

Annexe E: Consumer complaints

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATISTICAL RETURNS AND ANALYSES

Consumer complaints relating to inadequate goods and services are available from a number of different sources. Figures presented in this report are compiled by the local authority trading standards service, local authority environmental health departments and some advice agencies. These organisations voluntarily submit quarterly returns to the OFT systematically classified by the specific goods and services and the trading practices that gave rise to the complaint.

DATA COVERAGE

Most, but not all, local authorities provide returns and the number of returning authorities varies from year to year. Figures reported in this annexe reflect only those complaints brought to the attention of the trading standards service, advice agencies and environmental health departments which provide returns to the OFT. They exclude complaints made to regulatory bodies (such as OFGEM, OFTEL and OFWAT), government departments (other than the Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development Trading Standards Branch), representative bodies (such as the National Consumers Council), and trade associations. Most occasions when consumers are unsatisfied go unreported, while not all complaints raised with local authorities are justified. These figures cannot therefore be interpreted as a record of the overall level of consumer dissatisfaction.

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS

126 Substantial changes were made to the classification system in the second quarter of 1999 as a result of recommendations made by a working party of the OFT and the trading standards service. These changes to the classification system in the middle of the previous reporting year make year-on-year comparisons difficult and potentially misleading. More thorough analysis will be available in subsequent years.

Further details of the consumer complaints classifications can be found in the following documents:

- *Classification of consumer complaints – August 1998 – inc, guidance notes*
- *Rationale for reclassification of consumer complaints – August 1998*
- *Quarterly return form – trading standards service*
- *Quarterly return form – environmental health departments*
- *Future developments for the collection and classification of consumer complaints*

which are available from the OFT's Internet web site <http://www.of.gov.uk/rsearch/cc-info.htm>

Key to table:

Trading practices:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Defective goods or substandard service | 4 Difficulty in getting faults put right |
| 2 Non-delivery of goods, and delay or non-completion of services | 6 Unfair terms and conditions, including attempts to restrict liability |
| 3 Selling techniques: misleading claims, representations or advertisements (price, quality, etc); presentation of goods or services (availability, labelling and packaging); and lack of information. | 8 Health or safety |
| | A Age-restricted sales |
| | P Prices and pricing (including value for money) |

TABLE E.1: CONSUMER COMPLAINTS 12 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2000

		Trading Practices								Totals	Group Totals
		1	2	3	4	6	8	A	P		
Group A: House fittings and appliances											
AA	House construction	2,109	273	806	382	75	55	11	95	3,806	
AB	Home maintenance, repairs and improvements	39,144	7,019	10,716	8,450	1,083	668	188	3,468	70,736	
AC	Double glazing products and installation	14,903	2,397	4,933	4,605	674	216	37	446	28,211	
AD	Furniture, pictures, etc	9,974	3,544	2,603	1,609	414	431	34	669	19,278	
AE	Upholstered furniture	21,951	6,121	3,569	4,620	641	692	23	531	38,148	
AF	Floor coverings	8,686	1,171	1,429	1,364	189	51	24	333	13,247	
AK	Textiles and soft furnishings	3,018	659	1,033	513	131	99	9	259	5,721	
AL	Radio, TV and audiovisual equipment, etc.	20,161	2,625	5,413	4,554	773	295	49	1,036	34,906	
AM	Personal computers and related hardware	23,894	3,820	5,301	5,313	537	85	48	722	39,720	
AN	Large white goods and major fixed appliances	19,265	1,523	2,740	3,900	387	1,358	24	534	29,731	
AO	Other electrical domestic appliances	9,258	755	2,184	1,507	286	1,956	35	440	16,421	
AP	Repairs to domestic appliances equipment	4,425	1,354	862	1,324	175	110	24	561	8,835	
		176,788	31,261	41,589	38,141	5,365	6,016	506	9,094	308,760	
Group B: Other household requirements											
BA	Food and drink	7,188	442	13,356	309	337	3,674	471	4,669	30,446	
BB	Domestic fuel	374	52	428	56	25	62	25	167	1,189	
BC	Gas	2,579	448	3,299	613	306	235	56	940	8,476	
BD	Electricity	921	174	1,879	230	152	57	25	450	3,888	
BE	Water	427	47	286	79	56	1,213	8	180	2,296	
BF	Postal services	366	195	334	82	27	1	3	49	1,057	
BH	Laundry and dry cleaning	2,833	211	188	423	46	11	9	69	3,790	
BJ	DIY materials and tools	1,616	204	837	245	110	262	36	327	3,637	
BM	Telecommunications (excluding mobile phones)	3,937	768	3,390	988	407	28	50	921	10,489	
BN	Mobile phones and services	12,926	1,761	7,310	3,110	915	58	81	917	27,078	
BO	Internet service providers	786	711	924	128	80	7	1	179	2,816	
BP	Hardware, cleaning materials, etc	2,735	838	1,517	434	209	883	47	458	7,121	
BQ	Plants, garden furniture, equipment, tools, services	2,840	750	956	451	69	222	14	412	5,714	
		39,528	6,601	34,704	7,148	2,739	6,713	826	9,738	107,997	
Group C: Personal goods and services											
CA	Clothing and clothing fabrics	17,551	2,514	9,222	3,024	1,477	407	107	1,520	35,822	
CD	Pharmaceutical products and other medical services	3,398	611	4,011	559	212	377	30	502	9,700	
CE	Toilet articles, perfumery, hairdressing, etc	1,906	293	1,141	174	85	680	43	298	4,620	
CF	Jewellery, silverware, clocks and watches	5,305	678	1,864	902	264	82	30	322	9,447	
CH	Tobacco	304	85	1,124	39	29	304	884	304	3,073	
CK	Footwear and footwear repair	9,300	463	1,352	1,440	301	105	13	367	13,341	
CL	Nursery goods and services	4,098	249	538	675	106	1,175	6	129	6,976	
CM	Homeworking schemes	1,004	603	3,221	181	107	17	4	40	5,177	
CZ	Other personal goods and services	15,143	5,465	18,469	5,004	1,188	1,705	242	1,954	49,170	
		58,009	10,961	40,942	11,998	3,769	4,852	1,359	5,436	137,326	

Consumer complaints *(continued)*

		Trading Practices								Totals	Group Totals
		1	2	3	4	6	8	A	P		
Group D: Professional and financial services											
DA	Personal banking (excluding credit)	1,429	110	661	248	309	8	6	119	2,890	
DB	Hire and credit (unsecured)	2,200	915	5,494	1,025	1,693	23	33	631	12,014	
DE	Ancillary credit business	997	419	1,965	284	389	8	6	130	4,198	
DF	Life insurance	193	84	354	67	81	4	2	23	808	
DG	Non-life insurance (including holiday insurance)	3,119	1,290	3,269	975	1,531	25	36	572	10,817	
DL	Mortgages and other secured credit	514	182	1,201	138	317	2	5	135	2,494	
DM	Credit 'repair' services	244	123	398	52	50	1	0	11	879	
DN	Pensions excluding occupational	46	16	93	8	21	0	1	2	187	
DO	Extended warranties and extended guarantees	386	161	487	271	174	2	4	27	1,512	
DP	Estate agency, house purchase, surveying, etc	1,268	175	2,972	153	300	28	11	171	5,078	
DQ	Letting agencies and management	650	189	487	161	215	60	1	83	1,846	
DY	Other professional services	2,548	1,069	4,256	395	455	44	21	459	9,247	
DZ	Other financial services	1,003	303	1,783	203	349	3	8	173	3,825	
		14,597	5,036	23,420	3,980	5,884	208	134	2,536		55,795
Group E: Transport											
ED	New motor vehicles	6,810	839	3,018	1,232	241	118	46	556	12,860	
EE	Secondhand motor vehicles	44,108	1,372	16,613	7,261	1,216	914	64	1,396	72,944	
EF	Motor vehicle repairs and servicing	18,188	1,224	3,576	2,790	433	296	62	1,463	28,032	
EG	Motorcycles and repairs	2,960	261	787	565	85	120	8	117	4,903	
EH	Bicycles and repairs	2,120	312	368	319	57	313	6	113	3,608	
EK	Petrol and oil	1,259	104	1,903	70	54	437	38	906	4,771	
EM	Road, rail, air and sea travel excluding car hire	931	404	881	183	237	60	18	455	3,169	
EN	Freight, shipping and removal services	406	124	190	97	43	40	6	90	996	
EO	Motor vehicle spare parts, tyres, accessories	3,338	788	1,086	564	147	219	15	289	6,446	
EY	Boats, caravans, trailers, motorised buggies, etc	1,984	252	699	334	116	77	7	139	3,608	
EZ	Other motoring costs	1,806	402	1,294	319	387	148	20	418	4,794	
		83,910	6,082	30,415	13,734	3,016	2,742	290	5,942		146,131
Group F: Leisure											
FC	Travel agents	856	231	1,381	185	238	4	20	264	3,179	
FD	Holiday caravan renting and caravan sites	325	66	266	56	94	20	5	52	884	
FE	Time sharing	759	338	3,411	188	159	8	1	56	4,920	
FG	Books, newspapers and magazines	1,162	1,034	2,770	346	245	47	24	385	6,013	
FH	Entertainments, catering and accommodation	1,843	978	1,999	271	326	494	28	600	6,539	
FK	Holidays	5,536	1,206	6,584	851	678	94	53	1,019	16,021	
FL	Sports goods, hobbies and camping equipment	2,131	554	1,098	318	179	364	33	245	4,922	
FM	Toys, games and video consoles (exc software)	2,013	396	1,601	284	104	1,783	54	553	6,788	
FN	CDs, audio/video tapes, records, video games	2,291	898	3,438	414	196	25	78	359	7,699	
FO	Pets, pet foods, veterinary goods and services	2,053	239	1,324	181	70	659	12	252	4,790	
FP	Betting, competitions and prize draws	1,157	317	8,360	123	271	4	17	65	10,314	
FQ	Photography (equipment, film processing, etc)	1,746	507	589	306	73	13	19	145	3,398	
FZ	Other recreational goods and services	3,202	1,069	3,670	636	375	1,034	254	554	10,794	
		25,074	7,833	36,491	4,159	3,008	4,549	598	4,549		86,261
Grand Total:		397,906	67,774	207,561	79,160	23,781	25,080	3,713	37,295		842,270

Source: Office of Fair Trading, based on figures reported by the local authority trading standards service and environmental health departments and some advice agencies