CONSUMER CODE FOR HOME BUILDERS

www.consumercode.co.uk

ctsi APPROVED CODE — TradingStandards.uk —

Protection for new-build home buyers

Annual Report 2025/26

April 2025 to March 2026

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the 2025-26 Annual Report from the Consumer Code for Home Builders ("the Code") – a summary of what has been another busy year for our scheme.

Our key areas of work over the course of the year have included improving access to clear, comprehensive information for buyers, strengthening redress, and providing more opportunities for builders to learn from best practice.

An important highlight was the endorsement of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's Approved Codes Scheme – of which we are a member – from Consumer Minister, Kate Dearden MP. The endorsement was made at a parliamentary event organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Consumer Protection in October 2025. The well-attended event brought together codes of practice, consumer redress schemes, consumer protection and trading standards specialists, as well as members of parliament, to raise the public profile of the protection afforded by codes of practice, share ideas and consider how best to tackle consumer detriment.

Robust sanctions and independent redress are critical components of a successful code of practice.

Another highlight was the launch of our Home Buyers' Pack. This free digital download combines a host of useful content, guidance and resources to help new-build buyers navigate the home buying process.

We have been clear from the moment we launched the Code over 16 years ago that robust sanctions and independent redress are critical components of a successful code of practice. Although much of our industry focus is on providing the tools and guidance to help builders deliver a good service, we underpin this with genuine consequences on the rare occasions we identify persistent problems. This year our supporting home warranty providers took the decision to refuse home warranty reinstatement for a builder, effectively limiting their ability to trade. This type of decision is not taken lightly, and is only made after other attempts to resolve problems have been exhausted, but it is a reminder of the strength of our Code when put to the test.

We have also made it harder for builders to put off implementing decisions made by independent adjudicators after assessing disputes raised via our Code. Having piloted a new non-compliance charge for builders who fail to implement adjudicator decisions within agreed timescales, we took the decision at the end of the year to make the charge permanent. These decisions not only show our commitment to protecting consumers but also to supporting the majority of home builders who offer a high-quality service and want to see the reputation of the industry improve.

Alongside our own work, we have contributed to several government consultations and conversations that are helping determine new policy direction for all aspects of home buying and selling. We continue to work with colleagues and decision-makers to help ensure any policy changes are based on a sound understanding of the current marketplace and an accurate assessment of any gaps in protection or inconsistencies that need to be addressed.

Government is actively considering many important and inter related changes to the framework of regulation affecting this crucial industry. We believe it will be important to ensure that a coordinated approach to change is driven by an overall strategy and timetable to manage the complexity of these proposals. This will provide clarity for the industry and important information for consumers and others who are impacted by the changes envisaged.

This is particularly important due to ongoing public confusion over the levels of protection offered by Alternative Dispute Resolution schemes such as our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, and Ombudsman-based schemes. Essentially, both schemes work the same way, although in our case, our scheme also includes powerful sanctions when things go wrong.

We also see continued confusion within the industry about the different code schemes. To help address some of these issues and to support policy development, we hosted a meeting in July 2025, which brought together the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's (CTSI's) approved code bodies operating within the new homes sector under their Approved Codes Scheme (ACS). We believe information sharing and collaborative working is key if we are to ensure home buyers receive consistent protection regardless of which scheme or home warranty provider their builder operates under.

We believe information sharing and collaborative working is key if we are to ensure home buyers receive consistent protection

These are just some of the highlights from 2025/26 which are covered in more detail in this report. I would like to thank our Board and Advisory Forum members, our Chief Executive and the wider team that helps deliver the Code for their insight, support and activity across the year.

Noel Hunter, OBE
Code Chair

Contents

Annual Report at a glance

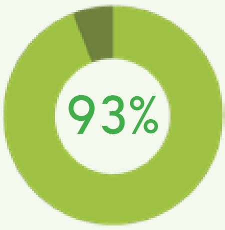
Supporting consumers

Free guide to **buying a new build home** including what to expect, questions to ask and useful resources

Video guides to **consumer protection** and home buying resources

Informative articles about **contract exchange, legal completion, warranty inspection** and more

Consumer satisfaction



Homeowners willing to recommend their home builder

Website

14 blogs

14 news stories

3 videos

27k website visitors

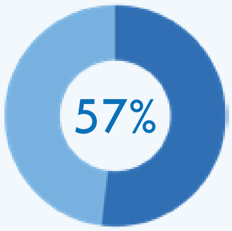
151k page views

Dispute resolution

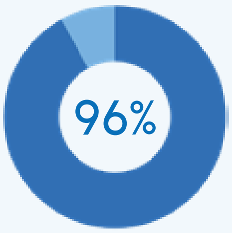
336 cases

9% decrease

the first significant drop in case volumes since the Scheme began



57% of IDRS cases were found **fully or partially in favour** of the home buyer



96% reached a Proposed Decision within eight weeks

Non-compliance

£385

additional recompense awarded to home buyers via builder **non compliance charge**

Supporting the industry

- ✓ Two new Right First Time factsheets
- ✓ Guide to lessons learned from site audits
- ✓ Site audits and desktop assessments
- ✓ Informative articles and guidance

Sanctions

8 Eight home builders were contacted for **failing to comply** with an adjudicator's decision

1 One home builder was **removed from the registers** of all the Code's supporting home warranty bodies

21 potential **non-compliance issues avoided** through new early alert process

Code contact centre

Contact centre has retained the Customer Service Excellence Award

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE® CSE

Case studies

24

case studies published

Enquiries

over 1,970

enquiries received

LinkedIn

13%

increase in LinkedIn followers

Protecting consumers in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Who we are and what we do

The Consumer Code for Home Builders ("the Code") provides additional protection for home buyers from the moment they reserve their new-build home until two years after legal completion. It makes the new-build home buying process fairer and more transparent for consumers, while helping the industry improve quality and customer service.

The Code sets out mandatory requirements and principles which home builders across the UK must comply with in the marketing and selling of new-build homes and in their handling of after-sales customer service. This includes:

- ensuring buyers receive clear information about the home on which to make an informed decision
- no aggressive selling tactics
- dealing with snags as well as rectifying defective, faulty or incomplete works in the home during the two years after legal completion
- having a process and adhering to it for dealing with any complaints.

While all new homes codes of practice are voluntary from a legislative perspective, it is mandatory for builders operating under most warranty schemes as a condition of cover, meaning the vast majority of consumers are protected by a code of practice and redress scheme such as the Consumer Code for Home Builders.

The Code applies to approximately 10,000 home builders registered with the UK's main new home warranty bodies: NHBC; Premier Guarantee; LABC Warranty and Checkmate policies sold by Lockton[1].

It was originally developed in 2010 to provide additional consumer protection for new home buyers and has been continuously reviewed and updated to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides quality support for home buyers across the UK. It is now in its fifth edition.

The Consumer Code for Home Builders is independently chaired and led by the Board made up of representatives from consumer and industry organisations as well as independent specialists.

If a builder is found to be in serious breach of the Code, sanctions are available through the Code's Board, working with the Home Warranty Bodies. These include:

- requiring the builder's staff who have contact with buyers to be trained on their obligations under the Code
- withholding the issuing of certificates of insurance
- suspension or removal from the home warranty body's register
- exclusion from all registers run by other home warranty bodies that take part in the Code Scheme.

[1] *Excludes homes that at the time of reservation by the first buyer are covered by the New Homes Quality Board Code (NHQC). Builders operating under the NHQC must still comply with Code requirements for new homes reserved prior to activation with the NHQC*

These sanctions can seriously compromise a builder's ability to sell the home and so are not taken lightly. However, they are essential in encouraging Code compliance.

The Code is underpinned by an Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) operated through the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution Ltd (CEDR) who are approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as the 'competent authority' acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for dealing with Disputes (see the IDRS section for further details).

In addition to the sanctions outlined above, with effect from 1 April 2025, any builder who fails to honour an award directed by an Adjudicator under the IDRS, is liable to a daily non-compliance charge. This is payable to the buyer in recognition of the fact that failure to comply within the prescribed timeframes can cause the buyer further inconvenience.

Purpose of the Code

The Code gives protection and rights to purchasers of thousands of new homes. It requires that new home buyers are treated fairly and are fully informed about their purchase, and supported before and after they sign the contract.

The aim of the Code is for all buyers:

- to be treated fairly by the builder (and their agent)
- to understand the builder's legal status and identity as a company, so the buyer understands who they have bought their new home from
- to be given clear and reliable information on which to make informed decisions about purchasing a home
- to know what standards the builder must deliver for the home
- to know what service levels to expect from the builder (and their agent)
- to receive clear advice about the main aspects of the home that the buyer will need to maintain
- to know how to access timely arrangements for resolving disputes if they are dissatisfied
- who may have a vulnerability to be identified and given suitable support to help them make decisions.

The Code reinforces best practice among home builders to encourage a consistently high level of information and customer service throughout the UK and provide a more consistent approach to consumer protection across the new build marketplace.

We do this by:

- Setting and monitoring customer service standards
- Providing resources and information to educate and guide builders and other stakeholders and drive-up compliance
- Providing a fair and independent dispute resolution service, which is free for home buyers to use, if things go wrong
- Working with our supporting home warranty bodies to implement appropriate sanctions against builders who fail to comply with the Code
- Providing resources and information that enable home buyers to become more informed purchasers

The Code builds on successful efforts already made by the industry to improve consumer satisfaction in recent years with the principles of the Code having been firmly adopted and embedded into the processes of many home builders, raising the standard of service and support provided to home buyers. Consumer confidence in home builders in 2010 was relatively low, with only 46% of homeowners willing to recommend their home builder, but that figure now stands at 93%[2] and is the sixth successive year that the industry has upheld a score of 90% or above.

[2] https://www.hbf.co.uk/policy/campaigns-and-initiatives/css-star-awards/

Governance

The Code's Board is responsible for the operation of the Code, supported by the Code's Chief Executive and informed and guided by the Advisory Forum.

Noel Hunter OBE is Chair of the Board and a Fellow, Vice President and former Chair of the Board of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute. Noel is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and former Chair of the British Hallmarking Council.

Other Code Board members:

Kim Carter - Senior Claims Outcome Manager.

Craig Ross - Head of Marketing and Propositions, MD Insurance Services Ltd

Frances Harrison – Chair of the Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel and Vice Chair of Brighton & Hove's Citizens Advice

Ron Gainsford OBE – Chair of the Advisory Forum, Vice President of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute and former Chair of The Motor Ombudsman

Claire Whyley - Independent Consumer Representative

Philip Hogg – Independent industry Representative

Carol Brady MBE, is the Code's Chief Executive and has supported the Code's Board, by bringing her extensive experience in consumer and regulatory policy since May 2014.

Advisory Forum

Ron Gainsford, Chair of the Advisory Forum

The Board is supported by an Advisory Forum, chaired by Ron Gainsford OBE. The purpose of the Advisory Forum is to support the Board with its decision-making by providing advice from a range of industry and consumer experts on all matters relating to the content, use, development, practical application, operation and promotion of the Consumer Code Scheme, including the Independent Dispute Redress Scheme.

Independent voices from organisations across the whole of the UK, who have an affiliation with the new home building industry, continue to make themselves heard and contribute through this Forum, through which changes and improvements are channelled.

The representative bodies of the Advisory Forum are:

- National House Building Council (NHBC) (sponsoring body)
- MDIS Insurance Services Ltd (sponsoring body)
- Chartered Trading Standards Institute
- Citizens Advice
- Construction Employers Confederation (Northern Ireland)
- Council for Licensed Conveyancers
- Federation of Master Builders
- HomeOwners Alliance
- Home Builders Federation
- Homes for Scotland
- House Builders Association
- Lockton Checkmate
- Propertymark
- Retirement Housing Group
- The Law Society of England and Wales
- The Law Society of Scotland
- UK Finance.

The Advisory Forum was integral in shaping and introducing a pilot non-compliance charge, introduced in April 2025. This charge saw builders who fail to comply with an Adjudicator's decision made by the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) within the agreed timeframe (as set out in the Scheme Rules), pay £5 per day beyond the original deadline to buyers for the additional and unnecessary inconvenience this will have caused them.

Having helped shape the pilot non-compliance charge, the Advisory Forum supported this feature of the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme becoming permanent, which has since been endorsed by the Code's Board (see further details under Sanctions). The Advisory Forum also recommended that non-compliant builders be named publicly where appropriate.

The Advisory Forum provided a platform for the Elderly Accommodation Counsel to share the work they do in supporting older people with housing and care decisions and in particular, the importance of informed choices and the challenges faced by older individuals navigating complex systems.

Consumer vulnerability is a key feature of our Code and builders must ensure the necessary arrangements are made to give appropriate information and advice suitable to the needs of the customer. This was therefore a timely reminder that builders should consider how anyone who declares a vulnerability, or where it is obvious they have a vulnerability (e.g. a physical impairment), may be affected by the proposed transaction.

Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel

Frances Harrison chairs the Code's Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel (DSP) which reports to the Board on matters of compliance with the Code.

Its purpose is to consider what action, if any, needs to be taken in relation to driving up performance and compliance with the Code, either across the industry, or in relation to individual home builders (see sections in this report on Compliance Monitoring and our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme).

The DSP met three times during the year and undertook the following:

Frances Harrison, Chair of the Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel (DSP)

- Reviewed all the decisions which had been through the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS)
- Considered any failure (or persistence in failing), by a home builder to comply with the rules of the IDRS and in particular, the failure to comply with an adjudicator's decision
- Made recommendations to the Code's Advisory Forum and Code's Board on the impact of the pilot non-compliance charge for builders failing to comply with an adjudicator's decision (see Sanctions section below)
- Shared lessons learned, through our Right First Time factsheets, with the industry, from the findings of our IDRS (see Supporting builders section below)
- Reviewed the findings of the compliance monitoring activity, particularly where non-compliance with the Code was identified
- Considered whether there was any persistent non-compliance in failing to meet the Code requirements that had been brought to the attention of the home builder and rectification previously sought but not implemented
- Delivered feedback to individual home builders, and the wider industry, on the findings from the compliance and monitoring activity to help drive up customer service standards.

On the relatively few occasions where a home builder fails to comply with an adjudicator's decision, the builder is reminded of its obligations through the disciplinary process, including that the supporting home warranty bodies could, if so requested, be required to apply appropriate sanctions.

Such sanctions can include the removal from a home warranty body's register and where this occurs, the Code's Scheme Rules ensure that those home builders are also removed from the registers of all the Code's supporting home warranty bodies. This is the most serious of sanctions that may be applied, given that it can affect a home builder's ability to trade, so such a decision is not taken lightly. Further, given the seriousness of the sanctions, most builders do comply.

For those builders who may argue or fail to pay the fees due to the administrators of the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme in a timely manner, and in line with the Code's Rules, the DSP can recommend that the supporting home warranty provider, with whom the home builder is registered, pays the fee and then claims reimbursement from the home builder with interest which is calculated at 5% above the Bank of England base rate.

Details of sanctions applied during 2025/26 are included in our Sanctions section.

Where an adjudicator's decision is accepted by the home buyer, the best outcome is for a builder to comply and within the prescribed timeframes set out by the adjudicator and in line with the IDRS Scheme Rules. Given the potential sanctions for non-compliance, and the fact that the majority of home builders want to do the right thing, compliance is high. However, on the rare occasions when this doesn't happen, home buyers can be put to additional inconvenience and upset.

"We fully understand the importance of the code and wish to express our commitment to adhering to its guidelines in all aspects of our operations".

Home Builder

Non-compliance charge made a permanent feature

Last year the DSP was struck by the feedback received from home buyers in relation to the additional inconvenience they are caused when a home builder fails to honour an award, directed by an adjudicator under the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, in a timely manner. Having gained the support of the Advisory Forum, the DSP recommended to the Code Board a pilot of the 'Total Non-Compliance Inconvenience Charge' which took take effect from 1 April 2025.

The 'Total Non-Compliance Inconvenience Charge' was co-designed with CEDR, the administrators of the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, to be a firm but fair additional inconvenience charge of £5 per calendar day for every day a home builder does not comply beyond the original deadline in recognition of the additional inconvenience caused to the home buyer.

Safeguards were built into the pilot to avoid scenarios where builders may be prevented from complying due to circumstances beyond their control. The adjudicators at the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR), which operates the Code's IDRS, decide when the charge should apply and how much it should be.

CEDR reported that the non-compliance inconvenience charge had been directed by an adjudicator on fewer than 10 occasions. Having considered the outcome of the pilot, the DSP further recommended it become a permanent feature of the Scheme with effect from April 2026 which the Advisory Forum continued to support (see Non Compliance Fee section within Sanctions for more details).

Advocacy

As the longest standing Code in the new homes marketplace, we play an active role in working with other codes and wider stakeholders to:

- continuously improve consumer protection
- adapt to changing legislation
- contribute to policy development
- support other organisations and industries in developing and strengthening consumer protection

In July, we hosted a meeting of all the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's (CTSI's) approved code bodies operating within the new homes sector under their Approved Codes Scheme (ACS) and discussed:

ctsi
APPROVED CODE
TradingStandards.uk

- the streamlining of codes so consumers can be confident they are receiving the same protection regardless of delivery mechanism
- identifying and sharing of best practice
- greater use of the CTSI ACS logo so home buyers recognise more readily the protection it affords them
- an agreed set of messages back to government to highlight that build quality and support for consumers continues to improve, and how this supports the Government's ambitious homes growth target
- how communications can make it clear to home buyers there is existing consumer protection and that home builders continue to have a choice
- how to prevent a developer, who may be sanctioned by one code scheme for non-compliance, simply registering with another code scheme and therefore circumventing any penalty/sanction, which therefore goes to the heart of the integrity of the ACS.

The collaborative meeting concluded that any future development in the sector in relation to a statutory code and redress scheme implemented by government, should ensure there is no diminution in the current protection, including the sanctions which underpin the codes, and the wider recognition of the protection afforded by CTSI's Approved Codes Scheme.

We have continued to work extensively with the CTSI's ACS to expand and strengthen this important independent, government-approved code auditing scheme. Our Chief Executive, Carol Brady MBE, has contributed to the strategic direction of the scheme through her role on the ACS's Sponsor Panel, and we have supported the development of the ACS marketing strategy and delivery of activities such as the Parliamentary event in November 2025 (see Communications section).

We have also responded to three government consultations which could affect the new build housing market:

- Private estate management arrangements – applicable to many new home schemes
- Home buying and selling reform
- Material information in property listings

Although the consultations go beyond the scope of the Code, there are some areas of overlap which could directly impact the role of codes of conduct in the marketplace. Overall, our Board has sought assurance from government that any new initiatives will build on the learning and best practice already operating in the codes/new homes industry to avoid duplication and consumer confusion. We have also recommended greater involvement from consumers in shaping the reforms, considering the principles set out by the British Standard Institution Consumer and Public Interest Network (CPIN) UK[3] to strengthen the voice of the consumer, including access, privacy, redress, safety and inclusivity.

Our Board has sought assurance from government that any new initiatives will build on learning and best practice

We have continued to work directly with civil servants and MPs to drive awareness of the challenges home buyers face and of the support available, as well as continuing to tackle inaccurate information that causes confusion for both builders and consumers.

[3] -https://www.bsigroup.com/siteassets/pdf/en/about-us/bsi_cpin_consumersandstandards_brochure.pdf

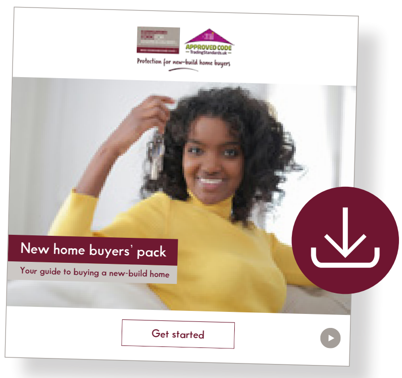
Supporting consumers

The Code exists to make new build home buying fairer and more transparent, and supporting consumers sits at the heart of this. In addition to the requirements we expect builders to meet, we produce resources and information to help buyers feel more confident when beginning the purchase process. We also provide guidance on how to raise complaints or disputes effectively when problems arise.

New Home Buyers' Pack

2026 saw the launch of our New Home Buyers' Pack - a free, digital download designed to provide new build home buyers with the key information they need to prepare for buying a new build home. Timed to coincide with national New Homes Week in February 2026, the pack includes:

- What to expect at reservation
- Choosing a legal adviser
- Key questions to ask your builder
- Snagging guidance
- Keeping completion on track
- What to expect when you move in
- Sources of support



Although some elements focus specifically on the additional protection offered by our Code, we have included information about other sources of support, making it a useful guide even for those whose builder does not operate under our Code. This is part of our commitment to improve the buying experience for all new-build home buyers and to help drive up customer service standards across the industry.

This pack complements the Complaints and Disputes guide which we launched at the end of the last financial year.

Blogs and videos

Throughout this year, we continued to publish blogs and videos providing useful tips and information for home buyers which we've summarised below:

Five ways to help legal completion go to plan

As completion date approaches, there are a number of things that buyers can do to minimise the risk of unexpected delays. Maintaining regular contact with their builder, solicitor and other advisers is key particularly as completion dates can change. If completion is delayed, buyers should make sure their mortgage offer is still valid, check and update their insurance cover if needed and arrange the pre-completion inspection.

Gardens, garages and beyond...

The Code covers the external areas and features of new homes as well as the home itself, including the garden, boundary, curtilage, communal areas and third party services. This blog explains what to expect and what to ask about especially where a home is under construction, to help buyers flag any potential issues early on.

Getting the legalities of your new home purchase right

Legal advice is an essential part of buying a home and we spoke to solicitor, Lorraine Richardson and licensed conveyancer, Stu Forsdike, for their input on what home buyers need to know about legal support when buying a new home. They explained the difference between solicitors and licensed conveyancers, what to consider when choosing a legal adviser, common pitfalls during a purchase and how to avoid them, and what to look out for when buying a leasehold property or those with estate management arrangements.

Keeping new-build home buying harmonious at Christmas

Buying a new home can be stressful at any time of the year but with so much else going on in the run up to the festive season, we provided five practical tips for buyers and builders, based on the most common disputes seen by our adjudicators through our Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme. Keeping in touch and providing regular updates, keeping written records, particularly of verbal agreements or conversations, having the right information at the right time and avoiding assumptions goes a long way to help making the buying experience more harmonious.

We also produced 3 overview videos to support our blogs for new home buyers.

Make home buying easier with our free resources

– summarising the free resources and toolkits we provide to help home buyers navigate the new build home buying process.

Top tips for pre-completion snagging

– resources and tips to help home buyers make the most of their pre-completion inspection and snagging.

Consumer protection in buying and selling new homes

– a brief overview of the protection available to new home buyers including Codes of practice and the areas covered by the home builder and home warranty provider.

Putting the spotlight on advisors

Alongside our consumer and industry blogs, we have been shining a spotlight on some of the organisations we work with to help consumers better understand their role and how to make best use of the service they provide. This year, we focused on our enquiry team and our dispute resolution scheme provider.

Spotlight Series: Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution

The Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) is provided by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR) and we spoke to John Munton, then Director of Dispute Resolution Services, who explained CEDR's role as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) provider, the benefits of ADR and how it differs from other forms of redress and the importance of independence.

https://consumercode.co.uk/spotlight-series-john-munton/

Consumer Code Enquiry Team in the spotlight

The Code's telephone and email support service has been in place since 2019 and is provided by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute's (CTSI) award-winning Customer Contact Centre. Centre Manager, Chris Bell, and Code enquiry team representative Patrick Ferreira told us more about the support provided to callers, the typical volume of calls and emails received and the most common queries that are raised.

https://consumercode.co.uk/consumer-code-enquiry-team-in-the-spotlight/

Supporting builders

We work proactively with builders to help them improve customer service. Complying with Code requirements is one of the best ways builders can provide a good service, but there are other ways to strengthen and improve compliance. We provide free resources and guidance to help builders continue to improve the experience they provide to home buyers throughout the sales and purchase process.

Learning from Site Audits

One of our key publications is the annual Learning from Site Audits. This summarises the most common compliance gaps identified through our independent site audit process.

The aim is to help the wider industry proactively learn from and address potential gaps in their own compliance, as well as sharing examples of best practice. This is all done so that consumers receive a high level of service and are not unnecessarily disadvantaged.

Right First Time factsheets

We also produce a suite of 'Right First Time' factsheets drawing on learnings from the most common sources of disputes. This year we published two new factsheets:

Reservation agreements: The Code requires builders to provide home buyers with a Reservation Agreement which clearly sets out the terms of the reservation. This crucial document marks the beginning of a builder's relationship with their customer and the official start of protection for buyers under the Code. Tips for success include:

- Using the guidance set out in the Code Scheme with Builder Guidance
- Including the 14-day cooling off period required under the Fifth edition of the Code
- Being clear about cancellation terms
- Using the Code's checklist to help ensure the right information is given at the right time

Customer service - five key elements: Whatever the root cause of a complaint, there are usually common factors which contribute to or exacerbate the issue and which can quickly escalate. In addition to our themed Right First Time factsheets, we outlined some top tips that apply to customer service in general, including:

- Providing the right information at the right stage of the process
- Keeping buyers informed
- Maintaining an audit trail
- Being accessible and responsive
- Not ignoring disputes

These and all our Right First Time factsheets can be downloaded here: https://consumercode.co.uk/resources/right_first_time/

Blogs and videos

We continue to provide useful content and guidance for builders, agents and solicitors/legal conveyancers via our blogs and videos. These help industry stakeholders improve understanding of consumer needs and improve the new build home buying experience for home buyers.

Getting five key elements of customer service right first time

Drawing on the content from our Right First Time factsheet, this blog focused on the importance of providing a great customer experience which will help reduce the likelihood and escalation of complaints. We highlighted how builders can use the Code's checklist to help them give buyers all the information they need to make informed decisions, the importance of keeping buyers informed throughout and keeping written records of any verbal agreements to prevent potential misunderstandings, and ensuring they provide an accessible and responsive after sales service.

Dementia Action Week: Recognising and supporting vulnerable consumers

The Code requires home builders to treat all customers fairly and we highlighted some specific areas where builders and their agents can support buyers who may be vulnerable. Having a relevant policy and procedures in place and ensuring staff are trained and aware of their responsibilities is key, whilst practical support includes using plain English and avoiding jargon, allowing buyers more time to consider the information provided, and offering to go through documentation to clarify anything that's unclear.

Right First Time: Handling customer complaints

Complaints handling is one of the most common causes of disputes raised through the Code's IDRS. At the end of the last financial year, we published a 'Right First Time' factsheet with tips and advice on handling customer complaints effectively. Our accompanying blog this year sets out the key points including the importance of responding promptly to each complaint, explaining the proposed remedial work and timeframes, ensuring buyers are regularly updated on progress, and setting clear service standards for contractors.

Spotlighting technical experts

As part of our ongoing spotlight series, we interviewed technical experts who contribute to the Code to share insights and new guidance for the industry. In addition, we continued our efforts to build understanding of how codes of practice support consumers. These are summarised below:

Spotlight on Warranty Inspection

During 2025, Premier Guarantee, one of the home warranty providers supporting the Code, issued its Industry Insights Report for 2025 looking at trends in defects in new build homes based on homes built to Premier Guarantee's warranty standards. In this spotlight Keith Evans, Executive Director of Surveying Operations at Premier Guarantee, explained more about the inspection process, what home builders can do to reduce the risk of problems over the lifecycle of their build, and how buyers can make best use of their pre-completion inspection.

https://consumercode.co.uk/spotlight-series-premier-guarantee/

Spotlight on UK Finance

UK Finance has been involved with the Consumer Code for Home Builders since its inception in 2010 and continues to support the Code's development through our Advisory Forum. It provides an important role in setting standards and best practice for lenders and published new guidance in 2025 to help home warranty schemes understand what lenders typically require from home warranty cover. We caught up with UK Finance Principal and Advisory Forum member, John Baguley, to understand more about how UK Finance supports the home buying process.

https://consumercode.co.uk/spotlight-on-uk-finance/

Chair's insight: Critical success factors for Codes of Practice

Code Chair, Noel Hunter OBE, shared his insights on what makes codes of practice work effectively in an article for the Chartered Trading Standards Institute. He focused on the importance of creating solid foundations including robust and achievable requirements, an independent redress scheme and compliance monitoring, as well as creating clear, workable standards and enabling meaningful improvement.

https://consumercode.co.uk/chairs-insight-critical-success-factors-for-codes-of-practice/

Case studies and learnings for builders and buyers

Last year saw the launch of a new case study section on our website. Over the course of this year, we have built this into a useful resources page for consumers and industry alike. In addition to sharing a summary of all adjudication decisions in our resources portal, we now select two case studies every month to highlight, drawing out learning points for both builders and buyers.

Across the year, we've highlighted both successful and unsuccessful cases, covering topics from general snagging and after-sales issues through to boundary issues, solar panel problems, garden concerns and site management issues.

We published 24 case studies during the annual report period, including:

Multiple breaches of the Code

- The buyer claimed the builder supplied the home in a sub-standard and unusable state committing numerous breaches of the Code.
- The builder did not respond to the buyer's claim.
- The adjudicator found in favour of the buyer and noted the breaches included major changes to the materials used and layout of the home, unrealistic completion information and no provision for reporting or dealing with defects or complaints.

Case succeeded - read the case study here

Resolving defects in communal areas

- The buyer claimed defects in the communal areas of the development had not been resolved and the builder's after-sales service had been inaccessible.
- The builder claimed the matters were the responsibility of the management company and other third parties.
- The adjudicator decided the builder should have taken more proactive action to secure engagement from the management company.

Case succeeded - read the case study here

Removal of trees from adjoining land

- The buyer claimed the sales and marketing material were misleading as the trees creating a 'landscape buffer' in the neighbouring field had not been retained.
- The builder noted it did not own the land in question.
- The adjudicator noted that the builder could not guarantee the view from the buyer's property or its surroundings would not change after completion.

Case did not succeed - read the case study here

Misleading information about bedroom space

- The buyer claimed the master bedroom was smaller than the plan indicated and the bed was not easily accessed from three sides.
- The builder stated the property was built to the correct dimensions but offered to place the wardrobe around a supporting pillar to increase the room space.
- The adjudicator noted the plan did not reliably illustrate the room layout, giving the impression of more space in the room.

Case succeeded - read the case study here

Handling enquiries

We provide a contact centre to enable consumers, builders and other interested parties to easily access information and support. In addition to this central telephone and email service, our supporting home warranty providers handle several enquiries directly from members of the public. The Code's secretariat also handles several industry queries during the year.

1973

Contact centre enquiries in 2025

Our contact centre enquiries team dealt with 1973 contacts during the calendar year 2025. This is a reduction of 73 contacts compared with the previous year - a trend which can be partly attributed to consumers increasingly using AI to answer queries.

Our Code secretariat dealt with a further 33 enquiries, most of which were requests for the Code's on-line e-learning content and the free Train the Trainer programme.

Code information provided to

678

policyholders

Our supporting home warranty bodies provided information on the Code to over 678 policyholders. Where these enquiries led to application forms being sent out to a home buyer to make a complaint via the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme, the home warranty body also wrote to the home builder advising them of the home buyer's contact and encouraging them to resolve the matter with the home buyer without the need for an Adjudicator to decide the case.

Contact centre

Our contact centre has retained the Customer Service Excellence Award continuously since 2014. The Customer Service Excellence Standard, originally created by the Cabinet Office, is a nationally recognised quality mark awarded to organisations that demonstrate a genuine commitment to delivering excellent customer service through continuous learning, development, and improvement.

The Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Award focuses on the areas that research shows consumers value the most, including delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.

Working with an established and independent contact centre, the team offers guidance to consumers and home builders, providing help with general queries about what the Code covers and how its Requirements apply in the purchasing process.

Our telephone helpline provides an easy way for people to get in touch if they have concerns during the home-buying process – whether that is pre-contract, exchange of contract or during occupation.

For those that prefer to email us, our enquiry form on our contacts page makes it simple to do so. All emails are answered within our target two working days.

The Code continues to be committed to providing protection and rights to new-build home buyers. Although the helpline team cannot advise consumers on Code breaches or individual cases, it can advise on how to raise a complaint through the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme.

This advice is supplemented by our free to download resources including our New Home Buyers' Pack and Complaints and Disputes Guide. Our resources are updated regularly and can be accessed via: https://consumercode.co.uk/resources/

Code compliance and monitoring

We monitor compliance regularly to encourage builders to adopt and uphold Code requirements and to enable the Code's Board to check how well the Code is being applied, and whether it needs to be amended or updated.

Our targeted auditing regime includes:

- desktop audits via the delivery and return of self-assessment forms
- site visits to areas across the UK where new homes are being offered for sale, including the offices of estate agents
- assessment of all complaints and decisions that have been made through the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme
- assessment of annual returns or reports from builders
- reviews and assessments of customer satisfaction feedback and complaints
- providing training to home builders

The outcome of the monitoring is considered by the Code's independent Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel (DSP) who decide whether any further action needs to be taken to improve compliance (see also the section on the Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel).

Self-Assessment

Given the size of the industry, self-assessment is part of our auditing regime and survey forms are sent each month to a cross section of home builders, ranging from large to small across the UK, ensuring those who build within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are included.

In the main, the responses received indicated that medium to large size home builders were more aware of the Code and had processes and systems in place to comply with its requirements. However, smaller home builders were less likely to be aware of the Code and therefore found the self-assessment process helpful in terms of raising awareness of what they needed to do to comply.

The self-assessment forms provide useful links to material available on our website to help builders comply if they are falling short in any particular area, such as to our training material, Reservation Agreement template, compliance starter pack and compliance checklist.

The Code's DSP reviews the responses to the self-assessment questionnaires at its meetings and considers what action, if any, needs to be taken. This may include a more focused audit, including a site visit if necessary.

Site Visits

Independent site audits remain an important part of our compliance work and are one of the ways we work with the industry to help ensure the Code is being applied correctly and that new home buyers receive a good service when purchasing their home.

Site audits are undertaken by Chartered Trading Standards professionals (through the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI)) and complement existing controls already in place – such as reviewing member complaints, self-assessment and monitoring undertaken by our home warranty bodies (which includes both financial and technical checks).

In 2025/26, we continued with our programme of both face-to-face and virtual visits, meaning audits are conducted across the whole of the UK, as travel (and resources) are not a barrier.

Most site visits are pre-planned and designed to support compliance. Our auditors continue to review sales and marketing materials, such as websites and sales brochures, in advance of the audit to gain a good understanding of the likely early consumer experience. However, where the auditor has felt it appropriate, the audit may be conducted on spec so they can assess how the builder engages with potential buyers without preparation for the audit. On the occasions where this has happened, the auditor has found the sales advisors to be very knowledgeable about the Code and engaging throughout the process.

The principle behind the audits is not about catching builders out but to promote proactive best practice. Home builders continually tell us how useful they find the audits as they provide an independent view of current strengths and identify any gaps they need to address, which could lead to non-compliance. The value of the audits continues to be recognised by builders, with some requesting specific sites are visited so an independent view of compliance can be obtained.

"....many thanks for the update on your audit ref our position on compliance with the Consumer Code. We will certainly be reviewing our procedures and paperwork and many thanks for your generic sample. We are committed to provide the highest of standards to all our customers and your help in this journey is very much appreciated".

Home builder

"This letter is extremely helpful, and I have discussed the contents with my management team. We have already actioned a number of the points that have been raised, as part of the Audit, and I have requested a further update on progress by the end of August".

Home builder

We continue to provide all home builders with individual feedback from the site visits. Areas of good practice are highlighted, as well as any potential non-compliance with the Code, which builders are expected to address.

An overview of the Code's audits[4] for the year where areas of potential non-compliance was found is tabled below:

Code Requirement	Comments re non-compliance
Section 1: Complying with the Code. Of the sites visited, on average 19% of builders failed to meet all the requirements under this section of the Code. The main causes for potential non-compliance were cited as:	
Making the Code available	The Code logo may not have been available in on-line brochures and/or the Code was not readily accessible to customers from the builder's website as there were either no links to it and/or the auditor felt details of the Code were 'hidden' and would be more visible on the home page of the builder's website.
Training of customer service staff	While all staff were knowledgeable about the Code, not all were able to evidence they had undertaken the training and/or they had not refreshed it annually.
Customer vulnerability	Not all staff were able to explain what made a customer vulnerable and/or what steps they had in place to support someone who might be vulnerable. Those that did, however, were able to give good examples of how they had helped customers who may be vulnerable.
Section 2: Pre-contract. Of the sites visited, on average 23% of builders failed to meet all the requirements under this section of the Code. The main causes for potential non-compliance were cited as:	
Pre-contract information	Not all the information as prescribed by the Code was given. Typically this would be the Detailed Planning Consent reference number and/or a copy of the builder's complaints procedure.
Reservation Agreements	Not all the information as prescribed by the Code was contained within the Reservation Agreement. This may have included the 14-day cancellation period, details of how the buyer can include in the Contract of Sale any spoken statement that is to be relied upon and/or the scope and process for administering changes to the home (such as paint colour, design changes, specification changes).
Appointment of professional advisers	The home buyer was not always informed about any fee, commission or any other reward or advantage the builder may receive for introducing any adviser.

[4] Section 3 of the Code, which covers Contract exchange, tends to be dealt with by lawyers and not site sales staff, and so these elements are excluded during the site audit and compliance monitored in other ways.

Section 4: Legal completion. Of the sites visited, on average 27% of builders failed to meet all of the requirements under this section of the Code. The main causes for potential non-compliance were cited as:	
Legal completion	- Not all buyers were provided with the opportunity (in writing) to visit and carry out a Pre-Completion Inspection - Not all builders had a complaints procedure and if they did, not all provided a copy of it to the buyer - Some builders failed to provide a statement of incomplete works, not being a part of the home, but which serve it and directly affect it, albeit most referred to a "snagging list".
Section 5: After occupation starts. Of the sites visited, on average 17% of builders failed to meet all the requirements under this section of the Code. The main causes for potential non-compliance were cited as:	
Complaints and Disputes	While builders may have had a complaints procedure this either may not have been given to the home buyer (see above) and/or may not have been published on its website.

As with our self-assessment audits, the feedback to builders from the site audits highlights the Code's 'Lessons Learned' documents, 'Right First Time' factsheets and provides links to resources which can help builders comply i.e. Reservation Agreement templates, logos/branding material and our on-line training.

The comments we continue to receive from builders demonstrates the value they place on the work undertaken:

"**I am delighted to see that everything was found to be in compliance** with the Code and I will of course advise my Sales advisor accordingly. We do go to great lengths as a business and individually to seek to provide our clients with the very highest standards of service and information as to their buying decision and experience. We are in fact about to carry out our annual refresher training of all customer facing / dealing employees in order to ensure that we continue to achieve very high standards."

"**Thank you for your email with the results of the recent audit** ..... It is pleasing to hear you found our team to be professional and knowledgeable. With regards to 2.2.1 of the code, we had made this amendment to our reservation agreement .... We will ensure our sales team receive further training in this regard in addition to providing detail on future approved planning applications. We find your audits useful for ensuring compliance and thank you for your continued support".

"**Thank you for the report,** all of the items picked up on the inspection were also noted by the sales team and actions have been taken to ensure that our paperwork matches the sales process. Thank you for the inspector's time, the team found it extremely useful".

As in previous years, the auditors continue to cite examples of good practice and in particular, the support builders provide to customers with a vulnerability. Our Code requires builders to acknowledge and cater for the needs of vulnerable customers and help them make informed decisions. The auditors found many builders were recognising the vulnerability of first time buyers, given they have never been through the process of buying a home before and may not understand the language or terminology used, or the processes that are followed.

Similarly, the auditors found plenty of examples of where builders provided additional support to buyers who may, for example, have been recently bereaved, in poor health or where English was not their first language.

Acting on adjudication decisions

The Code's Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel (DSP) reviews all final decisions that have been made by adjudicators under the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (further details of the scheme can be found later in this report).

The Chair of the Board writes to the Chief Executive or Managing Director of each company, where a breach of the Code has been found. The letter highlights the breach and offers further guidance on compliance to prevent a re-occurrence as necessary.

Most home builders remain keen to learn lessons from the adjudications and improve their customer service where they can; many implementing changes and/or improvements to their systems as a result:

> *"Many thanks ….. [the feedback] is very helpful. We will review these and ensure that we learn the lessons across the business, helping to drive continuous improvement in delivering for our customers".*

> *"We fully understand the importance of the code and wish to express our commitment to adhering to its guidelines in all aspects of our operations".*

> *"Many thanks for this and for the continued support - really helpful to review the learning points here across the business".*

We continue to help all home builders improve customer service and raise standards by sharing key learnings from the adjudicators' findings from the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme and via our case studies which draw out learning points for both builders and buyers alike (see section on case studies).

Sanctions

The Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel considers matters of non-compliance with an adjudicator's decision.

As part of a home builder's registration with the Code's supporting home warranty bodies, they are required to comply with the Requirements of the Code, and any directions and decisions given or made by the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS).

If a builder fails to comply with an adjudicator's decision, the Chair of the Board writes to them seeking compliance and advises that where there is continued failure, the matter will be escalated to the appropriate supporting home warranty body. If a builder is found to be in serious breach of the Code, home warranty bodies can apply a range of sanctions which include:

- requiring the home builder's staff who have contact with home buyers to be trained on their obligations under the Code
- withholding the issuing of certificates of insurance
- suspension or removal from the home warranty body's register.

The removal from a home warranty body's register is the most serious of sanctions that may be applied and where this occurs, our Scheme Rules ensure that those home builders are also removed from the registers of all the Code's supporting home warranty bodies. Given that it can affect a home builder's ability to trade, such a decision is not taken lightly, but does provide a useful deterrent.

In most cases, builders do comply with the decisions from the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme and take the required action. In some cases, however, builders have failed to comply despite repeated follow up from the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme administrators.

> During the reporting year, one registered home builder, Pine Valley Homes Limited (Company Number SC605104) was refused the right to have their home warranty body registration reinstated for their failure to comply with an adjudicator's decision. They also failed to pay the appropriate scheme fees to the administrators of the scheme.
>
> The effect of the sanction means the builder was also removed from the registers of all the Code's supporting home warranty bodies and the details published on the Code's website: https://consumercode.co.uk/home-buyers/how-is-the-code-governed/.
>
> There were a further eight home builders who were contacted for failing to comply with an adjudicator's decision and asked to take immediate steps to remedy the position. In one of those cases, the home builder had legitimate reasons for not being able to comply and an alternative remedy was agreed with the adjudicator. In another case, given the vulnerability of the home buyer, the home warranty body was engaged through their own resolution service.

One builder was removed from the registers of all the Code's supporting home warranty bodies

Eight home builders were contacted for failing to comply with an adjudicator's decision

In all cases, where appropriate, the home warranty body actively engaged with the home builder to help bring about compliance.

Where an adjudicator deemed cases involving defects/snagging issues needed to be investigated by the builder, it could be more appropriate to involve the home warranty body to help resolve matters under the cover provided by their home warranty. Such cases can often relate to where an adjudicator has deemed a builder needs to investigate whether rectification works need to be undertaken and then to undertake the work as necessary which may overlap with the cover provided under the home warranty.

Early intervention

The administrators of the Code's IDRS have continued to support early notification of potential non-compliance. If a builder is not responding to an adjudicator's decision, the Code Secretariat is notified early in the process so that speedier engagement with the builder can take place, reducing delays and further inconvenience to the home buyer. As a result of this process, there were 21 occasions where potential non-compliance was avoided.

21 occasions where potential non-compliance was avoided.

Non-compliance charge

Failure by a builder to comply with an adjudicator's decision can impact the confidence in both the Code and the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme and as such, any non-compliance is taken very seriously by both the Code's Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel and the Code's supporting home warranty bodies.

In addition to the early intervention process, we piloted a non-compliance charge during 2025. The charge was payable by builders who failed to comply with an adjudication decision within the timescales agreed (see Disciplinary and Sanctions Panel section).

This new sanction was introduced to minimise further disruption and distress for home buyers who had been through the dispute resolution process and although principally designed to incentivise builders to resolve issues quickly, home buyers benefitted from being paid additional recompense by the builder in recognition of the added inconvenience the delays cause.

During the 12 month pilot, the charge was applied fewer than 10 times, indicating strong compliance with adjudicator decisions. In cases where the charge was applied – in one case for a delay of over 70 days – the charge provided the home buyer with £385 additional recompense.

"It is positive to see that the non-compliance fee has only been needed in a small number of cases. However, it is a useful additional sanction to encourage swift compliance and better outcomes for consumers and is testament to the Code's progressive approach to driving up standards."

John Munton, Managing Director, Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution

"Sanctions are an important part of encouraging better customer service and standards overall. It's very encouraging to see there has been such limited need for this non-compliance charge to date. However, from the outset of our Code, sanctions have played an important role in incentivising compliance and we're particularly pleased to strengthen that to minimise unnecessary delays in complying with adjudicator's decisions."

Noel Hunter OBE, Code Chair

Following the successful pilot, the non-compliance charge was made a permanent sanction of the Code Scheme in April 2026.

Customer satisfaction

The 2026 National New Homes Customer Satisfaction Survey shows continued high levels of satisfaction with new build homes. Nine in 10 buyers who responded to the survey were satisfied with the quality of their home and 93% would be happy to recommend their builder to a friend. In addition, 92% per cent said they would buy a new build again.

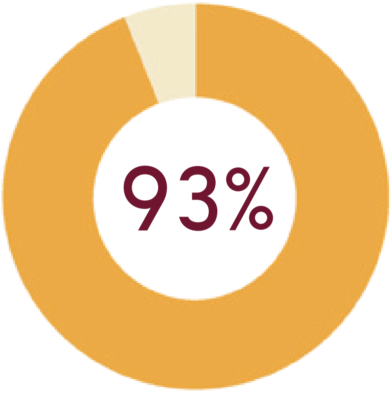
The results cover the period from October 2024 to September 2025 are were informed by over 57,600 survey responses, with over 36,000 people responding at 8 weeks and 26,000 responding to the 9-month survey.

The survey is an independent industry survey completed by new build buyers. The National House Building Council (NHBC) operates the survey to gather anonymous feedback. The survey is validated by independent research agency, Ipsos. The results inform the Home Builders Federation's Star Awards Scheme which gives builders who opt in to the scheme a rating based on their customer satisfaction scores.

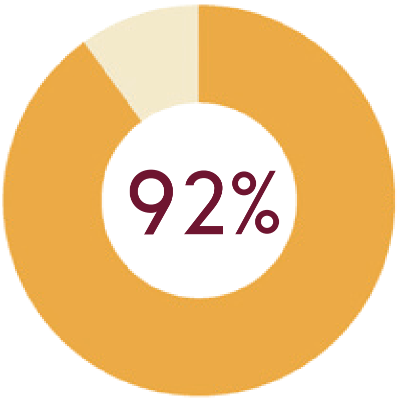
The survey was launched over 20 years ago and serves as a valuable barometer for quality and customer care, driving improvements across the industry while helping consumers make informed decisions.

The continuing high levels of homeowner satisfaction with the quality of new homes and the service they receive before, during and after moving in is very encouraging. However, the findings also indicate opportunities for continued improvement. Of those surveyed, 93% said they had reported problems to their builder, and 24% had reported more than 16 problems. Although only 6% said they would not buy a new build home again, that rose to 10% saying no when asked whether they would buy from the same builder, suggesting opportunities to improve service in some areas.

The full results of the survey, which we take into consideration when monitoring the effectiveness of the Code, can be viewed on the HBF website.



93% would recommend their home builder to a friend



92% would buy a new build again

Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme

Under the Code, home buyers can raise a claim using our free, speedy, Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS) if they believe their home builder has breached the Code, and their dispute falls outside the home warranty body's resolution scheme.

With the average small claims cases now taking between 36 and 57[5] weeks to resolve through the courts (in England and Wales), the IDRS provides a faster, more accessible option for home buyers and builders alike.

A home buyer may be able to bring a claim through the Code's IDRS where they believe they have not:

- been treated fairly
- been given information on what levels of service to expect
- been fully informed about their purchase and their consumer rights before and after they move in.

If things go wrong

Under the Code, home builders must have, and keep to, a system and procedures for receiving, handling and resolving buyer's complaints and disputes.

If a buyer has followed the builder's complaints process but is not happy with the response from their builder, they can contact their new home warranty provider to help resolve the issue.

The home warranty provider will deal with any issues that might fall under the home warranty policy and/or offer support through their own dispute resolution service. Where the dispute relates to a potential breach of the Code's requirements, buyers can bring a claim through the Code's IDRS.

The IDRS is run entirely independently of the Code by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR Ltd). CEDR Ltd is approved by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as the 'competent authority' acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for dealing with disputes that are raised with the home builder from the Reservation date until two years after the date of Legal Completion.

The dispute will be considered by an adjudicator who will determine if the home buyer has been disadvantaged or suffered financial loss because the builder failed to comply with the Code.

Further details of the scheme and summaries of case adjudications can be found on the Code's website.

[5] *Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2025/civil-justice-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2025*

Adjudication facts and figures

Between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025 there were a total of 336 cases referred to the Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme (IDRS), which is a decrease of 9% on the amount of cases (369) referred to the scheme in 2024. While 2024 saw the highest ever number of cases referred to the Scheme in a year, 2025 has seen the first significant drop in case volumes since the Scheme began operation, a trend that is directly attributable to a number of home builders transferring their Alternative Dispute Resolution coverage to an alternate code of practice.

A summary of the cases for the past five years is broken down in the table below. Where an adjudicator found that there had been a breach of the Code, but that the home buyer had not proven all their claim, including the redress they were seeking, they determined the claim partially succeeded.

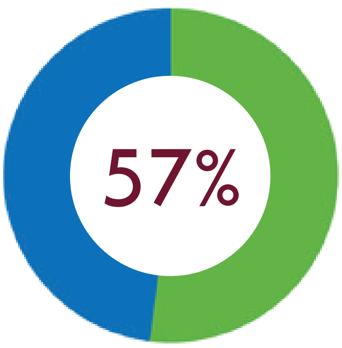
Cases submitted to the Code's IDRS

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Total cases received	336	369	356	324	307
Cases settled before adjudication	9 (3%)	11 (3%)	30 (8%)	44 (14%)	39 (13%)
Cases withdrawn or deemed invalid	59 (17%)	41 (11%)	42 (12%)	33 (10%)	30 (9%)
Total cases that went to final decision	268	320	284	247	238

Outcome of cases that went to final decision

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
Cases found fully in favour of the Home Buyer	51 (19%)	65 (20%)	64 (22%)	60 (24.5%)	82 (34.5%)
Cases found partly in favour of the Home Buyer (ie. where not all of the Home Buyer's claims were proven or they were awarded less than they claimed)	103 (38%)	124 (39%)	110 (39%)	92 (37.5%)	58 (24.5%)
Cases found fully in favour of the Home Builder	114 (43%)	128 (40%)	110 (39%)	95 (38%)	98 (41%)

Please note the 2024 figures reported in our 2024-25 Annual Report have been recalculated to follow the same method as previous years where outcome percentages are based on total number of cases that went to final decision rather than cases submitted overall.



In 2025, 57% IDRS cases were found fully or partially in favour of the home buyer

Financial sums claimed

In 2025, home buyers who applied to the Scheme claimed a total combined sum of £2,350,018 - an increase of 1.5% compared to the total amount claimed by home buyers in 2024.

Similarly, the average sum claimed by home buyers in 2025 was £6994.10, an increase of 11% on the average claimed in 2024, indicating buyers are continuing to seek higher financial recompense year on year. This is an interesting trend given that the number of cases coming to the IDRS in 2025 decreased by 9%, clearly indicating that home buyers are more demanding in terms of their financial claims than ever before.

The total amount awarded to home buyers by adjudicators in 2025 was £135,565, an increase of 30% when compared with 2024, despite there being a lower total number of decisions that were either fully or partly in favour of the buyer.

Only 5.8% of the total sum claimed by home buyers was actually awarded by adjudicators in 2025, a proportion that until 2025 had been decreasing year on year (8% in 2021, 6% in 2022, 5.1% in 2023 and 4.5% in 2024). This year's increase bucks this trend, potentially indicating that home buyers claimed more proportionate sums of money in 2025 than in previous years.

It's important to note that our IDRS - and indeed any dispute resolution or ombudsman scheme - can only award reasonable costs to resolve the issues raised plus, where appropriate, a limited award for inconvenience. Many home buyers claim the maximum amount of compensation available on the basis that if money is not claimed then it cannot be awarded. However, the independent adjudicator's role is to give an objective assessment of the value of a home buyer's claim based on the evidence that has been provided. Nevertheless, buyers continue to claim financial sums that far exceed losses which they are able to evidence. It is therefore inevitable that the amount awarded by adjudicators is significantly lower than the amount claimed.

Acceptance or rejection of decisions

Decisions made by adjudicators can only be accepted or rejected by the home buyer under the Scheme. Where a home buyer chooses to reject a decision, or where a home buyer fails to respond within six weeks of the decision being made, the decision has no effect whatsoever on either party. An adjudicator will issue a 'Proposed Decision' to both parties, in advance of any decisions becoming final, to give them the opportunity to provide any missing evidence or clarifications. However, once the adjudicator issues their final decision, it is not open for review or appeal.

In 2025, 43% of decisions were accepted by home buyers, which is a decrease from the 45% of decisions accepted in 2024. This is in line with what we would expect given the slight drop in claims found in favour of the buyer in 2025.

home buyers who applied to the Scheme claimed a total combined sum of £2,350,018

the average sum claimed by home buyers in 2025 was £6,994.10

only 5.8% of the total sum claimed by home buyers was actually awarded by adjudicators.

£135,565 was paid out to home buyers in total – a 30% increase on 2024

Main issues of dispute

Given the volume of new home sales within the UK, the number of home buyers who use the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme is low. It is difficult, therefore, to undertake robust statistical analysis, but a qualitative analysis of the complaints made under the Code's Independent Dispute Resolution Scheme indicate some key themes.

Of the 154 decisions in which an adjudicator found the Home Builder to have breached the Code during 2025, the most common sections of the Code found to have been breached were:

Section 5.1:
a total of 101 decisions (66%) identified a breach of the builder's duty to provide appropriate procedures for handling calls and complaints

Section 4.1:
a total of 41 decisions (27%) identified a breach of the builder's duty to provide an accessible after-sales service

Section 2.1:
a total of 27 decisions (18%) identified a breach of the builder's duty to provide the buyer with enough pre-purchase information to help them make a suitably informed purchasing decision

Section 1.5:
a total of 13 decisions (8%) identified a breach of the builder's duty to ensure that sales and advertising material is clear and truthful

Performance statistics

Of the 268 IDRS cases from 2025 that went to adjudication, 96% reached a Proposed Decision within eight weeks of the date on which the home buyer's application was sent to the home builder for their response. This is an increase on the 92% of Proposed Decisions completed within eight weeks in 2024 and a striking increase from the 44% of Proposed Decisions completed within eight weeks in 2023. This has been made possible by increased staffing and an upgraded case management system that moves cases on in the process automatically.

96% reached a Proposed Decision within eight weeks

It should be noted that within this eight-week period, the builder has three weeks in which to prepare a response to the claim, and this can also include making one or more objections to the claim falling within the scope of the IDRS and one or more attempts at reaching a settlement prior to adjudication, all of which can extend this timeframe. Following receipt of a home builder's response, the home buyer then has a further week to provide comments on that response.

None of the cases dealt with during 2025 exceeded the statutory timeframe of 90 calendar days from the date on which the complete complaint file is received to the date on which the Adjudicator's decision is produced, which is mandated by the Alternative Dispute Resolution for Consumer Disputes (Competent Authorities and Information) Regulations 2015 for all consumer dispute resolution schemes in the UK.

Consumer feedback

Once each case is complete, home buyers are invited to provide feedback on their experience of the IDRS process. While the outcome of a decision often influences the feedback provided, home buyers have offered useful perspectives on what aspects of the process were positive and which areas could be improved.

In this reporting period, home buyers were satisfied with the quality of the adjudications, the independent role of the IDRS in listening to users, and the smooth running of the case process:

"Thank you to CEDR and the Case Officers who were all helpful during the process, I very much appreciate the support and outcome reached".

"I am very happy with the level of care and detail the adjudicator went into in issuing the final decision, so thank you CEDR".

"The system was easy to navigate and I received consistent email updates throughout the journey, so I knew exactly where my case was at and the due date for the next action".

On the other hand, some home buyers raised concerns about the outcomes reached by adjudicators, the length and detail of the adjudicators' decisions, and the lack of a messaging facility on the online case management system to allow them to communicate directly with home builders:

> "The adjudicator did not agree with me, so I am dissatisfied with the outcome."

> "The adjudicator's decision was too long and detailed, so whilst I acknowledge there was a summary page, I was not used to reading such a detailed decision, so could be shorter."

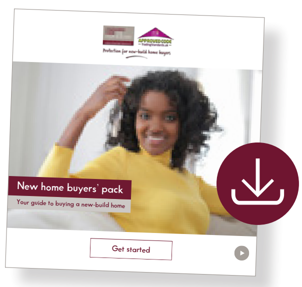
> "The online portal had a comments section but not a discussion board/messages area for us to contact the home builder, it would be useful to have this feature for easier and quicker communication."

It is unavoidable that home buyers who do not receive an outcome in their favour are more disposed to leaving negative feedback about the IDRS process in general. However, no matter the outcome the adjudicator reaches, decisions should always be articulated clearly and using accessible language.

While the importance of providing detailed reasoning for decisions remains high, it is useful to note that some home buyers considered decisions to be too detailed. The summary page at the start of the adjudicator's decision was designed to offer an 'at-a-glance' overview of the outcome of the case for those who did not wish to read the full decision – but this feedback will be taken on board by CEDR with a view to streamlining the language used by adjudicators to make it appropriate and accessible for the intended audience.

Further, CEDR is currently in the process of building a new case management system, due to go live in 2027, so all feedback on the perceived shortcomings of the existing system is welcomed.

Our digital complaints and disputes pack, which was designed in partnership with CEDR to make it easier for home buyers to raise issues effectively, remains popular. The guide makes it easier for home buyers to identify who to go to with what issues, how to escalate complaints if they are not resolved, and what information to include and focuses on complaints relating to builders, snagging and breaches of the Code.



The pack complements our new home buyers guide, which launched in February 2026 and builds on our experience of operating the Code over the past 16 years, provides our best tips and resources to help buyers purchase a new home with confidence.

Communications and publicity

Our communications activity is designed to:

- Raise awareness of the Code among new build home buyers
- Promote and enable compliance among builders and their agents
- Champion the critical role of codes of practice and alternative dispute resolution in protecting consumers, driving up standards and offering speedy and effective redress
- Build accurate knowledge of the new homes codes marketplace so that policymakers, builders and consumers have a clear understanding of what is in place and where the gaps are

One of our priorities is working with partners and other approved codes to raise awareness of the role codes of practice play, and the valuable protection they offer, particularly in the new homes industry where other consumer protection legislation often doesn't apply. This year, we worked closely with the CTSI's Approved Code Scheme to support their 'Moments that Matter' Parliamentary event, delivered in partnership with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Consumer Protection.

The event brought together experts in codes of practice, consumer protection and dispute resolution, to discuss how the Approved Code Scheme and ADR can be harnessed to help tackle the more than £70bn of harm consumers face each year due to poor service, rogue traders, and unresolved disputes.

Code Chief Executive, Carol Brady MBE, explains the various protections available to home buyers to Matt Turmaine MP

Chief Executive, Carol Brady MBE, pictured with the Consumer Code for Home Builders Code Scheme

Advisory Forum Chair, Ron Gainsford OBE, meets Llinos Medi MP, alongside Code Chair, Noel Hunter OBE and Chief Executive, Carol Brady MBE

Code Chair, Noel Hunter OBE (left) discusses the role of codes of practice with Connor Rand MP (middle) and Carol Brady MBE (right)

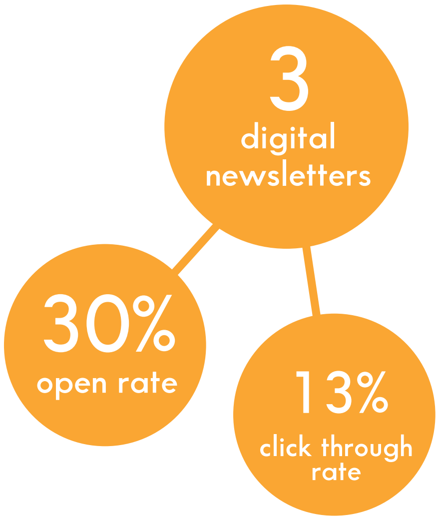
Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection, Kate Dearden MP, addresses attendees at the CTSI 'Moments that Matter' reception in partnership with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Consumer Protection.

Standing room only as speakers address the attendees at the CTSI 'Moments that Matter' reception in partnership with the All Party Parliamentary Group on Consumer Protection.

Consumer Minister, Kate Dearden MP (pictured), addressed the event and publicly backed the role of the Chartered Trading Standards (CTSI) Approved Code Scheme (ACS) in helping to both raise standards for businesses and protect consumers.

The event helped set the tone for our ongoing work with government officials and wider stakeholders to strengthen and champion the need for robust codes of practice, backed by effective sanctions and independent alternative dispute resolution to protect consumers and raise industry standards.

Newsletters



We send three digital newsletters each year directly to our growing database of builders, buyers and other stakeholders to help them stay up to date with Code news and resources as well as wider industry information.

This year, across the three newsletters we had an average open rate of approximately 30% which is in line with industry averages. Our average click rate of 13% among those who subscribe directly to our newsletter, however, is significantly higher than average – an encouraging sign of the value of the information we provide. Our newsletters are also shared in PDF form with member businesses via our supporting home warranty bodies (not tracked), published on our website and promoted via social media.

Website visitors can sign up to receive copies of our online newsletter at https://consumercode.co.uk/subscribe/

Social media

Our presence on LinkedIn continues to strengthen and generates good engagement with industry stakeholders and new followers from key industry audiences.

In the past 12 months (April 25-March 26) our number of followers increased by just over 13% to 593 followers.

We've seen continued engagement with a range of industry and consumer voices supporting and interacting with our posts and key messages.

Although we continue to promote the Code's website as the primary source of all our content, The Code's YouTube channel provides a central source of all our video content which is categorised by audience to make it easy for our stakeholders to find the content they need. Find the Code on YouTube @theCode_CCHB.

We also work with the Approved Code Scheme and our supporting home warranty providers to help amplify our reach, particularly across consumer-focused channels such as Facebook and Instagram where the Code does not have a dedicated presence.

Website

Our website provides a one stop shop of all the information and resources consumers and builders are likely to need to find out, comply with and make use of the Code and its protections.

During the year, the Code's website had 27K visitors equating to an average of 2250 visitors per month, representing a decrease of just under 44% compared with the previous year. This downward trend is being experienced across the internet as a result of AI searches often satisfying a user's query without the need for additional clicks – with some reports suggesting 60% of searches no longer yield any clicks[6].

We are mindful of generative search optimisation (GEO) in the content we produce to help ensure consumers looking for information about the Code receive accurate, helpful content. For example, ChatGPT now regularly features as one of the top referring websites for the Code and we periodically monitor the answers to typical homebuyer queries entered into different AI-assisted searches.

The Code's website registered 151K page views over the annual report period, an average of 12,583 monthly page views.

[6] https://www.forbes.com/sites/torconstantino/2025/04/14/the-60-problem---how-ai-search-is-draining-your-traffic/

Looking ahead

At the time of publishing this report, a new prime minister had just entered the doors of Number 10. We don't yet know what that might mean for government policy in our sector or whether we may see changes in the ministers leading on home building and consumer protection. We will actively monitor changes and seek to maintain and build relationships with members of parliament and government officials to ensure consumer protection in the home building industry remains high on the agenda.

Another priority for us throughout 2026/27 will be continuing to raise the public profile of the protection afforded by codes of practice, through effective joint working with the CTSI Approved Codes Scheme and new homes schemes collaboration.

As the outcome of the recent housing inquiry and related public consultations becomes clearer, we will also consider what changes may be required to ensure our Code Scheme remains fit for purpose. As ever, any review of our Code will include consultation with and input from the industry, consumer representatives and wider stakeholders.

The home building industry is so important to the UK economy as well as consumers and the challenges so complex that we would support the development of an overall housing strategy to consolidate all current areas of consultation. Without this there is a risk that the ambitions for the industry will suffer or take much longer to deliver.

Stay up to date

For the latest developments on the Code and related new homes industry updates:

Follow us on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/consumer-code/

Subscribe to our newsletter: https://consumercode.co.uk/subscribe/

CONSUMER CODE FOR HOME BUILDERS

www.consumercode.co.uk

ctsi APPROVED CODE

TradingStandards.uk

CONTACT INFORMATION

Secretariat
Consumer Code for Home Builders
Westgate House
Royland Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 2EH

Email: enquiries@consumercode.co.uk
Website: www.consumercode.co.uk
LinkedIn: @Consumer-Code
YouTube: @theCode_CCHB

Telephone: 0345 608 9797 (Monday-Friday 10am to 4pm)

Who supports the code

ctsi Chartered Trading Standards Institute | CEF Construction Employers Federation | HBA House Builders Association | Law Society of Scotland | Premier Guarantee

Checkmate powered by Lockton | HBF Home Builders Federation | warranty LABC | naea | propertymark | Retirement Housing Group

citizens advice | Delivering More Homes for Scotland | The Law Society | NHBC Raising Standards. Protecting Homeowners | UK Finance