

Customer Complaints Procedure

I. Customer complaints procedure

- I.1. Members must have an effective customer complaints procedure in line with the following:
 - I.1.1 It is the responsibility of the member to resolve all complaints about their business
 - I.1.2 Any complaints will be dealt with promptly, effectively and courteously, in accordance with good business practice and the terms of the scheme. A person will be nominated to take overall responsibility for the management of customer complaints.
 - I.1.3 All customer complaints will be recorded.
 - I.1.4 An initial response must be made to any customer complaint within five working days.
 - I.1.5 If it is not possible to resolve a customer complaint within one month of receipt, the customer will be given a written explanation by the business detailing why the complaint has not been resolved and what steps are being taken. In the case of unjustified complaints, this may take the form of a full written explanation of the businesses perspective.
 - I.1.6 In exceptional circumstances where it has not been possible to resolve the complaint you may refer the complaint to [your local advice service] to assist in reaching a solution.
 - I.1.7 If a satisfactory conclusion still cannot be reached, the agreement of the customer and the business will be sought for the use of a mutually agreed arbitration scheme e.g. trade association or other arbitration schemes, if available or the Small Claims court service. The business will accept the result of the arbitration.
 - I.1.8 If we receive any complaints about you as a member of this scheme and the complaint is civil in nature, the complaint will be referred back to you to resolve. If the complainant requires anonymity or has already approached you, we will give advice.
- I.2 If necessary the Trading Standards Service will be able to offer civil advice to both parties.
- I.3 Where you have dealt with customer complaints in accordance with paragraph I.1 above, without success but have not taken it through arbitration or small claims, we will try to assist in resolving the matter.
- I.4 Members will co-operate with the Trading Standards Service or any other intermediary consulted by the consumer in an attempt to resolve any complaint.

2. Mediation

- 2.1 If the customer considers the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, then the customer will be given details of a trade association or appropriate body for alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The Customer will be responsible for referring the matter to the appropriate body.
- 2.2 If options mentioned in 2.1 above are not available the Trading Standards Service may offer to assist the customer by contacting the member to mediate in appropriate circumstances. Members must ensure that the customer is aware of these options. The ultimate decision as to whether mediation takes place will lie with Trading Standards.
- 2.3 With regard to any individual consumer complaint, wherever possible, the process of mediation will be performed by separate members of the Trading Standards Service.
- 2.4 If a satisfactory conclusion still cannot be reached, the agreement of the customer and the business will be sought for the use of a mutually agreed arbitration scheme. There may be some cost to either/both parties for this service as it would be externally sourced. The business will accept the result of the arbitration. Where not agreed or where not available either party may decide to take the matter to the Small Claims court service