working days of the disciplinary outcome letter. Details of how to appeal will be confirmed in that letter.

If the trader is appealing a decision of the Markets Manager the Service Manager with responsibility for markets will consider the appeal. If the trader is appealing a decision made by the Service Manager with responsibility for Markets, the appropriate Assistant Director will consider it.

The Appeal Officer will consider the investigation report, decision, and any further representations from the trader. If it is considered necessary by the Appeal Officer, the Appeal Officer will arrange a hearing to consider the case in more detail. The trader and Markets Manager/Town Centre Development Manager will be invited to that hearing and will have the opportunity to make representations. The Appeal Officer will deal with the appeal in a timely manner and the trader will be kept informed of progress. A decision on the appeal will be provided within a reasonable timescale once the appeal has been received.

Following a long-term suspension of 12 months, a review of a trader(s) registration or right to trade on the markets may need to be reviewed. This could be due to several factors including, balance of trade, change in market layout, loss of space within a market, change of regulations or the trader(s) may not align with the values and direction that the market service is heading. Any decision will be at the discretion of the Town Centre Manager or Service Manager with responsibility for markets. If the decision is made to refuse a trader the right to work on the markets, a valid reason will be provided in writing. There will be a right to appeal this decision. The trader must appeal in writing to the Service Manager for markets, or Assistant Director with responsibility for markets, if the service manager has refused the right to trade, within five working days of the refusal to trade outcome letter. Details of how to appeal will be confirmed in the letter of refusal.

Any trader that receives more than one written warning in a 12-month rolling period will be suspended immediately whilst an investigation is carried out.

11. MAKING A COMPLAINT OR RESOLVING AN ISSUE

Where a Trader has any complaint regarding the management of the Stockton-on-Tees markets, they shall follow the following procedures.

- In the first instance endeavour to resolve it informally with the appropriate member of the management team or the Town Centre Manager.
- A complaint can be made in writing to the Town Centre Manager or the appropriate Service Manager (if the complaint relates to the Markets Manager) for a written response, which can be submitted either by the Trader directly or via a Traders Association (such as The National Market Traders Federation).
- A full response will be issued within 10 working days, unless the matter is complex which may require a longer period to investigate. However, in these situations the investigating Officer will provide a suitable holding response with periodic updates as appropriate.
- Following this action, if the Trader is dissatisfied with the outcome, they, or the Trader representative, can contact the Service Manager, or Assistant Director if the complaint has come through the Service Manager, who will undertake a Stage Two complaint investigation and issue an appropriate response within 20 working days.
- Where a Trader remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a review and wishes to appeal, there is the option of contacting the Local Government Ombudsman if they feel that the Council is guilty of maladministration or have failed to follow the Council's policies.

Contact details of the Ombudsman are as follows:

In Writing: PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH

E-mail: advice@lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 08456021983 or 0300 0610614

Text: 0762 4804323

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

12. DEFINITIONS

- **The Council** – shall refer to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- **Trader** – means a person offering goods or services for sale on any Stockton on-Tees market
- **Regular Reservation Trader** – A trader who has been granted a licence to trade on a particular trading position on a Stockton-on-Tees market
- **Casual Trader** – a trader who attends a market in the hope of a vacant trading position or is otherwise in the process of obtaining a licenced position.
- **Employment of Young Persons** – A “child” is any person not over compulsory school age’ and “employed” is extended to include any child who assists in a trade or occupation even when the child receives no monetary reward. A young person is anyone under 18 years of age. All traders must comply with the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 , The Education Acts 1944-48 and the Employment of Children Act 1973.

