



## WELCOME

Welcome to our Spring 2021 newsletter.

The timing of this newsletter coincides with the easing of lockdown restrictions which will no doubt be welcomed across the industry.

We have been impressed with all the good work being done to keep the home buying market going throughout the pandemic, and the efforts being made to help consumers access good quality information despite viewing restrictions.

We were especially pleased to see the results of the annual National New Homes Customer Satisfaction Survey which shows improvements in the levels of satisfaction amongst new home buyers - particularly in the buying process, after sales service and quality of their new home, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

Work continues on plans to introduce a New Homes Ombudsman - the New Homes Quality Board (NHQB) is now in place with the remit to champion build quality and strengthen protections for buyers. We look forward to working with the new Board on the transition arrangements and next steps.

In the meantime, we continue to work with home builders to enhance customer service, audit compliance with the Code and raise awareness of the protection available to consumers. Keep an eye on our news and blogs pages on the website for the latest updates.

Noel Hunter, Chairman

## CODE COMPLIANCE STARTER PACK LAUNCHED

We are launching a Code Compliance Starter Kit for agents and home builders in partnership with Propertymark.

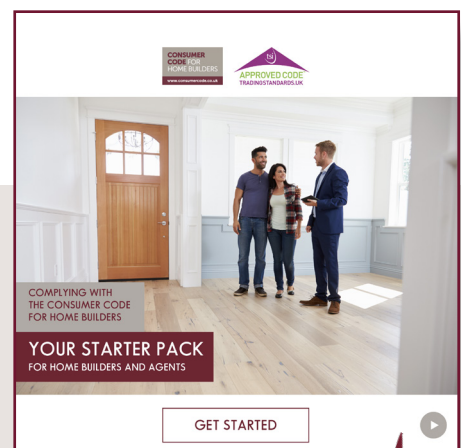
Agents have an important role to play in the marketing and selling of new-build homes on behalf of home builders, including maintaining high levels of customer service and ensuring compliance with the Code.

If you're an agent selling new-build homes, or a builder working with an agent, this starter pack is ideal for you. It includes useful information to aid compliance, including model terms between agents and builders, links to useful resources and a handy checklist to help make sure you have covered the Code's requirements. While not intended to be a comprehensive guide, it summarises the key information you need, with full details and further downloads available from the [Code website](#).

Propertymark has endorsed the starter pack and will be sending a copy of the interactive PDF to its members shortly. It will soon be available to download from the Code's website. To request a copy in the meantime, please email [secretariat@consumercode.co.uk](mailto:secretariat@consumercode.co.uk)

Starter pack produced in partnership with:

propertymark



# ANNUAL SURVEY OF HOME BUYERS SHOWS SATISFACTION WITH NEW BUILD HOMES IS ON THE RISE

The 2021 National New Home Customer Satisfaction Survey commissioned by NHBC, has indicated an improved level of customer satisfaction for the fourth year running.

Key findings include:

91%

91% of buyers would recommend their builder to a friend, the highest level since the survey began in 2006



over 81% were satisfied with the after sales service, despite the fact that the pandemic has made it more difficult to access customers' homes in some cases



satisfaction with the overall quality of new homes was up slightly at 88% (from 86% in 2020)



over 92% of those who bought a new build home would do so again

Encouragingly, 82% of buyers were satisfied with their builder in relation to their home being complete on time, despite the delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The annual National New Homes Customer Satisfaction Survey is carried out by NHBC and supported by the Home Builders Federation and Homes for Scotland. It is one of the most comprehensive, large-scale surveys of its type carried out in the UK.

Although these findings are very positive, there is still work to do to maintain a consistently high level of customer service across the industry. The Code continues to work with home builders to maintain and monitor high levels of customer service, including giving advice and training to agents and solicitors to support developers in complying with the Code. [Visit our website](#) for access to all the latest information and resources.





## WHAT IS AN INDEPENDENT DISPUTE RESOLUTION SCHEME?

Dispute Resolution, often known as ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution), refers to methods of resolving disputes without going to court and helps both the consumer and developer avoid costly and lengthy legal proceedings.

ADR falls into two main categories:

- mediation - where an independent third party will help disputing parties come to a mutually acceptable outcome (such as during divorce proceedings)
- arbitration - where the independent third party considers the facts and takes a decision that is often binding on one or both parties.

The Code's dispute resolution scheme is fully independent and run by award-winning dispute resolution experts, CEDR Ltd. Schemes such as our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) and Ombudsman

schemes are designed to give consumers access to free and impartial redress which is relatively simple and quick to resolve.

Under the rules of registration, the Home Warranty Bodies require each registered builder to honour any award made against them under the IDRS. If a Home Builder fails to honour an award, the Home Warranty Bodies can apply a number of sanctions including financial penalties, re-training or suspension/removal from the new Home Warranty Bodies' registers.

Our latest [blog](#) and [video](#) explain more about how the Code's IDRS works.

## INTERVIEW: CONVEYANCING MATTERS

In response to some information we shared on LinkedIn, the Code was approached by Conveyancing Matters - a YouTube channel dedicated to sharing information which helps conveyancers and their clients.

Our Chairman, Noel Hunter was delighted to chat with Lorraine Richardson from Aspect Law to help conveyancers understand more about the Code and what it means for their clients. Noel covered the Code Requirements, the online training available for conveyancers and an insight into some of the additional protection offered by the Code, such as the right to withdraw from a purchase:

***"The Code supplements the work the conveyancer or solicitor is doing because it provides further assurances for consumers and areas where they can get out of a property purchase if it goes wrong for them. For example, if a house changes substantially during the build process, and the consumer doesn't like those changes, they are entitled to get out of the deal at that particular point and get their reservation fee back."***

Noel has already been invited back for a future discussion on issues affecting conveyancers and their clients and the role of the Code.



[Watch the video](#)



### TRAINING FOR SOLICITORS

A [free online learning course](#) is available for conveyancers and solicitors involved in the property purchase of new homes. The course takes no longer than an hour to complete and is a process of individual learning and self-accreditation - leading to a partner-endorsed CPD certificate of achievement.



# SHARING LEARNINGS FROM VIRTUAL SITE AUDITS

After a pause for six months during the initial lockdown, site audits to check compliance restarted last autumn. These audits are designed to help builders plug any gaps in compliance, as well as identifying areas of success which could be replicated at other sites, and feedback to date suggests the audits are being welcomed as a positive opportunity to enhance customer service.

To help all builders, we've summarised some of the latest learnings from the audits in a handy leaflet which highlights good practice and opportunities to improve, taking into account new ways home buyers and home builders have been interacting during lockdown.

Successes included:



**Displaying the Code logo:** The audits found more developers using the new style logo (with the CTSI logo included) on display in their premises, on sales brochures and websites. [Download the logos](#)



**Staff training:** Most sales staff were found to be knowledgeable about the Code requirements. [Find out more about the Code's free training course](#)



**Covid-safe site visits:** Although fewer site visits have been made during the pandemic, where they were taking place, all developers had taken necessary action to comply with Covid requirements such as sanitised PPE, full briefings and timed visits with limited people.

Alongside these positive examples, auditors also discovered that some sites were not displaying the Code logo clearly or demonstrating a sufficient understanding of the Code requirements.

Concerns were also raised about Reservation Agreements and the risk of falling foul of Code requirements by not providing the right information at the right time.

There's no need to wait for an audit to see how well you're performing against the Code's requirements. For details and tips on how to comply, download our latest [lessons learned](#) leaflet and take a look at our full range of [resources](#) online to help you.



## GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

### Innovative solutions to lockdown challenges:

A number of developers have introduced videos to replace Home Demonstration visits and to provide details both on the after-sales service and customer complaint handling.





## WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR HOME BUYERS?

**Buying a new home is a major investment so it's good to know what support is available before taking the plunge.**

Homes are built to strict standards and must meet building control regulations before they can be sold. In addition, most new builds come with a ten-year warranty which requires the home builder to meet more standards relating to the overall condition and standards of every home.

Despite this, there are many different aspects to a new build home - not all of which can be fully controlled. This can sometimes lead to teething trouble, either during the purchase process or when a buyer first moves in, so it's good for all parties to know what support is available should it be needed.

### **Is there a fault?**

The first question for buyers to consider is whether there is a fault with the new home, or whether what they are experiencing is a normal part of the running-in of a new build. This is covered in detail in our handy guide, [What to expect from your new home](#).

### **Sources of support if problems arise**

Because there are so many different aspects to buying a new home, there are different sources of support depending on the situation. Generally speaking, these fit under:

- The marketing/sales and purchase process, principally covered by the Code and our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme
- Build quality and snagging, covered by home warranty schemes, backed up by the Financial Ombudsman
- Conveyancing/legal services, with redress offered by the Legal Ombudsman

Read [our blog](#) for more details on the support available for home buyers.

**Builders can help their customers and adhere to the Code by providing good customer service. Some of the items home buyers should be provided with, include:**

- enough pre-purchase information so buyers can make a suitably informed choice
- truthful marketing material and buyers need to be made aware of any associated costs such as management fees
- information of the different types of support available to them and how and when to access it
- a clear reservation agreement, including information about what monies may be retained if the buyer decides to cancel
- accessible after-sales customer service and details of the customer enquiry and complaints process

# SPOTTED!

Where are you showing the Code or the Consumer Codes Approval Scheme (CCAS) logos?

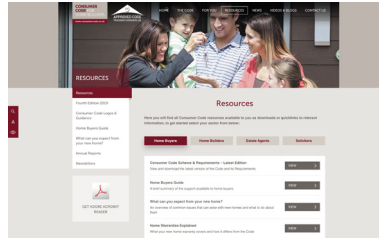
Support the CTSI's CCAS campaign to raise awareness of approved codes by taking a photograph or screengrab of the logos on display in your offices, on your brochures or online and share on social media. Don't forget to tag @ConsumerCodes and @TheCode\_CCHB



Please keep sending in your CCAS spotted! logos, we love seeing them. The logo means you can be reassured that the business or service you are using can be trusted. Let us know if you spot one! #CTSI #consumercodes #lookforthe logo



# NEW RESOURCES HUB



We have updated our website to make our resources more easily accessible. Whether you are a home builder, home buyer, solicitor or agent, you will find a wealth of helpful resources available as downloads or quick links to relevant information. Take a look.

# NEW HOMES OMBUDSMAN UPDATE

The New Homes Quality Board (NHQB), initially established in May 2020, has announced plans to introduce a new Code and a New Homes Ombudsman. The NHQB is led by 'new homes quality champion', Natalie Elphicke MP, and includes representatives from the home building industry as well as consumer groups.



Along with other Code bodies, we have shared our experience with the NHQB in the development of their new Code and which we understand will be consulted on shortly.

We are looking forward to working with the new Board on the transition arrangements and next steps once known and will publish updates on our news page when they become available.

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

We are now on LinkedIn, as well as Twitter – follow us for regular updates and tag us into any positive news about customer service that we can share.

For general enquiries relating to the Code, please call us Monday to Friday between 10am to 4pm on 0345 608 9797\* or email our enquiries team at: enquiries@consumercode.co.uk

\*Calls to 0345 numbers usually cost the same as standard UK landline numbers. Please check with your network provider.

# SUPPORTERS OF THE CODE

