



National
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Office

National Medical Weighing Equipment Project 2014/15

Invitation to Participate.

For a number of years, Trading Standards Services have taken part in National Metrology Projects. These have been organised to add value to inspectional work which has been done by individual Trading Standards Services as part of their local responsibility. Such work, which has been undertaken across the United Kingdom has been focussed on a particular subject and has been nationally collated.

This year, following the results of the requested projects published in the [Section 70 Report for 2012/13](#), the Local Government Metrology Group chose a project for 2014 / 2015 on Medical Weighing Equipment in locations other than hospitals. This decision was supported by the National Measurement Office (NMO).

A previous National Project over 2008 / 2009 had looked at medical weighing in hospitals with a view to assisting and promoting good practice. The final Project Report which summarised this work highlighted demonstrable improvements that had been made over the course of the project which had highlighted the importance of buying suitable equipment and using it properly.

During discussions at the Autumn Metrology group meeting in 2013 it was decided that the project would focus on Pharmacies, Doctors Surgeries, Health Centres & Mobile Health Visitors.

The reasons for identifying these targets are that doctor's surgeries & pharmacies are relatively independent organisations and do not historically receive many visits from Trading Standards (TS) to inspect weighing equipment.

Health centres are often involved in national incentives such as the current obesity drive, and mobile health visitors will use equipment that is regularly transported which could impact on their accuracy.

Both of these scenarios will involve the weighing of infants and babies, and the weights determined may be used to prescribe medication or embark on a course of action which may have detrimental consequences if based on inaccurate information e.g. identifying underweight babies or obese children.

Several supporting factors were also identified which made this an appropriate choice for a national project.

- In January 2012 the Public Health Outcomes Framework was introduced to comply with new local government responsibilities to combine traditional 'public health' activities with other local activities.
- As mentioned above, a previous National Project (the National Medical Weighing Project 2008) identified that there were serious inaccuracies in equipment checked, training provided to staff using the equipment and their perception of the importance of using accurate weighing equipment. Following on from this project, LACORS issued a series of recommendations for Hospital Trusts.



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- The UK Weighing Federation (UKWF) identified that 65-70% of the market that supplied medical weighing equipment were members of UKWF and these business would be keen to be involved in any projects that improved standards within the industry.

These factors made this an ideal example of how joint working between Government (NMO), Local Government law Enforcement (TS) and Business (UKWF) could combine to improve standards to benefit the wider community.

It was also felt that it would be interesting to compare the results of this project with those from the previous 2008 project to identify if standards have improved.

As background information, there have been two recent articles published supporting this subject as a choice for a national project. TS Today Oct 2013 published an article by Richard Sanders “Weight of responsibility” and Royal collage of Nursing “the use, limitations and risks associated with weighing devices”

If you wish to participate in the project please contact michael.harvey@nmo.gov.uk or deanne.hughes@nmo.gov.uk