

# CONSUMER CODE NEWS

AUTUMN 2023

## Transition special: Making the move to the revised Code



### WELCOME

The revised Code is here! After months of work and consultation, we're proud to unveil the Fifth Edition of the Consumer Code for Home Builders. Far from being a 'new' Code, this edition builds on over a decade of solid experience and

commitment to consumer protection, while plugging important gaps to give consumers greater confidence in their new-build home purchase.

As well as adding in some new requirements, we have clarified definitions and existing guidance to make it easier for the industry to comply with the Code. This revised edition is all the stronger thanks to the helpful feedback we've received from a wide range of stakeholders including consumer representatives. We'd like to thank everyone who contributed to our independent review.

We're extremely conscious of the wider pressures facing the

industry which is why we've set an implementation date of the 1st January 2024. To make preparations easier, we've launched a Transition Pack (see page 2) which you can download from our website.

With the growing financial pressures facing consumers, providing a fair and transparent service and protecting consumer rights is more important than ever. The Code is proud to continue to provide a service to 10,000 home builders across the UK and we are delighted to be working with you all to drive forward enhanced protection for new-build home buyers.

*Noel Hunter, Chair*

## Revised Code – Fifth Edition – available now

The Fifth Edition of the Consumer Code Scheme ('the Code') is now available to download from our website. The revised Code will be effective from 1 January 2024, giving you three months to prepare for the changes and make sure you're 'Code 2024 ready'.

In most cases, the revised Code enhances or clarifies existing requirements to strengthen protection and align with other codes in the marketplace. We have also introduced some new requirements to address gaps identified as part of the independent review of the Code earlier in the year.

Key changes to highlight include:

- A new 14 day cooling-off period from date of reservation
- A new pre-inspection requirement to enable home buyers to seek professional help to identify snags and get them resolved before completion
- More detailed requirements and guidance for managing customer complaints
- An increase in the amount home buyers can claim through our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme

The combination of the cost of living crisis, increase in interest rates and mixed reports about house prices in the media, can make buying a home currently feel quite daunting. By committing to the Chartered Trading Standards-approved Consumer Code for Home Builders, you are demonstrating that you will treat customers fairly, and make the buying process transparent, as well as providing an after-sales service and access to independent redress should that be needed. These commitments can help home buyers feel more confident in the decisions they're making, knowing they have access to the information they need to make an informed decision.



# Download your Transition Pack to accelerate your 'Code 2024' journey

We've put together a 'Transition Pack' to help you prepare for the revised Code ahead of implementation on 1 January 2024.

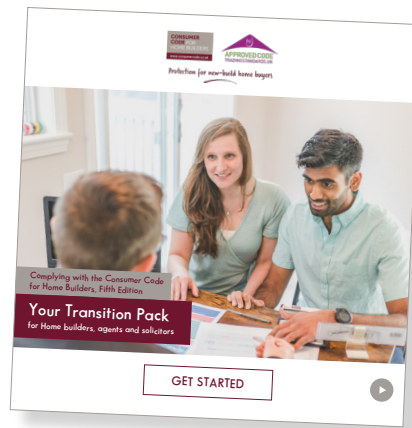
The pack combines a suite of updated documents with a summary of key changes, a quick guide to effective complaints handling and some tools to help you promote membership of the Code.

The full contents are:

- The Consumer Code Scheme, Fifth Edition (consumer version)
- The Consumer Code Fifth Edition Requirements and Guidance for Home Builders
- Summary of changes in the new edition
- Training overview
- Fifth Edition Code compliance checklist
- Fifth Edition Sample reservation agreement
- Complaints process good practice guide
- Transition and compliance promotional tools

If you're printing copies of the Consumer Code Scheme for your buyers, an ink friendly version for local printing is available [here](#), or for external printing (with crop marks etc) is available [here](#).

We are currently working through a number of updates to our website to ensure information is up to date and that consumers and the industry are able to navigate to the right content depending on the applicable Code edition. Keep an eye on our social channels for news of more resources to help you prepare for and comply with the Fifth Edition of the Code.



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Download your Transition Pack now:



## Follow us on social media

For the latest Code news, follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#).

## Join our mailing list

To receive our newsletters and other updates straight to your inbox, join our mailing list. [Click here](#) to sign up.

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@consumercod.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@consumercod.co.uk)

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

## Remember:

The current (fourth) edition of the Code will continue to apply to all reservations taken up to **31 December 2023** and will remain in place for those home buyers until two years after legal completion on their homes. For that reason, existing materials and guidance will continue to be available on our website, with clear signposting to denote which Code scheme it relates to. It's important to keep in mind which version of the Code applies when liaising with customers about queries or complaints.

# Get set for updated training

All customer-facing staff should complete updated training before the revised Code is implemented on 1 Jan 2024. A great way to do this is by using our new online training package which will be available from the first week of October, free of charge, to all those covered by our Code, including sales agents and solicitors/conveyancers.

The course takes no longer than an hour to complete and is a process of individual learning and self-accreditation, leading to a certificate of achievement if successfully completed. No advance preparation is necessary as the training provides all the tools/resources needed and allows you to go at your own pace. The Code now requires you to refresh your training annually.

The online training created for the previous version of the Code will continue to be available until 31 December 2023 for those that want to undertake or refresh training on the current Code.



## Are you #Code2024ready?

To help raise awareness of the forthcoming implementation of the revised Code, we'll be running a campaign across our social media channels and website to ask builders, agents and solicitors if they're 'Code 2024 ready'.



Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) [@TheCode\\_CCHB](#) and on LinkedIn [@Consumer-Code](#) and share your progress on becoming Code 2024 ready. Check out the promotional tools and suggestions in the Transition Pack to help promote the work you're doing to enhance customer service.

Don't forget to share examples of Code compliance such as using the Code logo on your website or sharing comments from your customers about the quality of your service so we can help spread the word and share best practice. Tag us on social media or message us via [secretariat@consumercode.co.uk](mailto:secretariat@consumercode.co.uk) with your news.

## Webinar programme – watch this space

We will soon be launching a webinar programme to help builders, agents and solicitors/conveyancers to comply with the Code and hear from experts on topics to help enhance customer service.

Our first event will focus on the Code compliance - including an overview of requirements, what's new, and top tips to comply with the Code. Future events are expected to cover customer vulnerability, using the Code in your marketing, and understanding Consumer Protection Regulations. If there is a topic you would particularly like us to cover, please email: [secretariat@consumercode.co.uk](mailto:secretariat@consumercode.co.uk)

Events will be broadcast live with a Q&A and available to view after the event. The sessions will be free for all those covered by our Code. You can register to receive alerts about our events [here](#) or watch out for updates in future newsletters and on our website/social channels.



# Annual Report 2022-23 charts progress for the Code

Our Annual Report 2022-23 is now available to download: [Consumer Code Annual Report 2022-23](#)

The report highlights the progress made from April 2022 to March 2023, including the comprehensive independent review of our Code to further strengthen protection for consumers. It also summarises the work we have done to improve awareness of the Code among consumers, as well as the support we provide to the industry to aid Code compliance.

The Annual Report includes an overview of the number of cases handled by our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2022, including the most common Code breaches, outcomes for consumers and follow-up action by our independently chaired Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel. Full details of cases can be found in the latest CEDR report: [CEDR Annual Report 2022.pdf](#)



<h3>Helping home buyers</h3> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>3.5%</b></p> <p>2676 Contact Centre enquiries - 3.5% increase on last year</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>39%</b></p> <p>1,433 home warranty policyholders sent Code information - 39% increase</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; background-color: #f9a825; padding: 5px; border-radius: 10px;"><b>Tips, guidance and resources via our website</b></p>	<h3>Supporting the industry</h3> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>"we have tried implementing items we didn't have in place and will continue to monitor and progress over the next few months".</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;"><i>HOME BUILDER</i></p> </div> </div>	<h3>Dispute resolution</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>5.5%</b></p> </div> <p>324 cases referred to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS)</p> <p>Home buyers claimed a total combined sum of <b>£1,695,579.40</b></p> <p><b>73%</b> claims completed within 8 weeks</p> <p>Average sum claimed was <b>£5,233.27</b></p> <p>Total amount awarded was <b>£95,271</b></p>															
<h3>Customer satisfaction with new homes</h3> <p>99,726 questionnaires were sent out by HBF Oct 2021 - Sept 2022</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>Over 60%</b> (60,655)</p> <p>of HBF survey forms were returned</p> </div> <p>90% say they would buy a new build home again</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>90%</b></p> </div> <p>90% would recommend their home builder to a friend</p>	<h3>Communication and partnerships</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>average <b>6,358 users</b> visit the website per month</p> <p>average <b>19,166</b> monthly page views</p> </div>	<h3>Partnership working with stakeholders</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Industry bodies</p> <p>CCAS      CTSI</p> <p>Civil servants      Law societies</p> <p>Consumer organisations</p> </div>															
	<h3>Adjudicator decisions</h3> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Code Section</th> <th>No. decisions</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>5.1</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>41</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.1</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>25</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">16%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2.1</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>19</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">13%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.5</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><b>15</b></td> <td style="text-align: center;">10%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Code Section	No. decisions	Percent	5.1	<b>41</b>	27%	4.1	<b>25</b>	16%	2.1	<b>19</b>	13%	1.5	<b>15</b>	10%	<h3>Social media</h3> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>5%</b></p> <p>followers on X (formerly Twitter)</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>33%</b></p> <p>followers on LinkedIn</p> </div> </div>
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<p>"The advice you have given is invaluable and particularly the detail you have provided of the various sections of the code of conduct. Thank you also for the link to the dispute resolution service". <i>HOME BUYER</i></p>																	

## Sharing learning and best practice

Code Chair, Noel Hunter OBE, was invited to share some of the learning from the Code Review with other industries in his article 'How independent reviews can strengthen codes of practice' for the Journal of Trading Standards.

JOURNAL OF  
**Trading Standards**

"The one thing we can all be certain of is change. Whether it's a change in regulations, customer needs, availability of goods, development of new services or simply better knowledge of a subject, as individuals and as organisations, we are always learning and developing.

"As our needs develop, so must codes of practice if we are to maintain strong protection for consumers and provide appropriate guidance to industry. For codes looking to continuously improve and adapt to new requirements to support consumers, being willing to go beyond standard internal reviews and invite both independent scrutiny and external audits demonstrates a robust commitment to maintaining high standards."

To view the full article, visit the [Journal of Trading Standards](#)

Noel was back in the hotseat again having been invited to appear in another episode of *Conveyancing Matters* on YouTube, discussing the independent Code Review and developments regarding New Homes Codes in general.

Interviewed by Lorraine Richardson of Adapt Law, Noel stated, "The Code seeks to reinforce the consumer protection that exists in the purchase of a new home" and went on to explain how the protection provided by the Code is being strengthened and the additional areas that will be covered by the revised Code.

He also reiterated that a single code covering all developers is not yet in place or mandatory, and that developers are free to register with the Code of their choice, subject to any restrictions imposed by their Warranty body.

Watch the full interview [here](#).





## CONSUMER FOCUS

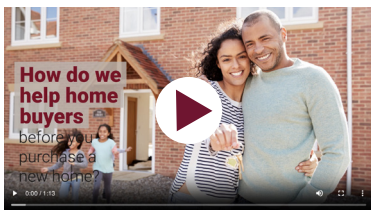
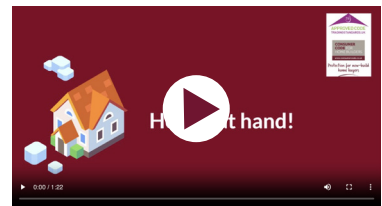
### How the Code can help you: video guides

You don't have to wait until the new Code is implemented on 1 January 2024 to benefit from additional protection when buying a new-build home. Our Code has been protecting home buyers for over a decade by setting out requirements builders must meet to make buying a new-build home fair and transparent, as well as making sure you have access to redress should something go wrong. And there are other forms of support available too, such as build quality protection through your home warranty.

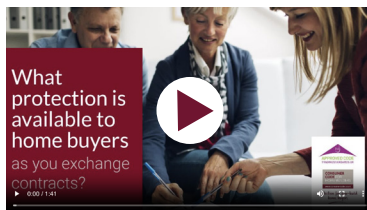
When it comes to buying a new home, there's a lot to take in. That's why we've summarised the key points you need to know about Code protection in our video guides.

Buying a new-build home? Help is at hand provides an overview of the cover available through the Code and your home warranty.

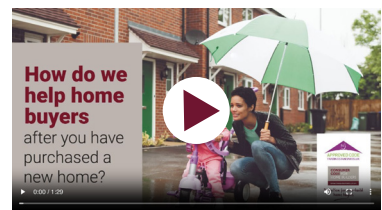
For more detail on how we support buyers through the three main stages of buying a home, visit the links below:



[Pre-purchase](#)



[During purchase](#)



[After purchase](#)

You can find more videos, tips and information about buying a new-build home on our website - visit the [resources for home buyers](#) to find out more.

# Wet and windy weather protection for your home

While many of us may want to cling to the last signs of summer, there's no denying autumn is here, and with it, the prospect of some wet and windy weather. Even new-build homes can benefit from some preventative action to reduce the risk of damage from more extreme weather and help minimise your heating bills. Here are some tips to keep in mind:

- 1. Clear out your gutters:** Even new-build homes need regular maintenance. Keeping your gutters clear of leaves and debris will allow your pipes and gutters to do their job and minimise the risk of water ingress.
- 2. Secure loose and lightweight garden materials:** When high winds are forecast, take a moment to secure any lightweight outdoor furniture, plant pots or other loose materials that could cause damage if left to blow around.
- 3. Put your home furnishings to work:** Simple tips such as closing curtains and blinds in the evening to help keep heat in, adding warmth to hard floors with rugs and repositioning furniture so that it doesn't block your radiators can all help to keep your home warm.
- 4. Insulate and ventilate:** New-build properties are generally very well insulated, although there may still be improvements you can make such as adding draft excluders to keyholes and letterboxes. But while it's important to keep heat in, it's also essential to ventilate your home, particularly during the first year. Make sure the vents in any double-glazed windows and doors are open whenever possible to allow air flow and make use of your extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms to reduce the risk of condensation.
- 5. Make the most of heating controls:** Set your heating to come on when you need it most and use room thermometers - and individual radiator thermometers - to manage the temperature. Aim to keep the inside of your house between 18-20°C - nudging the thermostat up too high in a newly-built home could accelerate the natural drying out process and lead to superficial plaster cracks as well as impacting your heating bills.
- 6. Check your boiler service date:** Gas boilers should be serviced every 12 months to ensure they are working safely and effectively - this is normally a condition of your boiler warranty. Check when your service is due as it may differ from your home's legal completion date - and don't forget to check the back-up batteries in your carbon monoxide alarms too.
- 7. Clear out your fireplace and chimney:** If you have a wood burner or open fireplace in your new home, check any recommendations from your builder about how frequently the chimney should be swept. Always clear out the debris from previous fires before lighting a new one to minimise fire risk.
- 8. Protect your pipes:** As we head into winter, it's important to protect your water pipes from damage. Rather than switching off your heating and hot water before going away, it's better to set both to come on, even at a low temperature such as 10 degrees, to reduce the risk of frozen or burst water pipes if temperatures take a dive.

For more home tips, including what to expect from your new build home, visit our website [www.consumercode.co.uk](http://www.consumercode.co.uk).

# How to raise an effective complaint

Despite best intentions, occasionally there may be some aspects of buying a new-build home that don't go according to plan and you might find that you need to raise a complaint with your builder. All builders covered by the Code must have an accessible complaints process in place and should provide you with a copy of this along with details of the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme.



Raising a complaint gives your builder an opportunity to investigate and put things right. To get your complaint off to a good start, we've [published a blog](#) containing tips to consider when raising your concerns which we've summarised below:

- **Check your builder's complaints process.** This should have been given to you prior to legal completion and should include details of what is covered, how to make your complaint, who to, and the relevant contact details.
- **Explain the subject of your complaint clearly and concisely.** Stick to the facts, avoiding any emotive language, and include any supporting documentation such as warranties, work orders or email correspondence.
- **Alert your builder to any support needs.** If you require support or have specific needs that may affect how you share or receive information from your builder, make the customer service team or complaints contact aware of this so they can adapt their approach accordingly.
- **Set out the remedial action you would like** your builder to take to put things right. Try to remain objective, constructive and realistic in your requests.
- **Keep written records of all your conversations** with those dealing with your complaint and retain a copy of all correspondence you receive.
- **Be prepared to follow-up.** Some issues may take a while to resolve, and your builder should keep you informed throughout, but be prepared to chase if you don't hear anything for a while.

If your complaint has not been resolved within 56 calendar days of raising it with your builder, you can contact your Home Warranty body for assistance. If your dispute relates to a breach of the Code, you can raise it with the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS). Details of the Code's IDRS are available on [our website](#).

## Supporters of The Code

