



LEARNING FROM CODE ADJUDICATIONS: ADVICE FOR HOME BUILDERS

FACTSHEET 4: COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Giving customers access to a complaints process is an essential part of providing a good service. As part of the Code's ongoing commitment to improve the home buying experience for customers, this factsheet shares the learning from some of the decisions made recently by adjudicators acting for our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme in relation to Requirement 5.1 – that Home Builders must have procedures for handling customer calls and complaints.

To read about the other common areas where complaints have arisen, download the remaining factsheets from our website.

SECTION 5.1: Complaint Handling

Home Builders are required to explain in writing:

- what system is in place for receiving, handling and resolving Home Buyers' service calls and complaints
- details of the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme provided by the Code

Adjudicators found evidence of breaches such as:

"ten months is an unacceptable period of time to wait for complaints to be resolved"

"the Home Builder's failure to follow its own published complaints escalation process constitutes a breach of section 5.1"

"the Home Builder failed to ensure that the Home Buyer was made aware of the formal complaints procedure"

"if the Home Builder had a complaints policy it was not put into place in relation to the Home Buyers' attempt to complain"

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- It is not only incumbent on you to have a complaints process in place, which you make known to the home buyer, in writing - you must follow it too.
- You must also inform the home buyer of the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, in writing.
- You should respond to, and deal with home buyers' complaints within a reasonable time.
- The escalation process for a complaint should be clearly outlined, and the order of escalation followed.
- Where complaints cannot be resolved swiftly (if, for example, investigation work is needed; there is a lead time for sourcing materials, or additional preparation work is needed), give the home buyer an indication of the expected timescale and then adhere to it or keep them fully informed if unavoidable delays occur.
- Keep notes of conversations with home buyers including dates/times, who has spoken to them and about what. Follow up discussions in writing/by email, including how any concerns raised have been, or will be, addressed and by when.

TOP TIP:

If you may not be able to resolve a complaint within any timescales you have agreed, you should keep the home buyer apprised of the situation and agree revised timescales. If possible, consider alternative remedies including whether a financial remedy for inconvenience (such as time spent or any upset caused by having to bring a complaint), may be appropriate.



FEEDBACK

Don't forget that online training is available to you, your staff and your agents to help improve customer service and compliance with the Code.

For more information or to suggest ideas for information you would like to receive, please email: secretariat@consumercode.co.uk