

MJ Public Protection award 2008: finalists named

LACORS is once again sponsoring the MJ Public Protection Achievement of the Year award, with the co-sponsors the Food Standards Agency and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

The award is an opportunity for councils to showcase the best work being carried out by regulatory services and to highlight innovative examples of good practice across areas including consumer protection, food safety, animal welfare, environmental protection and many more besides.

A total of 40 councils entered this year – the highest number ever for this award – all of which were of the highest standard.

The judging panel had an extremely tough time narrowing down the entries but eventually settled on six finalists, all of which successfully met the judging criteria which included value for money, partnership working and implementing the Hampton principles.

The winner will be announced at the MJ Awards dinner on 26 June at the London Hilton, Park Lane. So good luck to all our finalists, well done to the commended councils, and thank you very much to all those who entered.

The six finalists:

Bedfordshire County Council

The county is running a campaign against criminal traders operating in its area, especially those selling counterfeit goods. Led by the county trading standards services, the campaign, FIERCE, includes extensive use of the Proceeds of Crime Act, seizure of equipment, use of special constables and targeting of manufacturers and importers. The approach led last year to a 78% drop in the number of illicit DVD sellers in Bedfordshire.

London Borough of Brent

Concern about dangerous dogs prompted the council and its police and voluntary sector partners to set up BARK (Brent Action for Responsible K9s), London's first multi-agency approach to dangerous dogs and irresponsible owners. Patrols offer help, advice, briefings to schools and magistrates and monitor dogs without collars and tags and have led to organised raids where dogs have been seized and owners prosecuted. Detection rates for dangerous dogs have more than doubled as a result of BARK.

Lancashire County Council

The council's trading standards department along with its partners has developed an initiative to taking a multi-agency approach to tackling young people's alcohol and tobacco misuse. Realising that enforcement action alone would not solve the problem it launched a programme to target relevant groups such as teenagers, parents and of course retailers.

Norwich City Council

The Norwich Safer Food Award, the country's first 'scores on the doors' initiative, has positively influenced the behaviour of food business operators and improved food safety compliance. It works by converting the compliance component of the hazard score given at an inspection into an easily understood rating capable of being used on a certificate for the public. Since its introduction there has been a marked reduction in the number of premises getting no stars and an increase in three, four and five-star premises.

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Tackling environmental crime through a multi-agency approach of enforcement and education has made the district a cleaner place. A year ago Wakefield recorded a 28% reduction in fly-tipping, the highest drop in West Yorkshire. The council's input to the partnership is through its Environmental Crime Team which has earned a high reputation in the drive against fly-tippers.

West Dunbartonshire Council

The council's environmental health section helped transform a one-acre derelict and vacant site into a safe, attractive area of green space. Its Public Health and Pollution Team, whose activities include the remediation of contaminated land, played a key role in developing the site which had once been a scrapyards and had been derelict since 1989. The majority of the landscape work was carried out by the council's enviro-squad while local schoolchildren were also involved in tree planting and flower-potting.