

Five key elements of customer service



Protection for new-build home buyers

Whatever the root cause of a complaint, there are usually common factors which contribute to or exacerbate the issue and can quickly escalate. In addition to our themed Right First Time factsheets, we've outlined some top tips that apply to customer service in general, to help you deliver a great customer experience and reduce the likelihood of complaints.

FACTSHEET: Right first time

1. Provide the right information at the right time

Use the Code's [checklist](#) to prompt you to provide the required information to help buyers make an informed decision. The Code's sample [Reservation Agreement](#) also incorporates a checklist as a further reminder.

Remember: The Fifth Edition of the Code, which applies to properties reserved from 1 January 2024, has expanded the pre-contract information required. Check the latest [Builder Guidance](#) for details.

2. Keep buyers informed throughout the process

Avoid surprises. If there are changes to the specification, timeframe, landscaping, shared spaces or any other aspects of the build, let your buyers know. Even if changes relate to elements that may only have been indicative at reservation stage, it's still good practice to share details as they are confirmed.

Remember: You must inform and seek agreement from buyers of any major change to the property which directly or materially affects the home's value or appearance.

3. Keep an audit trail

Keep a record of conversations with home buyers, including details of any concerns raised and how they were resolved, and share with your buyers. Follow up discussions in writing (email or hard copy) to avoid misunderstandings. Encourage buyers to ask questions about anything they are unsure of.

Remember: Both buyers and builders will need to provide evidence to support any claims or statements made if a dispute is raised via the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS).

4. Be accessible and responsive

Make sure your after sales service is accessible and that responses are timely. Set timescales by when issues will be remedied. Where an issue takes longer to fix, keep the home buyer informed and consider whether there is a suitable alternative remedy.

Remember: Code guidance states that most issues should be addressed within 30 days. Where this isn't possible, provide regular updates, at least monthly, until the issue is resolved.

5. Don't ignore the IDRS

Do not ignore an application form from CEDR, the IDRS administrators - there are strict timeframes for a response which must be adhered to. Failure to engage with the IDRS could be a breach of the Code and of the Rules of Registration with your warranty provider for which they could apply sanctions.

Remember: Adjudicators can continue to reach decisions just on the evidence provided by buyers, without receiving any defence or evidence from you. Once the decision is accepted by the home buyer, you are required to comply with it.

Resources:

[Code Compliance Starter Pack](#)

[Right First Time factsheets](#)

[Lessons learned from site audits](#)

[Consumer guide to complaints and disputes](#)