

TRADING STANDARDS SERVICE CONSUMER CHARTER

This charter explains the Trading Standards Consumer Advice Service which is available to the public and local traders.

The Trading Standards Service promotes fair trading practices in Flintshire. We have a statutory duty to enforce a wide range of consumer laws and to provide help and advice to businesses and consumers, including consumer advice.

We enforce legislation covering unsafe goods, product descriptions, short weight etc and have powers to ensure compliance with the law. Our specialist advisers, give advice on Consumer Protection Legislation and the rights of shoppers and traders.

WHO CAN GET HELP?

- Flintshire residents
- Traders with a base in Flintshire

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT US?

- If you require initial Consumer Advice you can contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service by:
 - Telephone - 03454 04 05 06
 - *Or*
 - Submitting an online enquiry form via - www.adviceguide.org.uk
- For all other Trading Standards issues or to speak to a particular officer telephone 01352 703181, 8:30a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday. An answer phone operates whenever we are closed or dealing with other clients. Simply leave a message and we will ring you back within two working days.
- **Please remember this line is very busy and you may not get through straight away.**
- Make a personal visit to our offices between 8:30a.m. - 4.30 p.m. If possible telephone this office on 01352 703181 before making the journey to ensure that an appropriate officer is available.
- Write to us at County Hall, Mold. We will aim to give you advice within five working days.
- Contact us via our website at www.flintshire.gov.uk

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Explain the civil law relevant to your consumer problem. This service will normally be undertaken by the Citizens Advice Consumer Service
- Give you practical 'first step' advice to assist you to pursue the complaint yourself which will include an explanation of the choice of actions available to you. This service will normally be undertaken by the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service is a telephone and online consumer advice service, supported by The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) . They provide clear, practical, impartial advice to help you sort out problems and disagreements you may be having with suppliers of goods or services.

- If you do not achieve a successful outcome, we will provide 'next step advice' and if necessary, by sending you a support pack to help you with your problem.
- If you still cannot resolve the matter and if we think you have a case, we may intervene on your behalf or offer to mediate. In certain circumstances and with your agreement it may be appropriate for us to make a home visit to discuss the complaint with you. *This service is not available where the disputed contract is between two traders/businesses.*
- Where your complaint cannot be resolved, we will advise you how to take a small claims action in the County Court. In some cases, you may be eligible for us to assist you by attending court with you. This is not usually necessary as the County Court Small claims procedure aims to put consumers at their ease and enable them to present their case in an informal and comfortable setting.

WE CANNOT

- 'Demand' refunds, replacements, repairs or apologies from traders on your behalf.
- Intervene directly with the trader where this would conflict with any criminal investigations.
- Intervene/mediate where the dispute is in respect of a trade to trade contract.
- Continue to pursue small value complaints (below £50.00) beyond providing consumer advice.
- Pursue a complaint which, in our opinion, is unjustified or which we consider is not in the public interest. This does not affect your right to pursue the matter yourself.
- Act as a solicitor

WE ASK YOU

- To be completely honest with us and give us all the facts relevant to your case.
- To listen to our advice and to our reasons for recommending a particular course of action.

- Accept that we may not always be able to help you find a solution if no laws have been broken.
- To understand that we have other clients with whom we have to deal. We will deal with your complaint as quickly as possible.
- Be patient and courteous to our staff at all times even though you may be upset or angry. We are trying to help you.

YOU CAN

- Ask for an explanation of our actions or our advice.
- If you remain dissatisfied with our service, you can complain to a more senior officer and/or use our corporate complaint service
- Seek alternative advice from a solicitor.

OUR STANDARDS

Courtesy and Helpfulness

We will be courteous and helpful at all times. We will identify ourselves by name in all correspondence, on the telephone and when we meet you.

Prompt Response

Our target times for responding to consumer complaints and requests for services are:-

- Matters affecting the health or safety of the public – 1 working day
- Requests for advice and information (from businesses and members of the public) – 2 working days.
- Other requests for service and complaints about trading practices – 5 working days.

Privacy

Information which you or any other party provide to us will be treated in confidence. It will only be given out by agreement or when legally necessary.

Appointments

Appointments will be kept at the time agreed. If we are forced to cancel we will make a new appointment to suit you.

YOUR VIEWS

Flintshire Trading Standards is committed to providing the highest quality services and we are constantly striving to improve our performance.

We encourage your comments, good or bad about the service you have received and welcome any suggestions you may have for improvements. If you wish you may use the space below to make your suggestions.

YOUR COMPLAINTS

If you are not satisfied with the service you have received from us and wish to complain, here are the steps you can take:

Step 1 - Contact the Trading Standards service or the Customer Services Team. Your complaint will be recorded on a central database and if it is not possible to resolve the matter immediately it will be acknowledged with 5 working days.

Step 2 - If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the service, contact the Customer Services Team who will ensure that your complaint is considered by a senior officer within the service or the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Ombudsman

If you feel that the Council has failed to address or resolve your complaint to your satisfaction you can contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Officer Welfare

Any threatening or abusive behaviour towards an officer is always treated seriously and may result in the advice/ visit being ended. The incident may also be reported to the Police.

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COMMENTS

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October 2014