

PUBLIC SECTOR

## Tracking down rogue traders and stopping criminal gangs.

- Seized illicit tobacco worth hundreds of thousands of pounds
- Undertook criminal investigations into rogue traders
- Returned over £237,000 to victims in one year

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### The challenge



### The solution



### The outcome



## The customer

The Heart of the South West Trading Standards Service ("the Service") supports businesses and protects consumers across Devon, Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay in the United Kingdom. Covering both urban and rural areas, its role ranges from tackling doorstep crime and rogue traders to targeting illicit tobacco markets, enforcing food standards and safeguarding animal welfare.

## The challenge

From mouldy dog treats to burning e-scooters, the Service must deal with thousands of complaints and enquiries annually. First, it has to identify the often-elusive individuals and businesses involved, then gather intelligence to support action by its own officers or the police.

"We need to identify people, places and businesses," says Senior Intelligence Analyst Rachel Pecz. "We often start with just a name so a reliable intelligence-gathering solution is vital."

## The solution

Whether the Service is investigating a criminal gang, a rogue trader or a negligent farmer, GBG Investigate provides that solution. It delivers over 1.5 billion enhanced, interlinked consumer and business records to search through and interrogate.

"Like many other local government services, we have relied on GBG Investigate for years," explains Rachel. "We turn to Investigate to find dates of birth, track down addresses and phone numbers, or to support in-depth investigations. And if Investigate corroborates existing information, I can be confident it is correct."

GBG Investigate's powerful search and visual data-linking analysis reveal otherwise hidden connections between cohabitants, business directors and aliases.

"A group might claim not to know each other, then GBG Investigate shows they are all at the same address or even part of the same family," says Rachel. "Or when you have 200 companies all registered at the same address, Investigate data will give us new lines of enquiry."

## The outcome

GBG Investigate provides intelligence to stop the sale of illicit tobacco and find criminals selling fake cigarettes online, or age-restricted products to minors.

"Working with the police, GBG Investigate helped the Service seize 876,968 illicit cigarettes and 418kg of illicit tobacco in 2023-24 alone," says Rachel.

In other scams, like mis-sold solar panels or spray foam roof insulation, GBG Investigate helps locate rogue builders who have moved on without leaving a forwarding address.

“Foam insulation can cause mortgage problems,” says Rachel. “And then the same people charge you even more to remove it – almost £15,000 in one case!”

More positively, the Service uses GBG Investigate to trace victims of nationwide scams and return money to vulnerable consumers. Last year, the Service's interventions for victims of scams and rogue traders saved consumers over £237,000.



“GBG Investigate is the Swiss Army Knife of intelligence gathering. It gives us the contact details and information that we'd sometimes struggle to find anywhere else; it's incredibly valuable to us.”

Rachel Pecz, Senior Intelligence Analyst  
Heart of the South West Trading Standards Service

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