

Protection for new-build home buyers



Photo courtesy of NHBC

Consumer Code Compliance Auditing

A guide for developers and agents

Complying with the Code's requirements is essential to enhance the service home buyers receive when purchasing a new home.

To encourage home builders and their agents to comply with the Code, and to enable the Consumer Code's Board to check how well it is being applied, we carry out several activities to aid compliance including:

- research
- independent site audits
- self-assessment questionnaires completed by home builders
- reviewing customer satisfaction feedback and complaints
- providing free training, guidance and learning.

This guide outlines what to expect if you receive a self-assessment questionnaire or an auditor contacts you to arrange either a site visit or virtual audit.

Site Audits

Who are the auditors?

Audits are carried out for the Code by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) who use experienced Chartered Trading Standards practitioners well versed in auditing requirements. In normal circumstances, CTSI will try and pre-book visits but on occasion, this is not always possible. However, if our auditors arrive when you are particularly busy, every effort will be made to arrange a mutually convenient time for them to return.

Learning lessons from the Covid pandemic, many of our audits now take place virtually, online. These are all pre-booked and the relevant links provided for you to join the video call.



What does the audit involve?

The audits normally take around an hour. The auditors will want to talk to you about how you and your organisation comply with the Code. They may want to look at some paperwork such as reservation agreements, brochures and training records, but most of the assessment will be based on a conversation.



Do I need to prepare anything?

There is no need to prepare for a visit other than doing your best to comply with the Code requirements. The auditors will often undertake some preparatory work by downloading information, such as sales brochures, from your company website. If some paperwork is not available for review immediately, this can be provided during or after the visit.

How will the findings impact my team?

The audit focuses on how your organisation is complying with the Code rather than on an individual or team. Where potential non-compliance is identified, you will be encouraged to prioritise compliance, which might include running additional staff training. The objective is to help you improve, so that consumers get a better service.

Findings from your site and others will only be shared with the Code's Management Board and with your head office on a quarterly basis to aid learning and development.



Why we run audits

The Code aims to make a positive difference to the service home builders provide to new home buyers.

The audits are designed to encourage home builders to adopt best practice which will help to improve consumer confidence in the industry. The audit helps you to identify any areas for improvement and can help prevent any potential breaches of the Code, which may lead to a dispute with a home buyer later down the line.

Those developers that have already received a site visit have found it of value. We are confident that if, in future, one of your sites or your sales office/agent is chosen for an audit, you will benefit from the opportunity to independently review your compliance with the Code.

Self-assessment questionnaires

Each month, several home builders who are registered with the supporting home warranty bodies and covered by our Code, are selected at random to undertake a self-assessment audit to assess their compliance with the Code requirements. Home builders of varying sizes, whether building a few homes per year or hundreds of homes, are chosen so that we have a broad cross section and can monitor how effectively the Code is being applied.

Taking part in our self-assessment audit is a condition of your membership with the home warranty body. The survey is also a useful health check, designed to help you and your team avoid common errors and reassure you about your compliance with the Code. Home builders that have completed the self-assessment questionnaires in the past have commented on how it has helped them plug gaps and take positive, proactive action to comply with the Code.

Photo courtesy of NHBC



Helping you to **comply with the Code**

To help you comply, a copy of the Code requirements, along with the good practice guidance for home builders, can be found in the home builders resources section of our website:

<https://consumercode.co.uk/resources/#home-builders>

Free on-line training is also available via our website:

<http://www.consumercode.co.uk/home-builders/what-training-is-available/>

We also provide a free Train the Trainer programme, details of which can be obtained by emailing: secretariat@consumercode.co.uk