



Office for Product  
Safety & Standards

# Science and Analysis in OPSS

January 2024





# Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Foreword</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Economic analysis</b>	23	The impact of artificial intelligence on product safety
<b>8</b>	<b>The Office for Product Safety and Standards</b>	16	Developing our understanding of detriment	<b>24</b>	<b>Chemistry, materials science and toxicology</b>
8	Our remit	17	Mapping product ownership and turnover	24	Collaborating in a cross-government ring trail
8	Our purpose	<b>18</b>	<b>Analysis of risk</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>Building for the future</b>
9	Our approach to evidence	18	Product Safety Risk Assessment Methodology – PRISM	26	Extending our research
10	How evidence supports our day-to-day work	19	Bayesian networks and risk quantification	28	Developing our laboratories
11	How we deliver this evidence	<b>20</b>	<b>Engineering</b>	30	Practical science for effective regulation
11	Our areas of expertise	20	3D printing of spare parts for consumer appliances	31	Independent advice
<b>12</b>	<b>Social research</b>	21	Safety of second life batteries in battery energy storage systems	<b>32</b>	<b>Get involved with our work</b>
12	Product safety and industry	<b>22</b>	<b>Technology</b>	32	Registers of Specialists
13	Public perceptions of smart products	22	Horizon scanning	33	Strategic collaborations
<b>14</b>	<b>Data science and statistics</b>			33	Building internal capability
14	Product Safety Database reporting			35	How to get involved



**Graham Russell**

Director, Office for Product Safety and Standards,  
Department for Business and Trade

# Foreword

The Office for Product Safety and Standards was established in January 2018 with a remit to better protect people and places from product-related harm.

Since 2018, OPSS has worked to ensure we can resolve the acute threats to product safety and the systemic challenges to our product safety environment. By responding quickly to incidents, and carefully considering our approach to a UK product safety framework through our Product Safety Review, we are building a regulator that is fit for the needs of an increasingly complex market.

With this in mind, I am pleased to launch our first report on science and analysis in OPSS. Supporting effective regulation with evidence is one of our key aims, and we have prioritised building a strong technical capability to support this goal.

By embedding scientists, engineers and analysts in our work, we draw from technical expertise to provide the best regulatory and policy outcomes for the public and consumer industries we serve.

Our comprehensive research programme also allows us to identify new areas of focus which we constantly review to ensure we are staying up to date with changes in the product market.



**This review explains why we care about evidence-based regulation. It shows how we draw from the best evidence in our mission to strengthen consumer confidence, to enable productive trade, and make the UK a world-class market for consumer products. In publishing this report, we also want to let potential research partners and experts know how they can get involved to help us to protect people and places from product-related harm.**



**We are pleased to say that OPSS’ science and engineering expertise has provided them with the ability to set out a comprehensive evidence programme to tackle these challenges and to evaluate our successes.**

**Julia Sutcliffe**

Chief Scientific Advisor,  
Department for Business and Trade

Many of the problems facing the UK today are made increasingly complex by vast quantities of data, the broadening applications of data analysis, and the effects of new technology. Product safety is no exception; our ability to keep pace with, and pre-empt developments by rapidly assessing new and emerging technologies and product innovations as they enter the UK market is one of the metrics we need to judge ourselves by.



**This review lays out how OPSS is building an ambitious plan to ensure that we have access to the right evidence for the future, enabling safe products and facilitating the department's goal to remove barriers to trade at home and internationally.**

**Ben Cropper**

Director of Analysis, Chief Economist,  
Department for Business and Trade

The research and analysis performed by OPSS is key for delivering our mission to be a trusted product regulator in the UK. OPSS' careful study of business and consumer behaviour shows how regulation can influence barriers to market, and deliver better outcomes for consumers, businesses and our whole economy. Our focus on novel products and technologies allows us to help innovation drive UK business success in national and international markets of the future.

# The Office for Product Safety and Standards

## Our remit

The Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) is the UK's product regulator. We are responsible for the regulation of most consumer goods and we are the national regulator for construction products. We hold policy responsibility for product safety, legal metrology (weights and measures), standards and accreditation, hallmarking, and Primary Authority. We enforce regulations across the product lifecycle from design, assessment, and manufacture through to supply, end use, and safe disposal.

## Our purpose

Our primary purpose is to protect people and places from product-related harm, ensuring consumers and businesses can buy and sell products with confidence.

We act to keep citizens safe by keeping products safe. We seek to ensure consumers receive fair measures and get what they pay for. We work to limit the negative effects that products, their supply chains, and their disposal can have on our environment to facilitate products and markets that support clean growth and to support our mission to use good regulation as an enabler for trade.





Delivering these protections in a fair and transparent way helps maintain consumer confidence in markets and helps to support innovation and sustainable business growth.

To achieve this we use science, evidence, and data to inform our decision making and shape our interventions. We act proportionately, guided by the risk of harm, and seek to minimise complexity and cost for business and consumers.

To find out more about our goals, please read [our corporate strategy](#).<sup>1</sup>

## Our approach to evidence

Effective regulation relies on evidence. Our policy and regulatory responsibilities for a large range of product areas and services has required that we build

processes that draw from cutting edge science, regulatory insights, market data and intelligence. This allows us to respond appropriately to the challenges we face, and to create a positive impact for both consumers and businesses.

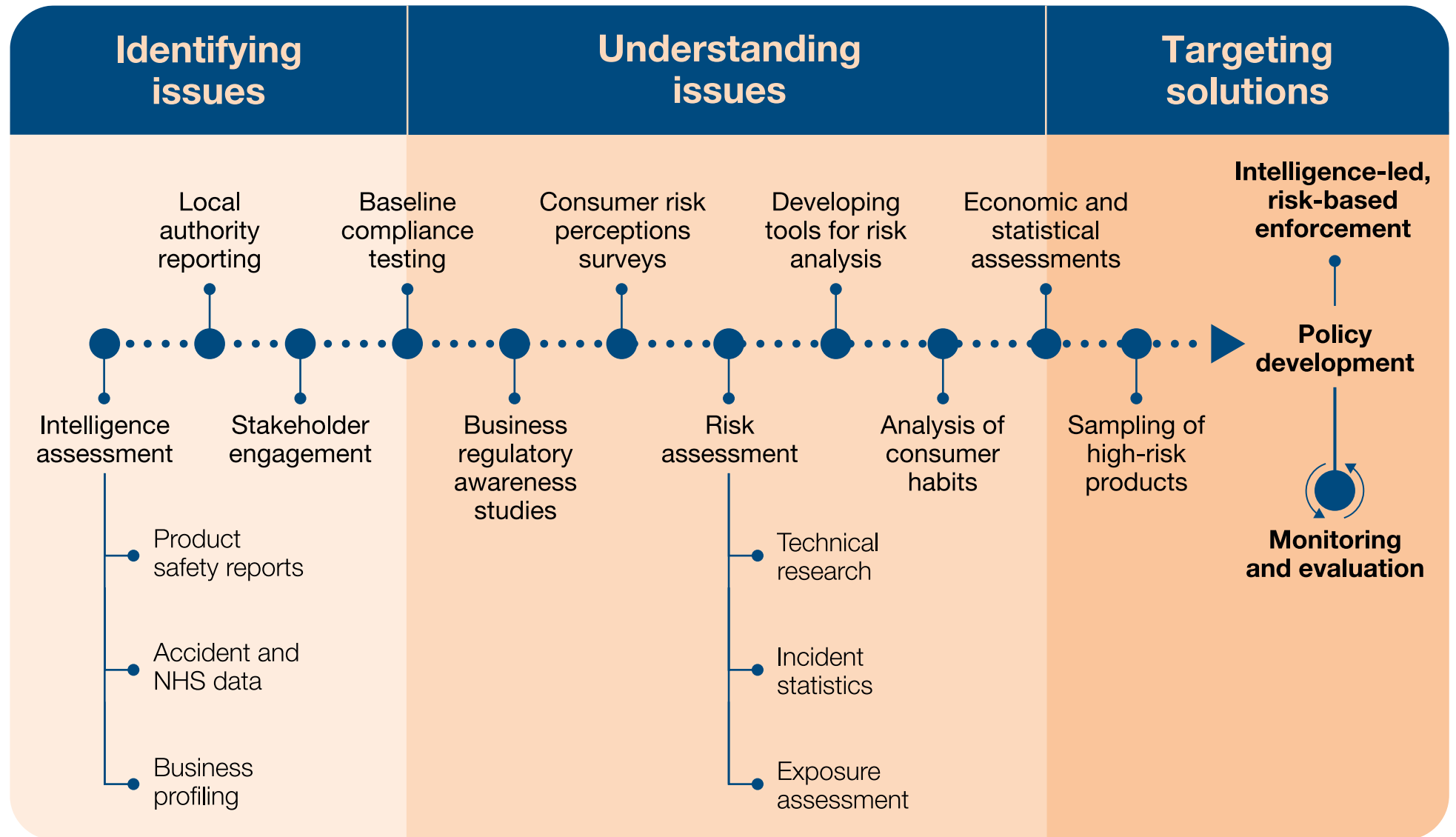
We are building a comprehensive data strategy to support our key regulatory work and to ensure that we have the right digital, data and technology infrastructure in place. We are continuing to develop our research programme to define and build the evidence to deliver our policy and regulatory objectives.

By providing an overview of our use of evidence, we hope to demonstrate both how we integrate evidence into our day-to-day work, and how we plan for research to define our future trajectory.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opss-product-regulation-strategy-2022-2025>

## How evidence supports our day-to-day work



## How we deliver this evidence

We employ evidence professionals with wide ranging expertise, who enable us to support the policy and regulatory responsibilities across our remit. Our teams include:



... scientists and engineers who provide technical advice and services for policy making and regulatory

action, commission external testing work, identify evidence gaps across our remit, develop and carry out research projects, and operate our testing laboratories.



... risk assessment professionals and intelligence analysts who lead on identifying high-risk products and

entities and develop new tools which enable us to appraise risk factors and effects of interventions.



... analysts, social scientists, economists, statisticians and data scientists who map out stakeholder

awareness, provide deep analysis for impacts of policy and regulatory options, and scour our data sources for trends that can help us improve the product safety and standards environment.

The work that our teams do across our technical areas show how we ingrain technical advice in delivering our responsibilities and seek to build evidence bases that pre-empt future challenges.

## Our areas of expertise include:

- Social research
- Data science and statistics
- Economic analysis
- Analysis of risk
- Engineering
- Technology
- Chemistry
- Materials science
- Toxicology



# Social research

We regularly conduct research with consumers to understand how certain products and the risks they pose are perceived, and what expectations exist for product safety.

We work with businesses to understand how they interact with supply chains, understand their obligations, and identify how we can best support them to comply with requirements to make their products safe. Overall, this helps us to guide how regulation can be made to work better for everyone, and how we target our action as a regulator.

## Product safety and industry

In 2020 and 2022 we commissioned IFF Research to perform an extensive survey of over 1000 businesses in our first nationally representative business survey. This reviewed attitudes in industry towards the product safety environment, and how they viewed and understood their obligations relating to product safety assurance.

### Why does this matter?

A key conclusion was that OPSS was not a well-known regulator amongst certain types of business and provided clear direction for the need to communicate our role and expectations of obligations.

[Read the full publication on our website.<sup>2</sup>](#)

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/product-safety-and-industry-wave-2>

## Public perceptions of smart products

Smart products are becoming increasingly common. The risks they pose, or are seen to pose, are critical to how consumers and business will expect these to be regulated. We worked with a network of UK universities to survey consumers to see how they perceived risks in smart products, and how they attribute blame when they fail.

### Why does this matter?

A key conclusion was that product users were less likely to blame manufacturers, retailers or regulators when a smart product fails if they perceived that the 'smart' elements of a product were designed to result in a safer product.

This is a useful insight for the design of regulation, as it helps us target where under-reporting of incidents may occur in certain product areas.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>3</sup>

### Our future in social research

- Building comprehensive maps of the construction product sector to understand supply chains and their perceived responsibilities in this key new area of OPSS responsibility.
- Implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess OPSS' impact and learn lessons to improve delivery.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-perceptions-of-smart-products-summary-report>

# Data science and statistics

Robust data analysis is critical for effective regulation. Whether assessing incident data to understand threats posed to consumers by products like e-bikes or baby products, or developing new tools and methods to analyse data, we ensure that we have the tools to understand what we need to do, and how it makes a difference.

Our on-going research contributes to our regulatory toolkit by assessing trends in incident and injury data, developing our access to data that we can use to assess risk and target regulatory action. We are also developing machine learning models to scrutinise data to understand how risks from products can impact consumers in the UK.

## Product Safety Database reporting

The UK Product Safety Database holds data on UK notifications of unsafe and non-compliant products. For the first time, we have published a summary from this database, considering reports from a range of sectors.



Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, notifications were received on 3164 products. Of these, electrical appliances and equipment were most prevalent at 32.7%, followed by toys and cosmetics. The most frequently reported hazard was electric shocks at 34% of the unsafe products, followed by chemical hazards at 13.7%. The database shows that half of the corrective actions notified involved removal of the items from online marketplaces.

This data provides insights and transparency for the regulatory responses to consumer product issues. We will also be able to use this data to refine and prioritise our activities to ensure we continue to target known problem areas and investigate reporting behaviour to ensure that our data is representative of the risks of products on the market.

### Why does this matter?

Analysing these reports can show emerging safety issues for novel products or in certain sectors. This helps us to target market surveillance work and feeds into our regulatory activity on how we manage risks to consumers from certain products.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>4</sup>

### Our future in data science and statistics

- Building machine learning models to identify and predict areas of product risk using sources such as NHS injury data.
- Publishing more of our data as official statistics reports.
- Obtaining access to a wider range of external data sources to help develop our evidence base.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/product-safety-database-annual-reports>



# Economic analysis

As both a policy making and enforcing regulator, it is critical that we understand the economic impacts of our new initiatives and our operational decisions.

We support this work by analysing markets to target our interventions, modelling socioeconomic impact, considering value for money cases, and developing new metrics and methods to understand how we can quantify the effects of product safety on consumers.

## **Developing our understanding of detriment**

We are building methods that will help us to quantify the economic harm done to businesses and consumers resulting from unsafe and non-compliant products. Product safety is critical, but non-compliant products can also threaten the livelihoods of businesses and our own personal finances by generating a need for expensive replacements or introducing financial liability. A holistic picture of the safety and socioeconomic impacts of products is critical for ensuring that our regulatory interventions are fit for purpose.



## Mapping product ownership and turnover

How many consumer products are in UK homes, and how often do we replace goods for newer versions? We are trying to understand the impacts of our regulations on consumers by generating clear data that tells us the answer to these questions. With the most up-to-date information on product use, we will be able to know how much of an impact there is when product recalls are implemented. We will also be better placed to assess when new requirements that are brought in for product specifications will find their way into consumers' homes.

### Our future in economic analysis

- Continuing to assess our major projects and policy initiatives to understand the impacts of our work.
- Refine our work to quantify the detrimental effects of unsafe and non-compliant products on businesses and consumers, and apply these approaches in our regulatory activity to help guide our interventions.

# Analysis of risk

A full appraisal of product safety issues requires that the risks presented by products are understood. We embed risk assessment, and risk evaluation in our processes to ensure we understand how best to deal with non-compliance and novel products and can act proportionately.

We draw from a range of evidence including scientific literature, research and accident and incident data. We develop new risk analysis tools suited to different contexts and products, exploiting the range of data available to us.

## Product Safety Risk Assessment Methodology – PRISM

We recently developed and launched a new risk assessment methodology – PRISM – that has benefits for UK market surveillance authorities when assessing product risk to deliver effective interventions to ensure consumer safety.



### Why does this matter?

This methodology clearly links risk levels not only on a per-product basis, but considers the total number of a non-compliant product in use within the UK to understand risk at a population level. There is also greater focus on risk triage, people who may be at increased risk, the tolerability of the risk, and on the uncertainties associated with risk assessment. We are currently monitoring the effectiveness of PRISM using data and feedback from the whole UK product safety environment.

[Read the full guidance about PRISM on our website.](#)<sup>5</sup>

## Bayesian networks and risk quantification

As part of our work to ensure that we are equipped with the best possible tools for addressing risk, we commissioned Queen Mary University of London to propose a new risk model based on Bayesian network idioms. Bayesian networks can manage incomplete data and be used to model interventions on risk perception more powerfully than other risk assessment methods.

### Why does this matter?

This project highlighted the potential of Bayesian networks in risk assessment and has led to deeper research to design a more bespoke risk assessment tool based on Bayesian networks. This will improve our ability to make quantifiable assessments with limited data.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>6</sup>

### Our future in risk analysis

- Development of new methodologies for risk assessment to address where there are gaps in data and causative understanding of factors leading to harm.
- Developing versions of our risk assessment tools for construction products to support our new responsibilities

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/product-safety-risk-assessment-methodology-prism>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bayesian-product-safety-summary-report>



# Engineering

We perform research and assurance across a range of areas to provide advice for policy and regulation on the issues that face OPSS. We also officially designate standard methods that help businesses ensure that they can comply with regulations.

From the metrological requirements of a hydrogen economy to the complex world of 'smart' products, we build the evidence to ensure that OPSS knows how to regulate products on the horizon safely and help UK product development flourish.

## **3D printing of spare parts for consumer appliances**

We commissioned DLA Piper to survey the regulatory environment and consider the risks that could arise from the use of 3D printed replacement parts created by at-home devices or commissioned services within pre-existing consumer appliances.

## Why does this matter?

Case studies identified potentially hazardous scenarios due to replacement parts with different characteristics than the components they were replacing. These scenarios highlighted difficulties in interpreting what precise role 3D printing suppliers played, which affects liability in the case of subsequent failure. This work has detailed the legal and technical challenges associated with the market for 3D components, providing context for when regulatory activity is needed.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>7</sup>

## Safety of second life batteries in battery energy storage systems

We commissioned Newcastle University to review the safety of second-life lithium-ion batteries for use in energy storage systems. The scarcity of information for test methods, best-practice procedures to assure performance, and material risks was highlighted.

Why does this matter? There were aspects of the entire assurance system surrounding second-life lithium-ion batteries that stakeholders thought needed significant development before they could be safely implemented on a large scale.

This has allowed us to further prioritise our work in battery safety, and has shed light on this multifaceted problem.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>8</sup>

### Our future in engineering

- Build evidence bases on the risk scenarios of batteries in consumer products like e-scooters, 'personal light electric vehicles', and household energy systems.
- Accessing and developing expertise in gas engineering and safety as we respond to emerging risks associated with changing supply chains and new materials.
- Expanding our evidence base to support our role as the National Regulator of Construction Products, supporting incident response and enforcement action.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/3d-printing-of-spare-parts-for-consumer-domestic-appliances-safety-and-legal-implications>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safety-of-second-life-batteries-in-battery-energy-storage-systems>

# Technology

The world is changing. Artificially intelligent systems, products connected via the Internet of Things, and a range of new technologies on the horizon challenge our established ways of managing the product safety and standards environment.

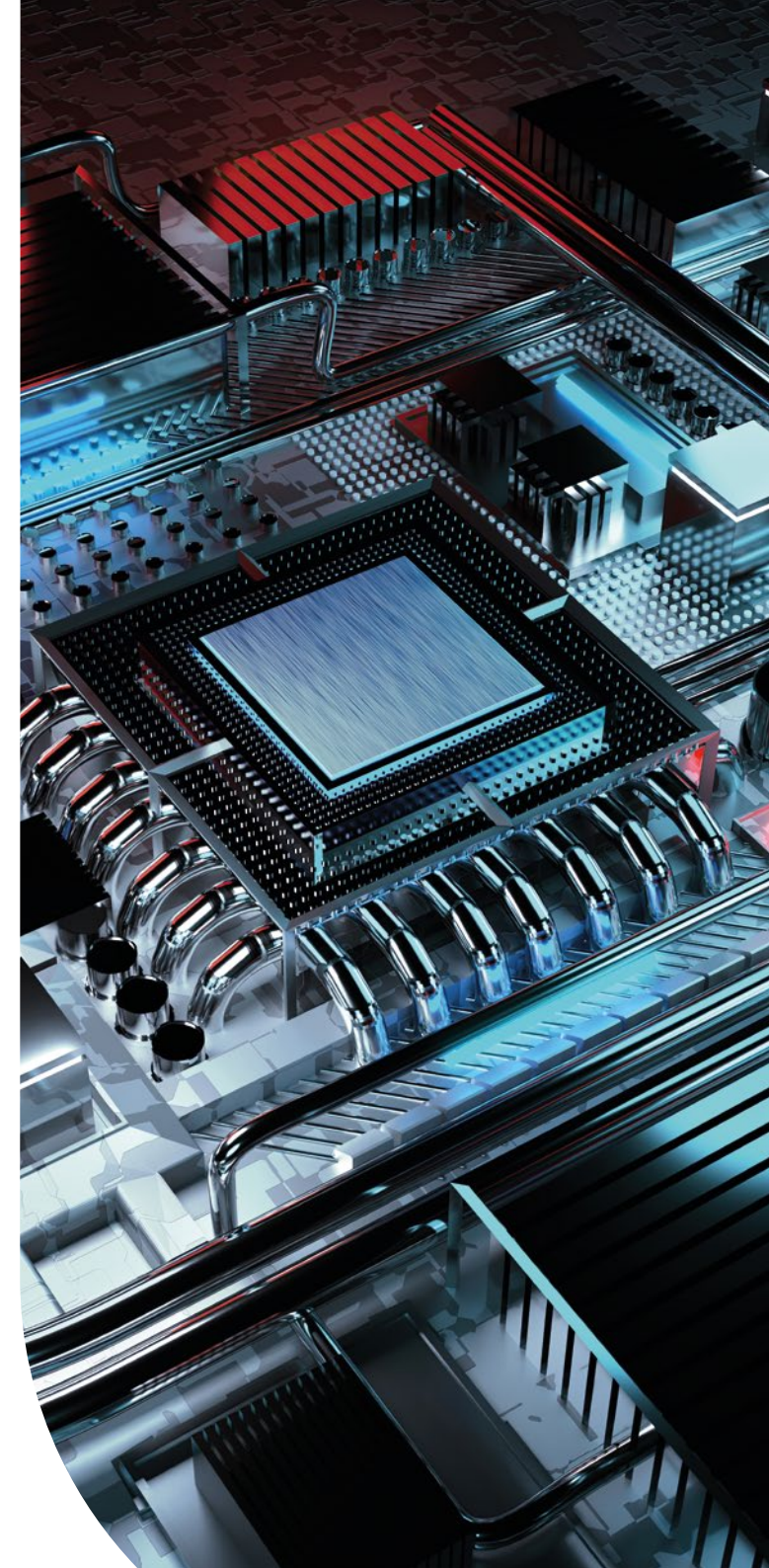
New risks to our physical safety are enmeshed with new vulnerabilities to our digital safety and privacy. How new products and services are defined in the context of our pre-existing regulatory infrastructure will require that we adapt to manage these new risks.

**Science and Analysis** in OPSS

We are focused on staying ahead of these technologies so that we make the changes we need to be ready for the future, and implementing new technologies in our ways of working to ensure we respond nimbly to regulatory challenges.

## Horizon scanning

We have set up a horizon scanning function within OPSS to map out possible challenges to our regulatory framework. Our first scan 1.0 has recently finished and we have been sharing the findings across OPSS to inform current and future policy and enforcement thinking. This has also complemented our work on legal metrology and artificial intelligence, showing where we need to focus for the future. We have also been engaging on our horizon scanning



work across government with relevant stakeholders and groups such as HSE, DBT Foresight Team and the Heads of Horizon Scanning network run by the Government Office for Science.

## The impact of artificial intelligence on product safety

We commissioned the Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services to assess the impacts of artificial intelligence on product safety, and the challenges for our pre-existing regulatory framework. A range of challenges and opportunities for the product safety environment were identified.

### Why does this matter?

A key conclusion was that trying to understand the role and impact of artificial intelligence systems in incidences would be challenging.

For OPSS, considering how we account for artificial agency in accreditation, liability and standardisation was a key area for us to consider in terms of

regulatory readiness – in partnership across government – and is an important focus moving forward.

[Read the full publication on our website.](#)<sup>9</sup>

### Our future in technology

- Developing our horizon scanning capability to consider digital, physical, biological and socioeconomic drivers for the changing product safety environment.
- Identifying sources of data and expertise in machine learning, advanced analytics and new digital platforms to supplement our analytical capabilities.
- Building a new team within OPSS dedicated to identifying and interpreting the pressures of new technologies, social habits and economic realities on our entire regulatory framework to support policy development.
- Ensuring that we have the digital, data and technology infrastructure in-house to support our regulatory and research needs.
- Horizon scanning to understand metrological needs for the future.
- Continuing to identify the risks and effects on product safety and behaviour of smart and connected products as these markets mature.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/study-on-the-impact-of-artificial-intelligence-on-product-safety>



# Chemistry, materials science and toxicology

The risks posed by hazardous substances within products are pernicious for product safety management, as their presence is not always obvious and small concentrations can have large effects if they go unidentified.

We invest in strategic research and draw from evidence and expertise from right across the UK's regulatory regimes to ensure that emergent

hazards resulting from contamination or use of substances in products can be identified and managed.

## **Collaborating in a cross-government ring trail**

Cannabidiol (CBD) has become a popular ingredient in foods, supplements, cosmetics and other products. While not a controlled substance like other cannabinoids, awareness of the purity of many CBD products with respect to illicit cannabinoid contamination is a critical factor to regulating these products successfully.



In 2020, to strengthen our evidence base in this area, we collaborated in an interlaboratory ring trial to develop suitable analytical methods to determine the purity of CBD-containing products, and to improve the quantification of controlled cannabinoids. The project was led by the Government Chemist, and funded by the Government Chemist Programme, the Food Standards Agency, the Home Office and OPSS, and was carried out in collaboration with Food Standards Scotland and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory. Many international laboratories participated in the trial to compare methods and results from a range of products.

### Why does this matter?

This work increased the understanding of the CBD and illicit cannabinoid contents of consumer products and built international confidence in methods available to analyse these products.

[Read the full report from the Government Chemist.](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cbd-and-controlled-cannabinoids-results-from-a-ring-trial)<sup>10</sup>

### Our future in chemistry, materials science and toxicology

- Developing our evidence base for nanomaterials in consumer products to ensure that their innovative properties can be harnessed safely.
- Continuing to review the market for harmful substances in products and building new systems to deliver effective assessment of emergent risks.
- Keep abreast of the current science in relation to chemical safety and ensure that product regulations are able to reflect this.
- Build confidence in the use of Next Generation Risk Assessment methods (NGRAs) within OPSS and across government.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cbd-and-controlled-cannabinoids-results-from-a-ring-trial>

# Building for the future

## Extending our research

Shortly after the inception of OPSS in 2018, we established our Strategic Research Programme; seeking to bolster our evidence base across our whole remit. Early recognition of the value of research in contributing to our evidence base has supported decision making at both the tactical and strategic level from the beginning.

### Our key research themes are:



**Chemicals and Materials in Products** focuses on identifying the risks from substances in

products to reduce negative health impacts and provide businesses with tools to be assured of product quality.



**Construction Products** focuses on building our knowledge of this sector. We seek to

understand risks and performance requirements, to ensure that we are ready to assume our responsibilities as the new construction product regulator.



**Consumers and Vulnerability** seeks to identify how features of our product safety environment negatively

impact consumers to inform what policies and regulations could rectify this.





**Making Regulation Work Better** focuses on building our knowledge of business behaviour, supply

chains, risks and how these interact with regulatory intervention to enable well-targeted and proportionate action.



**The Application of Risk** focuses on how risk is analysed and embedded in regulation to ensure

that our action is underpinned by a robust risk-based approach.



**Study of Online Marketplaces** seeks to identify the unique policy and regulatory challenges of online

marketplaces to inform how we can apply our powers to keep consumers safe from products purchased online.



**The Right Evidence for the Future**

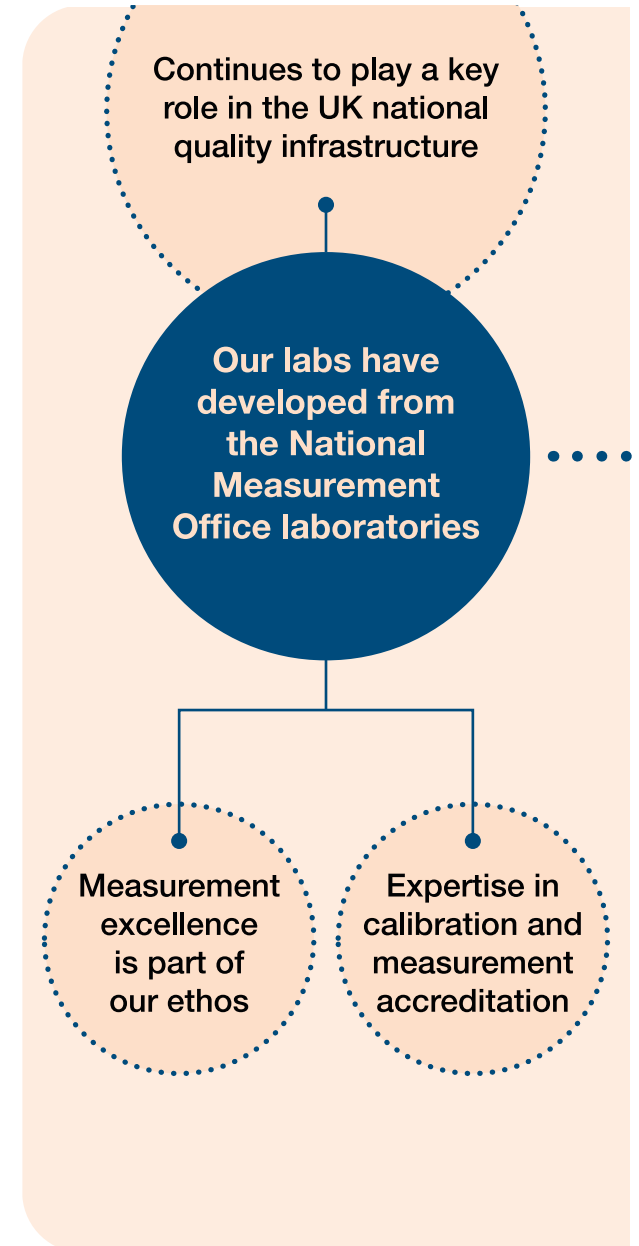
scrutinises novel products, practices and technologies to

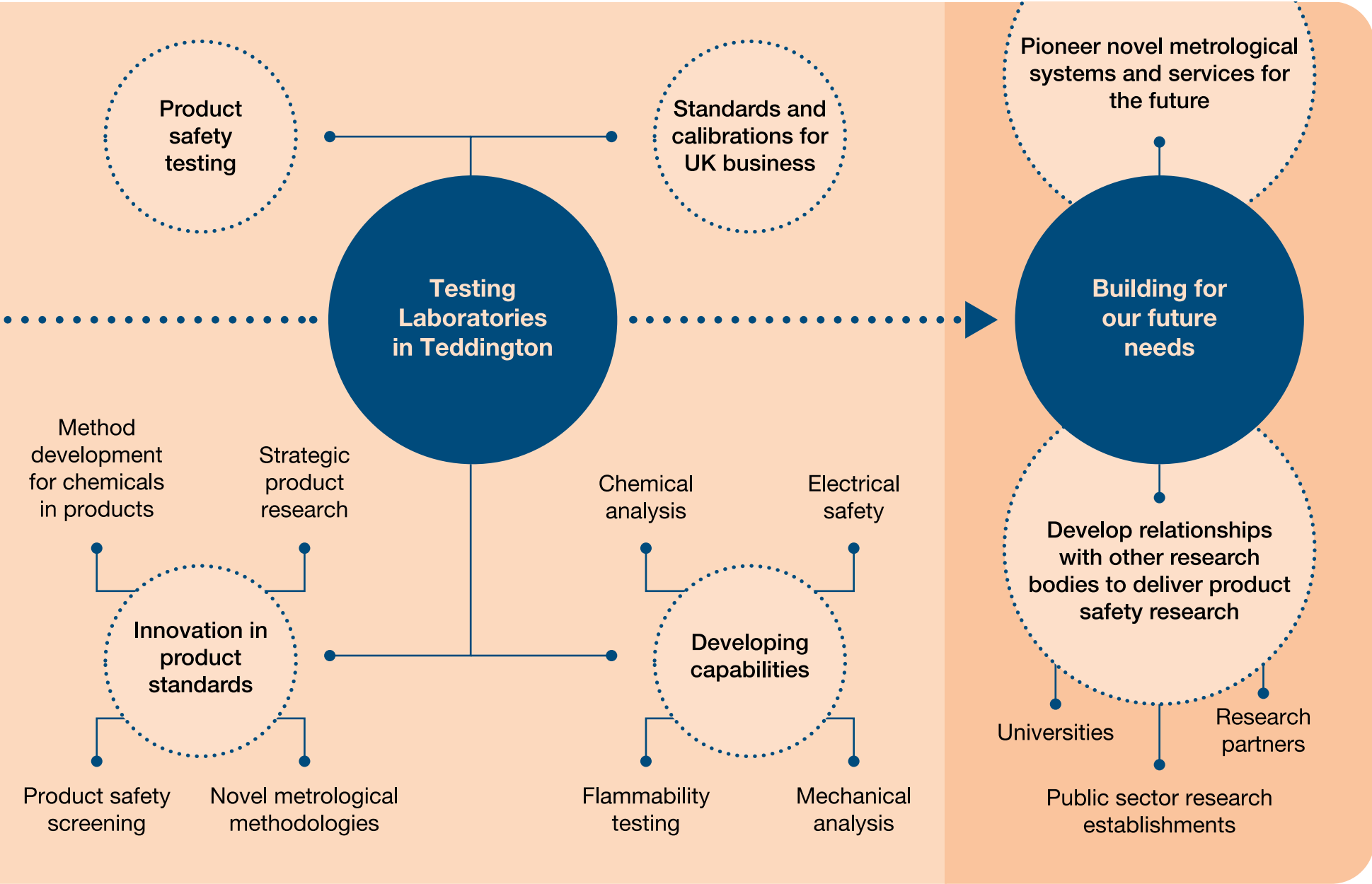
ensure that our regulatory powers and approaches are robust enough for future challenges in product safety and standards.



## Developing our laboratories

Our testing laboratories in Teddington are central in our plan to strengthen national testing and measurement capability for consumer and construction products. By combining in-house insights with close collaboration with external subject matter experts and external laboratories, we hope to achieve our vision of a safer and more prosperous UK.





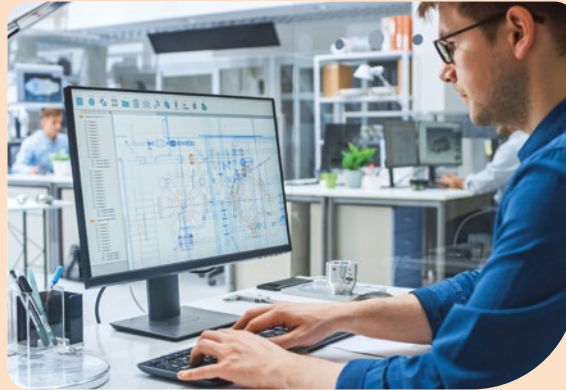
## Practical science for effective regulation

Our laboratories deliver three key activities to support our regulatory responsibilities across our whole remit:



### Product testing

- Assessing product compliance with relevant regulations and standards
- Developing new approaches and techniques
- Applying scientific research to understand product risk and underpin innovation



### Incident investigation

- Investigating products implicated in incidents and accidents to understand how they pose a risk



### Legal metrology

- Fulfilling our responsibilities under the Weights and Measures Act 1985 by ensuring the standard measures used by local regulators are accurate

Our testing laboratories are building their capability, and continuing to build effective relationships with other science and laboratory institutions is a key part of our ambition to ensure that our work is impactful and collaborative.

## Independent advice

### Scientific Advisory Group on Chemical Safety of Non-Food and Non-Medicinal Consumer Products

The Scientific Advisory Group on Chemical Safety of Non-Food and Non-Medicinal Consumer Products (SAG-CS) assesses and advises us on chemical and biological risks to humans. The group is chaired by Professor Emerita Shirley Price, and its members are drawn from across a range of relevant disciplines. SAG-CS is commissioned to provide us with scientific advice and risk assessment in the areas of public health and consumer safety. This independent scientific advice is used to advise ministers on possible changes to regulations, in particular in the areas of cosmetics and toys.

The scientific opinions produced by SAG-CS are published so that interested parties can see and understand the scientific advice which informs regulatory decisions.

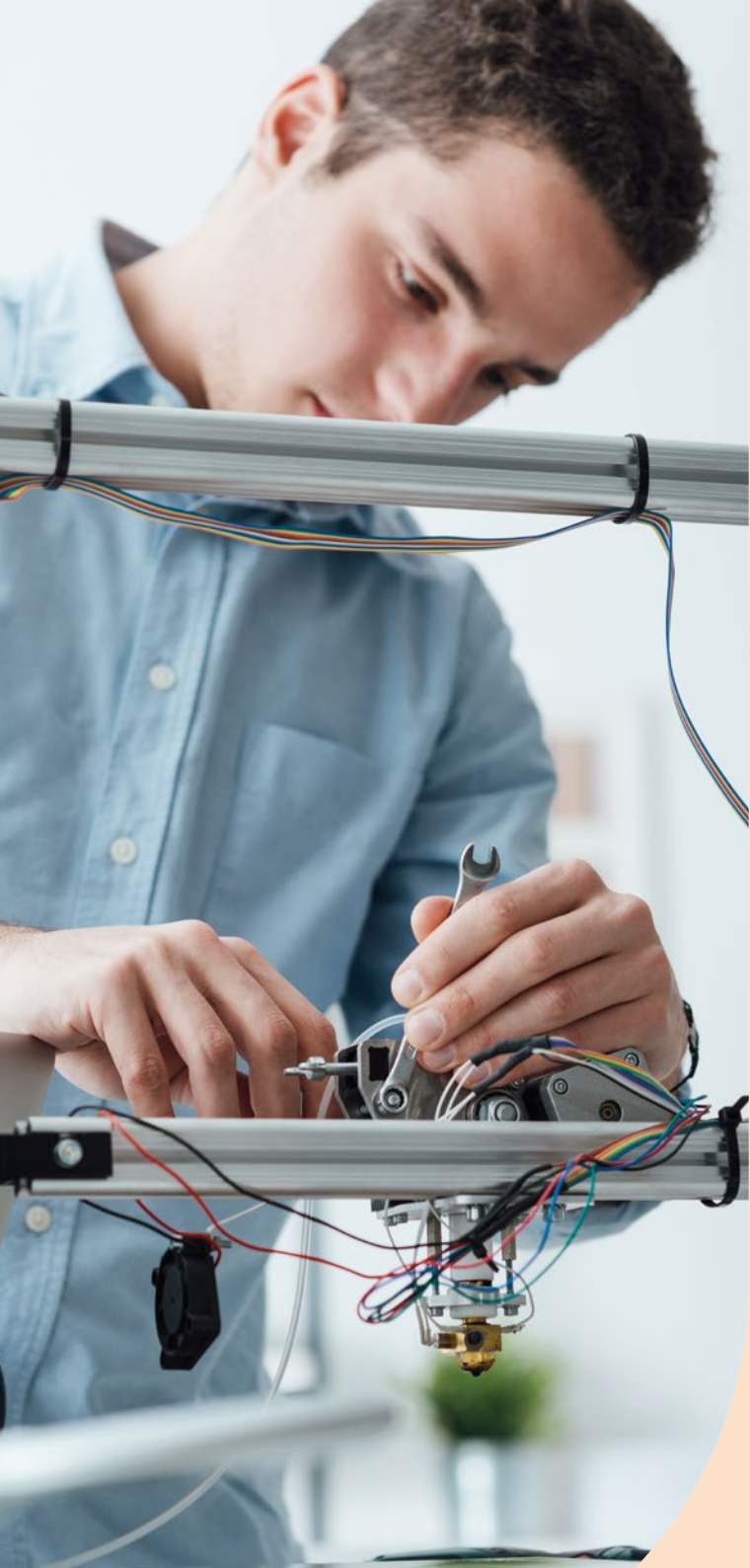
The group has produced scientific opinions on the safety of aluminium, aniline, formaldehyde and cobalt in toy materials, and on deoxyarbutin, salicylic acid, methyl-N-methylantranilate, formaldehyde-releasing preservatives and certain ultraviolet filters in cosmetic products. This independent scientific advice has been critical in understanding the needs for regulatory action and has enabled us to make changes in the law to keep consumers safe and provide clarity to business.

[More detail about the group, and their opinions to date can be found on the SAG-CS webpage.<sup>11</sup>](#)

### The OPSS Advisory Group

Professor Emerita Shirley Price is also a member of our OPSS Advisory Group, a group that provides us with high-level strategic advice and oversight of all our activities. The group is based on the model of non-executive directors, with members bringing knowledge from similar delivery organisations and related nongovernmental bodies. The group is not involved in operational decisions, but help provide an external perspective on our work and challenge our thinking and approach.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-on-chemical-safety-in-consumer-products>



# Get involved with our work

Improving the UK product environment for consumers and business is a vision shared across regulators, industry and academia. We want to ensure that we have the best access to expertise in both the private and public sectors, internally and externally.

## Registers of Specialists

We have created 'Registers of Specialists' in areas where we need to be able to access the deep expertise of key individuals outside of government.

We use these registers of pre-approved experts to be able to rapidly contract ad hoc advice for incidents or research projects, provide specific pieces of work and research, and to form advisory groups comprising external experts.

We currently have experts in a range of disciplines including chemistry, materials science, toxicology, health and safety, fire safety, construction products and manufacturing. We want to broaden our network of external experts, especially in the areas of novel technology, horizon scanning, gas engineering, child safety, paediatrics and child-centred design.

[More information on the Registers of Specialists is available on our website.](#)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-members-wanted-for-opss-registers-of-specialists>



## Strategic collaborations

Through our research programme and our laboratories, we are trying to hone our ability to deliver a product safety environment that works for both businesses and consumers.

We anticipate that by collaborating closely with public sector research establishments, regulatory agencies, universities and private sector laboratories that we may be able to create mutually beneficial work programmes across product safety, metrological techniques and standards.

We also hope that we can bolster the range of research partners we work with right across our remit.<sup>13</sup> Our range of research is incredibly broad, and the outcomes we want to deliver require an equally broad range of skills, expertise and capabilities.

More information about the Research Collaboration Network is available on our website.<sup>14</sup>

## Building internal capability

Building our internal skills and bringing external experts to work within OPSS has been a key part of our evidence capability development. We have hosted a range of undergraduate and postgraduate placement students, interns, and academic secondees in technical teams right across our remit, from risk and social sciences to engineering.

### University industrial placement programme

In 2023, we welcomed our first intake of industrial placement students to OPSS, who will complete projects for their bachelor's or master's degrees in one of our technical teams. From product safety issues and capability development in electrical and mechanical engineering, social research and statistics, and chemistry, these projects will help to support our ability to respond to incidents, prioritise new policy, and ultimately improve consumer safety.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/product-safety-research>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/33243f45-66fd-4684-9cfc-aa48bfb197d4>

We want to continue to strengthen these links and create new opportunities.

We are particularly interested in secondees from a range of institutions to help us in the development of our laboratory capability and be part of building the UK's product safety and measurement capacity.

### **Integrating academic expertise in our teams**

We have hosted three academic secondees in OPSS teams to help upskill our teams and complete focused studies in particular areas relevant to our regulatory competence. Working with Queen Mary University of London, University College London and the University of Leeds, we have welcomed academics into OPSS teams on projects to draw from the cutting edge of research and share skills with those at the forefronts of their field.

These projects have considered:

- the sociolinguistic aspects of how we interact with stakeholders to improve the quality of evidence we collect;
- how we can design clear monitoring of impact into our research projects and workstreams; and
- how we can evaluate the effectiveness of our new product safety risk assessment methodology and understand what behavioural changes in risk assessment practice it has delivered.

## How to get involved

View our work, let us know about what you think of our research and reach out to see where we may be able to provide opportunities for secondments, placements, employment and joining our Registers of Specialists, through the links below.

### Our main contact point for discussing or getting involved in any research work, analysis, secondments and placements

[opss.research@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:opss.research@businessandtrade.gov.uk)

### Testing laboratories

[OPSSTestLabs@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:OPSSTestLabs@businessandtrade.gov.uk)

### Statistics at OPSS

[OPSSAnalysis@businessandtrade.gov.uk](mailto:OPSSAnalysis@businessandtrade.gov.uk)

### Our full list of research publications

[OPSS research publications<sup>15</sup>](#)

### Application information for our two current Registers of Specialists: chemicals, materials and toxicology and construction products

[Chemicals, materials and toxicology  
Construction products<sup>16</sup>](#)

### Employment opportunities at OPSS

[OPSS careers website<sup>17</sup>](#)

### Publications of our Scientific Advisory Group on Chemical Safety

[SAG-CS publications<sup>18</sup>](#)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/product-safety-research>

<sup>16</sup> <https://opss-careers.co.uk/chemicals-materials-and-toxicology-register-of-specialists>

<sup>17</sup> <https://opss-careers.co.uk>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-on-chemical-safety-in-consumer-products>



© Crown copyright 2024

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Contact us if you have any enquiries about this publication, including requests for alternative formats, at: [OPSS.enquiries@beis.gov.uk](mailto:OPSS.enquiries@beis.gov.uk)

**Office for Product Safety and Standards**

Department for Business and Trade,  
4th Floor, Cannon House, 18 The Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 6BS

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-product-safety-and-standards](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-product-safety-and-standards)

