Annexe A – Consumer survey methodology
Sampling

1.1 The survey of consumers was conducted on TNS-BMRB’s face-to-face omnibus survey. Results from the survey have been used to report on the consumer experience of initiating home improvement, maintenance and repair work.

1.2 The omnibus survey involves undertaking computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI) with a representative cross-section of around 2,000 people in the UK. It uses a random location sampling methodology whereby interviewers are given lists of addresses and required to achieve a set number of interviews based on demographic quotas.

1.3 Each week, a varying number of sampling points are issued depending upon the length of the questionnaire. Census small area statistics and the Postcode Address File (PAF) are used to define sample points.

1.4 Assignments are conducted over two days of fieldwork. Quotas are set by gender, presence of children and working status to ensure a balanced sample of adults within effective contacted addresses.

Questionnaire design and piloting

1.5 The questionnaire was designed by TNS-BMRB working alongside the Office of Fair Trading. Questions were tested during a pilot exercise in two separate locations (London and Birmingham). A total of 20 interviews were conducted at the pilot stage. A number of changes were subsequently made to the questionnaire ahead of main stage fieldwork. For the final questionnaire see Annexe C.

Fieldwork

1.6 Questions on home improvement, maintenance and repairs were included on three waves of the TNS Omnibus survey in January 2011, giving a total of around 6,000 prospective respondents to contact.

1.7 A total of 1,680 respondents had initiated home improvement work in the last two years or maintenance and repair work in the last 12 months, representing 26 per cent of the total omnibus sample for the three waves. In total 1,269 respondents were asked about a home
improvement and 411 respondents were asked about maintenance or repair work.¹

Coding

1.8 A small number of questions were included in the questionnaire with an 'other specify' code. Verbatim responses from the 'other' code were reviewed by TNS-BMRB in consultation with OFT throughout the data collection stage. Based on this a number of responses were back-coded to existing codes and a number of new codes were added to capture additional common responses.

Weighting

1.9 Results were weighted by key demographic variables at the analysis stage to be representative of the adult population of England and Wales aged 16+. No weights were applied to correct for the bias shown towards home improvement work in the selection of events.

¹ A bias was introduced to the selection to ensure a sufficient number of home improvement events would be included in the final sample. Consumers who had initiated home improvement and maintenance/repair work were asked about the home improvement work they had initiated. If they had initiated more than one home improvement event (or no home improvement but more than one maintenance or repair) they were asked about the most recent event undertaken.
Regression analysis of the key drivers of problems

1.10 Regression analysis was performed on the survey data to determine which variables were associated with having experienced any problems. This was based on whether or not the respondent said they had experienced any problems in relation to their selected home improvement or maintenance/repair event. The question asked was:

*Ask all*

C9. What problems if any did you encounter with the work you had carried out?

- Problems with plans/specifications – for example not clear / mistakes
- Substandard work – faults with work, things had to be done again, etc
- Substandard goods – for example fittings not of adequate quality, or already damaged when they arrived
- Wrong goods delivered – fixtures and fittings delivered were wrong type, colour, etc
- Trader did not do what they had agreed – the results didn’t match the descriptions
- Delays
- Cost was higher than expected – no firm price agreed in advance
- Cost was higher than expected – additions to agreed price
- Knock-on inconvenience or damage – for example tradesman damaged something; water cut off unexpectedly
- Problems getting snags or faults sorted out after initial work
- Trader went out of business before completing work
- Trader was rude or aggressive
- Some other problem (specify?)
- No problems encountered
- Don’t know

1.11 The model built used the data for both home improvements and for maintenance and repairs. The alternative of building a separate model for each type of work was not viable given the number of observations and the number of variables to be included. Furthermore, given that a number of questions about ‘reasons for choosing a supplier’ were based on those who had asked at least one supplier to quote for the work, regression analysis was restricted to this group. This left 1,490 cases for building the model.

1.12 The approach used was to test demographic and non-demographic variables to see which were significant, whilst controlling for the cost of work and type of work in the model. A backward stepwise regression approach was used to reduce the variables to a set which were
significantly associated with whether consumers encountered any problems.

1.13 The variables that were fixed were:

- Cost of the work carried out
- Type of work (home improvements versus maintenance/repairs)

1.14 The demographic and non-demographic variables below were tested for significance using backward stepwise regression:

- Age band of the respondent
- Social Grade of the respondent (ABC1 compared with C2DE)
- Tenure (i.e. whether owning their home outright or with the help of a mortgage)
- Gender
- Single/Multiple adult households
- Whether child present in household
- Whether have access to internet
- Working status
- How many times work carried out in previous 5 years
- Number of quotes requested (None, 1, 2, 3 +)
- Consumer’s reason for using the trader they did: used before, recommended, cheapest, price was reasonable/competitive (not the cheapest), trader was registered on a scheme, liked them, local/locally focused, reputation for quality
- Size of trader (4 bands)
• Documents provided by the trader: no documents provided, quote, basic specification, detailed specification, contract, complaints procedure, guarantee

• The payment structure agreed upon: payment in advance, payment of deposit, payment in full on completion, payment plan (instalments)

• What was considered very or extremely important by consumers when choosing a trader: price, quality, service, when the work could be done, reliability

1.15 Table A.1 shows the variables which were considered to be significant, and the odds ratios for each category within a variable. Initially tenure was found to be significant, but there was little cognitive explanation as to why. To improve the interpretation of the findings, the variables in the model were refined by: replacing tenure by age and number of quotes obtained by whether the consumer had used the trader before.²

1.16 The 'odds ratios' show how much more or less likely the outcome would be, given one characteristic over another, when all other variables are controlled for. One way to think of this is to imagine two people, who share the same characteristics as each other among those listed, except for one. One person has an attribute that matches a reference category, and the other person has a different attribute. The odds ratio will indicate whether the other person is more or less likely to encounter problems than the person who shares the attribute of the reference category.

1.17 Odds ratios greater than 1 indicate that the person with a given attribute within a variable is more likely to have a problem than someone who has the attribute of the reference category. Odds ratios less than 1 indicate they are less likely to have problems.

1.18 For example, Table A.1 shows that someone who chose the trader because they had used them before has an odds ratio of 0.65, and is

² As highlighted in the main report, there was a relationship between previous use being cited as a reason for choosing a trader and the number of quotes requested. Those who chose a trader for this reason were less likely than others to request three or more quotes.
less likely to encounter problems than someone who did not choose a trader because they had used them before (given that all other factors are the same). How much less likely is determined by how far the odds ratio is from 1. In this example, someone who chose the trader because they had used them before would have 35 per cent lower odds of experiencing a problem than someone who did not (35 per cent comes from ((1 - 0.65) x 100)).

1.19 As a second example, someone who paid a deposit has an odds ratio of 2.03. This means their odds of encountering a problem were twice those of someone who did not pay a deposit, given the other factors controlled for in the model.

1.20 As with any survey, there is a margin of error around each estimate, and so we report 95 per cent confidence intervals for the odds ratios. In the deposit example, the 95 per cent confidence interval for the odds ratio is between 1.46 and 2.81.
Table A.1. Logistic regression: Whether consumer had any problem with work being carried out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home improvement</td>
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<td>NS</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>2.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance or repair</td>
<td>(Ref)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of work carried out</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t know/refused</td>
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<td>NS</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>3.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>£250 - £999</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>2.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>£1000 - £4999</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>3.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>£5000 - £9999</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>£10k+</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>3.62</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.56</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.06</td>
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<td>-.50</td>
<td>*</td>
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<td>.61</td>
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<td>Deposit paid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.81</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-.44</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.91</td>
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</table>

** - Significant at < 0.01 in relation to reference category
* - Significant at < 0.05 in relation to reference category
NS - Not significantly different in relation to reference category

Nagelkerke R2 correlation coefficient = 0.126
Hosmer Lemeshow: p = 0.248

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3 Whether or not respondents said customer service was very or extremely important could incur bias coefficients, since it is possible that how important a customer feels service is to them could be driven by problems experienced, as well as problems being driven by the importance of customer service. This is hard to avoid in surveys such as these which ask such questions post hoc, and has been controlled as much as reasonable through questionnaire design.