

Worried that you might have been conned?

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) or your local authority's trading standards service can take action against traders who persistently flout the law and cheat you. Trading standards officers also help local businesses to follow consumer law.

We're providing more money for training and other help for trading standards officers.

by Dec 2000

We're strengthening their hands to stop companies using unfair terms in their standard contracts – such as demanding full payment up front for fitted kitchens. The Consumers' Association and the regulators for gas, electricity, water, telecoms and rail will also be able to take action.

by Dec 1999

We will change the law to give trading standards officers more powers to take dishonest traders to court to stop their activities or stop them from trading. We will be able to ban a range of practices that are not presently illegal – but should be – such as tricks used in bogus one-day sales.

after legislation

We will make it easier to spot when the mileage has been fiddled on second-hand cars.

after legislation

We will protect you from scams that exploit your need to work from home.

after legislation

We will make it harder for you to be tricked by get-rich-quick schemes.

by Dec 1999



Paying more than you expect?

You may find it difficult to compare prices of similar goods, and some shops do not put their prices on display.

It will be easier to get the best possible deal. All shops will have to display prices without you having to ask. Larger shops will have to help you compare prices of similar goods – by showing how much each costs for the same quantity.

by Dec 2000

Sometimes, although price information is given to you, it is so confusing that

you cannot work out what you actually have to pay.



We will help business to make sure that you can see the true costs of goods and services that are hidden or hard to work out – such as hotel telephone charges, soft drinks in pubs, mortgages and other types of credit.

by Dec 2000

Are we paying more than others for the same goods?

Magazines and organisations publish comparative prices.

We are investigating and will publish the prices of 100 goods and services in the UK, US, France and Germany. If any UK prices appear too high we will ask the competition authorities to investigate.

early 2000

Feel that you have received short measure?

You must receive the quantity you pay for, but the law is unclear on how much you should be served when you order a pint of beer and you may be paying for more froth than you'd expect.

We will change the law so that you are guaranteed a full measure in the pub.

after legislation



You may find it difficult or time consuming to find out how much is in a packet. Or you get home and find a box is only half full.

We will change the law so that more products have to show on the packet how much is inside. And to prevent the size of a packet from giving a false impression of the contents.

after legislation

Misled by a description?

It is illegal to give a false description of goods.

We will bring in tougher controls on those who give a false description of the services they offer – such as holiday companies that mislead you about facilities in hotel rooms.

after
legislation

We will tackle misleading claims made on packs – such as claims that the product inside is environmentally friendly when it isn't.

by Dec
1999

Confused about who you can trust when buying something?

It is not easy to tell who is or is not a good trader. Many people buy and will continue to buy from names they know.

We will provide an 'at-a-glance' hallmark so that you can identify those businesses that guarantee good service and to put things right if they go wrong. The OFT will take away the right to use the hallmark from businesses that do not abide by the code of practice behind it.

after
legislation

We will introduce a special code so that you can avoid cowboy builders. It will give you extra information about whether the builder or plumber or electrician is competent and reliable.

trial Dec
1999

Icons on the internet promise that you are dealing with a reputable trader but there are so many it can be difficult to know what they are guaranteeing.

We will provide a special hallmark for internet traders who will guarantee security of payments, privacy of information about you and that they will not target your children.

by Dec
1999

What to do if you have a problem now?

First of all speak to the person or business from whom you bought the goods or service. By law goods that you buy must be of satisfactory quality and fit for purpose. A conversation or a letter could be all it takes to put things right. If you have no success, get in touch with your local Citizens Advice Bureau, local trading standards officers, or other private or voluntary advice networks – the numbers should be in the telephone directory. Trading standards officers may be able to take court action on complaints about criminal or fraudulent behaviour. There are many other sources of help and information including many projects to help consumers. You should be able to find out more about local projects at your library. There are helpful free publications such as the OFT's *A Buyer's Guide* (call 0870 6060 321).

The full text of the Consumer Strategy is available from the Stationery Office Limited: *modern markets: confident consumers* (Cm 4410, £ 4.95). It, and an overview, can be found on the internet at <http://www.dti.gov.uk/consumer/whitepaper>. This leaflet and the overview are available on the internet in English and Welsh, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. They are also available in Braille and on audio tape.



confident consumers

access to
information

competitive markets

new ways to a **fair deal**

a new focus
on consumers

dti

Department of Trade and Industry