

# CONSUMER CODE NEWS

WINTER 2025

CONSUMER CODE FOR HOME BUILDERS  
www.consumercode.co.uk



Protection for new-build home buyers

## Welcome to our first newsletter in 2025

This year will no doubt bring both challenges and opportunities for the home building sector, particularly considering the government's ambitious plans to increase the number of new homes built each year. Among these developments we hope to see a continued focus on improving customer service in the new build market and ensuring appropriate support and protection remains available to home buyers.



At the end of 2024, the government responded to the Competition and Markets Authority report on housebuilding, notably including confirmation that they would proceed with a mandatory code of practice and an ombudsman scheme. The specifics are still to be worked out, but I am encouraged to see code schemes, warranty bodies and trade bodies recognising the need to collaborate in developing solutions which combine and strengthen the best of what is currently available.

The year ended on a high for us with the results of the latest independent audit into the Code scheme. Read on for feedback from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute auditor about our progress.

Don't forget to subscribe to receive your own copy of this newsletter and keep an eye on our website and social channels for latest developments.

Noel Hunter OBE, Chair

## COMING SOON: Your guide to raising complaints and disputes

To help make it easier for home buyers to resolve issues, we're creating a useful digital pack with resources to help you navigate the different types of redress processes available and how to access them.

Our new guide covers how to raise a complaint with your builder, as well as when and how to raise disputes via the Code's independent dispute resolution scheme or your home warranty body's scheme depending on the scenario. Alongside tips on what information to include, the pack contains links to the resources you need to raise a dispute and what to expect during the process.

The pack is due to launch next month (February 2025) and will be available via our [resources centre](#).



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# News

## Government confirms mandatory code of practice and ombudsman scheme

In October 2024, the government provided much-needed clarification about the future direction of new build homes codes of practice and associated redress schemes for consumers.

In its response to the Competition and Markets Authority's report into Housebuilding published in February 2024, the Government has accepted the recommendations made by the CMA in relation to a single mandatory consumer code and a new homes ombudsman scheme.

However, government has also confirmed they are yet to decide how this will be delivered, by whom and the timescale. All the current schemes (including our Scheme and the New Homes Ombudsman) are voluntary schemes, supported by different warranty providers.

Secondary legislation will be required to implement the

new recommendations, on which government will need to consult, meaning changes are likely to take considerable time to implement. Consequently, our Code continues to operate as normal, covering approximately 10,000 builders of all sizes.

As the government develops its plans, we are particularly keen that builders of all sizes, as well as consumer groups are engaged in the process, and that any new code incorporates continuous improvement by having a strong compliance and auditing regime, with effective sanctions.

We will also continue to encourage government to consider minimum standards for warranty schemes so there is consistency for consumers. This, we believe, will help address build quality issues.

View the full government response [here](#).

## Consumer Code for Home Builders praised for “exceptional leadership” and “collaborative approach”

Our Code has passed its latest annual independent audit by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Approved Codes Scheme, with the auditor highlighting strong leadership for the whole new homes building sector as a major strength.



The [audit report](#) states: “CCHB continually strive to attain the highest level of consumer protection for homebuyers. **Their altruistic and collaborative approach has meant that the whole sector has benefitted from their knowledge, experience and lessons learnt.** This has led to a high level of consistency across the new homes sector.”

This praise reflects the considerable work done by the Code to promote effective consumer protection, collaborating with other codes across the new homes marketplace and beyond to share learning and drive-up quality standards. The auditors were particularly pleased to see evidence of the successful introduction of the revised Fifth Edition of the Code in January 2024, and the work done to align the various new homes codes where it is in the home buyer's interest to do so. The report continues: “Their Board should be applauded for their exceptional leadership in making all the material generated to support business to comply with the Code and educate the home buyer freely available.”

Stringent requirements set by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Approved Code Scheme require all

member schemes to be independently audited every year to ensure they remain fit for purpose and provide high quality protection for consumers. This includes being able to demonstrate robust processes for monitoring compliance and taking disciplinary action where required, as well as providing access to an independent dispute resolution scheme. The audit highlighted the Code's multi-layered disciplinary and sanctions process, recent steps made to strengthen consumer redress, and our ongoing commitment to share learning from audits and complaints.

The report concludes: “The Consumer Code for Home Builders continues to be fit for purpose and the current alliance ensures a high level of compliance with its provisions.”

Noel Hunter OBE, Code Chair, said: “We are proud to retain our Approved Code status for the sixth year running. This reflects the hard work our team has put in to ensure the Code continues to deliver for consumers, and the commitment from our member builders to comply with the Code and improve customer service.”

# New Case Studies with lessons learned

New case studies are added regularly to our Case Studies section that was launched in October. These are all real examples of cases that have been through the Code's independent dispute resolution scheme and provide some useful learning points whether you are a new home buyer, a builder or a sales agent.



***Just added: first case studies relating to the fifth edition of the Code.***

We are now starting to see cases relating to the fifth edition of the Code launched in January 2024. View our latest case studies in relation to reservation agreements under the new arrangements. Take a look: <https://consumercode.co.uk/case-studies/>

**Reminder: Check the dedicated Resources Hub on our website for compliance information, useful guides and learning points as well as links to download the Code Scheme.**

## The Code responds to NHQB consultation

The Consumer Code for Home Builders was invited to respond to the New Homes Quality Board's latest consultation on proposed revisions to the New Homes Quality Code.

We were pleased to see their draft containing changes to some of the terms used, bringing it in line with other codes in the marketplace, including ours, which will help provide clarity and consistency for consumers.

We have highlighted a few areas for review, including clarifying potential confusion in aligning to National Trading Standards Information requirements where this conflicts with more stringent requirements already set out in other code schemes. Full details of our consultation response can be viewed [here](#).

As always, we remain open to working with the NHQB and other code schemes in helping to deliver government policy and provide support and protection for home buyers.

## New Homes Week 2025

**New Homes Week is back, starting Monday 3rd February.**

The campaign, led by the Home Builders Federation (HBF), will showcase the benefits of buying a new build home, with stories from communities and homeowners, and will share tips to help home buyers make the most of their new home.



Across the week, HBF will highlight some of the advantages of new build homes, including energy efficiency, the support throughout the buying process and peace of mind cover, with lots of information and opportunities to get involved.

The Code will be supporting the campaign, sharing information about the protection and support we provide, during and after the purchase process and the requirements builders must meet under our Code to provide good customer service. Keep an eye on our LinkedIn page for updates.

For all the latest news during New Homes Week, visit the [New Homes Week website](#) and follow the NHW team on their socials via the hashtag #NewHomesWeek.





# Supporting the industry

## Learning from independent site audits

The latest learnings from recent site audits are now available to download to help all builders benefit from the auditors' feedback.

Each year the Code appoints independent inspectors to undertake several site audits to check compliance with the Code requirements. The auditors highlight examples of good practice as well as useful learning points providing helpful feedback for builders to improve their Code compliance.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, inspectors conducted more than 130 site audits and found evidence of strong compliance relating to sales and marketing materials, supporting vulnerable customers and meeting the health and safety requirements for visitors to sites under construction.

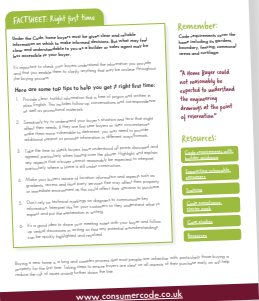
However there is always room for improvement. Common examples of non-compliance included failure to display the Code logo, reservation agreements which did not contain all the required information as set out under the fifth edition of our Code, and sales staff who were unaware of their duty to ensure customers are informed of the prepayment protection in place for client monies.

We have summarised all the key learning points from these latest site audits in our updated Lessons Learned factsheet, available as a useful guide for builders and sales agents. The factsheet can be downloaded [here](#).



Our auditors completed over 130 site visits between April 2023 and March 2024

Making information easy to understand



## Making information easy to understand

**Under the Code, home buyers must be given clear and reliable information on which to make informed decisions. But what may feel clear and understandable to you as a builder or sales agent may be less accessible to your buyer.**

It's important to check your buyers understand all the information you provide and that you enable them to clarify anything that may be unclear throughout the buying process.

*"A Home Buyer could not reasonably be expected to understand the engineering drawings at the point of reservation"*

For example, are your buyers aware of aspects such as gradients, access and third party services that may affect their property? Have you fully explained the plans where buyers are purchasing off plan?

**Remember:** Code requirements cover the home including its gardens, boundary, fencing, communal areas and curtilage

Read the latest factsheet in our Right First Time series '[Making information easy to understand](#)' for some top tips to help you.

We have also updated the format of all the Right First Time factsheets to reflect the new Approved Code Scheme logo following their recent re-branding exercise. You can view them all [here](#).

# Video: How promoting code compliance can boost your marketing

Promoting your commitment to the Consumer Code for Home Builders can help give buyers confidence that they will receive a good service, and that help is available should they need it. Not only that, by following the Code compliance guidance, you're more likely to provide a good customer experience which reflects well on your overall reputation.

Watch our video for some ideas to promote your commitment to the Code.




## Consumer focus

### Who does what when it comes to consumer protection for new build homes?

Buying a new home is a major and complex purchase, which is why consumer protection is so important. In our recent blog, we have set out the different types of protection that apply to new home buyers, what their role is and how they are overseen. These include:

- Codes of Practice
- Home warranty schemes
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Conveyancing Services
- Legal Action

 If you want to know who is responsible for what and the redress schemes available, read our ['who does what'](#) blog.

### New guide to support for home buyers

There are often lots of different people and processes involved in buying a new home. To complement our 'who does what' blog, we've created a handy overview to help you navigate the support available. [Download our guide](#) to the different organisations, professions, trade bodies and consumer protection schemes that you may need to access when purchasing a home.



# Understanding your new property purchase

Buying a new build home is an exciting time. But it's also crucial that you fully understand what's involved and what to expect from your new home – particularly if you're buying a home under construction that you can't yet see.

Home builders under our Code are required to provide you with clear information covering the elements that may affect your decision to buy. But what may be obvious to someone working in the industry, may be less clear to those of us who don't buy homes very often.

Here are some pointers to help you understand what to expect during the process and some important things to clarify along the way.

## Clear and truthful information

Under the Code, your builder and any sales agent they use must give you clear, truthful and enough information so that you are fully informed in your decision-making throughout the purchase process.

## Understand the detail

When buying off plan, ask your builder to explain the technical drawings and plans including any markings or notes indicating features such as gradient lines or the location of external services.

## Extra support

If you need the information provided in a different format or extra help to understand the documents, let your builder know. It may also be useful to have a friend or family member with you during the discussions.

## In writing

Ideally all conversations and matters agreed should be recorded in writing (an email may do), including verbal discussions in person or over the phone. Take your own notes during meetings and share these with your builder so that any misunderstandings can be quickly highlighted and resolved.

## Outside space

Your property includes the garden area, boundary, fencing and curtilage which should all be covered during discussions with your builder. You should be made aware about any communal facilities or third party services that may affect your property or boundary and this includes any future construction phases that are planned for the development.



Read the full blog here:

<https://consumercode.co.uk/understanding-your-new-property-purchase/>





# Showcasing our expertise: Spotlight Series

Our Code is strengthened by the experience our board and advisory members bring to the table, as well as the partners we work with to provide robust, independent auditing, information and dispute resolution services.

Over the past few months we've been shining a spotlight on this wealth of experience, featuring a number of board members including Code Chair, Noel Hunter OBE, Citizens Advice representative, Frances Harrison and Ron Gainsford OBE, Board member and Chair of the Code's Advisory Forum. You can read their spotlight interviews here. <https://consumercode.co.uk/category/blog/home-builders-blog/>

**This time we focus on Craig Ross, Chartered Insurer and Associate Director of MD Group (which includes LABC Warranty and Premier Guarantee), and Carol Brady MBE, Code Chief Executive.**



Craig Ross

## **How did you find yourself working in the home building industry?**

Having graduated in law I worked for insurers dealing with property claims. This led to a role at Premier Guarantee handling claims and disputes between home builders and new home buyers and gave me a good understanding of how builders operate, as well as understanding the needs of people buying a new build home.

## **What do you consider to be the role for warranty providers when it comes to consumer protection?**

Our role during construction is to ensure that the build process meets our standards, reducing the possibility of issues after buyers move in. In turn, our insurance cover provides financial security so that if defects do occur home buyers are not left with unexpected costs.

## **How does the Code add value for the industry? Why is a code of practice important?**

The Consumer Code for Home Builders adds value through setting clear standards for quality, transparency and customer service. The vast majority of home builders want to provide excellent service and the Code helps them do this whilst also reassuring potential buyers that this will be the case.

## **What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing the home building industry?**

The government has set ambitious targets for new homes to be built, which will be welcomed by many home builders, but maintaining quality and sourcing suitably qualified staff to get close to these targets will not be easy.

At the same time there is increased pressure to deliver more energy efficient homes, which will require home builders to embrace new technologies and build techniques. This will require new skills and an appreciation for how this impacts home buyers who may not be used to these technologies.

## **What does a perfect start to the day look like for you?**

The perfect start to a day for me is an early morning dog walk followed by a decent cup of coffee.

You can read the full articles in our [blog here](#).

# Showcasing our expertise: Spotlight Series



Carol Brady  
MBE

## How did you find yourself working in consumer protection?

One of my first ever roles was licensing private hire and hackney carriage vehicles to ensure those booking them were kept safe. From there I moved into a long and varied career within the Trading Standards profession, by which time, I was hooked.

## What do you feel are the biggest challenges facing consumers?

Often it can be as simple as not understanding your rights and/or the process, particularly when it comes to a new home. There is so much legal and industry jargon used which can be quite daunting, particularly if you're a first time buyer.

## How important do you believe codes of practice are in protecting consumers?

Codes of practice are extremely important. They set standards that a business must follow and which usually go above and beyond technical requirements which any legislation may prescribe. A code of practice will often focus much more on the quality of customer service provided to the consumer and get to the heart of the everyday experience for consumers.

Most codes of practice, like ours, have an independent dispute resolution scheme so if things go wrong, a consumer can very quickly have their complaint considered by a trained independent third person. Codes of practice can also adapt very quickly to a changing market whereas legislation takes time to update.

## What impact, in your view, has the Consumer Code for Home Builders had since it began?

I believe the Consumer Code for Home Builders has been the backbone for many of the codes which now operate to protect home buyers in the new homes sector today.

Prior to our Code being launched back in 2010, satisfaction of new home buyers with their builders was as low as around 42%. The latest survey has this at 90%.

The Code has improved customer service. Prior to the Code, for example, home builders could sell the home to the highest bidder and the introduction of the requirements surrounding the Reservation Agreement essentially prevented this form of gazumping overnight.

## And finally, what's your top tip for switching off after a busy working day?

My family owns a kennels and cattery business so a walk around the fields with a dog, or a cuddle with a cat, can ease the burdens of the day and clear the head no end. Secondly, I'm a season ticket holder with Birmingham City Football Club and time on the terraces allows me to let off steam!

You can read the full articles in our blog [here](#).

## Supporters of The Code

