



Norfolk County Council

Trading Standards' Consumer Services Policy

Community and Environmental Services



If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact us on 0344 800 8020

February 2020

Consumer Services Policy

In providing consumer services we aim to contribute to the Together for Norfolk outcomes of:

- **Strong Communities**
 - People of all ages enjoy good health and increased wellbeing
 - Services in communities are joined up and more able to meet people's needs
 - Communities are safe and resilient
- **Thriving People**
 - All families, older people and people with learning or physical disabilities are supported to live well, independently in their community
- **Growing Economy**
 - More businesses start, grow and invest in Norfolk
 - The local economy is inclusive and supports and benefits local business and communities

We achieve this by concentrating on the following key areas of activity:

- Safeguarding vulnerable people and building community resilience with partners; by tackling scams, fraud and rogue traders; including through our Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP), No Cold Calling Zones and Trusted Trader scheme
- Protecting consumers and supporting legitimate businesses by tackling non-compliance, focusing on the most detrimental trading
- Through programmes of intelligence-led market surveillance, education and enforcement activities:
 - Safeguarding communities and public health by tackling the supply of age restricted products to young people
 - Ensuring fair trading of products and services, and the safety and legal measurement of products

We will deliver these by working with partners, where possible, to obtain the best outcomes for consumers.

1. Working with the Citizens Advice Consumer Service which provides consumers with information and advice

We work in partnership with the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) which provides information and advice to consumers to enable them to:

- Avoid problems with traders,
- Make informed choices in future transactions, and
- Deal with problems should they arise.

The CACS provides information via their Advice guide website:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

A problem with a trader or a product can be reported to Trading Standards by contacting our partners the [Citizens Advice consumer service](#) via:

- Telephone: 0808 223 1133, open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. Closed on bank holidays.
- Textphone: 18001 03454 04 05 06, or
- [Online enquiry form](#)

The Citizens Advice Consumer Service will provide information about how to resolve the consumer issues raised. They will then share the information with Trading Standards so that we can tackle wider problems with businesses at a local level. We use the information that Citizens Advice Consumer Service shares with us to direct our resources to the areas of greatest need. We might use this information to take action to stop the trader from acting unfairly, for example by educating them about the law. If necessary, we may take legal action against them to stop their illegal practices.

The Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline will immediately transfer to us those matters considered to be urgent. For example:

- Doorstep rogue traders – uninvited traders in the middle of work or returning later
- Safety complaints – where an unsafe product has caused injury or damage to property or there is an immediate risk of injury
- Short measure deliveries of heating fuel, coal or sand and ballast.

What we can't do – consumer advice and redress

We do not provide consumer advice. If a consumer need consumer advice or has a consumer complaint, they should contact our partners Citizens Advice Consumer Service as above.

We will not obtain redress on behalf of consumers and we are not able to pursue cases in the civil courts for them. Consumers have rights if they pay for faulty goods or a substandard service. CACS will give them professional advice and assistance on their rights and how to obtain appropriate redress. This may require the consumer to take the matter to a civil court.

We are not able to provide feedback on individual complaints to CACS. After a consumer has reported a matter to the CACS we will only make contact with them if we need further information or cooperation. We will only provide feedback if formal action has been taken to deal with the matter reported.

2. Safeguarding vulnerable people and building community resilience with partners; by tackling scams, fraud and rogue traders; including through our Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP), No Cold Calling Zones and Trusted Trader scheme

We work with the National Trading Standards Scams Team (NTSST), Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP) and the Scams Prevention Service to safeguard vulnerable people and build community resilience to scams.

National Trading Standards Scams Team

We work with the National Trading Standards Scams Team to tackle mass marketing scams and disrupt the operations of perpetrators behind mail scams. With the team, we identify and support victims of mass marketed frauds. In addition, we participate in and promote the Friends Against Scams scheme. This initiative aims to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to take a stand against scams. We commission the delivery of training sessions, by Community Champions, on how to spot the signs of scams and what to do if you suspect you or someone you know is a victim of a scam. With increased knowledge and awareness, people can make scams part of everyday conversation with their family, friends and neighbours; which will enable them to protect themselves and others.

Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP)

We participate in the Norfolk Against Scams Partnership (NASP), a partnership of organisations committed to taking a stand against scams. The partnership's aim is to make Norfolk a scam free county. Partners work together to support residents and businesses in Norfolk to help protect them from scams, doorstep crime and fraud.

Scam Alerts

Consumer Scam Alerts are available via our [website](#), our Twitter account @NorfolkCCTS and our Facebook page.

No Cold Calling Zones are designated areas where the resident community declares they no longer wish to accept traders calling at their homes without an appointment. The main aim of the zones is to reduce cold calling by unwanted traders. We will support a community to set up an NCCZ where this is suitable and will proactively seek to set up NCCZs where information and intelligence suggests this would be beneficial to the community. We work with the community and community representatives such as Neighbourhood Watch coordinators.

Trusted Trader Scheme

Our Trusted Trader scheme provides information to help consumers find reputable traders. Traders on the scheme agree to comply with consumer protection law and to follow good business practice. Consumers can check out customer feedback via our website prior to engaging with a trader, and there is a dispute resolution procedure via Ombudsman Services, a national scheme which operates independently to resolve complaints between consumers and businesses that are signed up to the scheme.

Consumer Champions

The Consumer Champion network is an initiative from Trading Standards to reach out to Norfolk residents to build resilience against rogue traders and scams and ensure people can access their consumer rights.

The initiative engages and involves local community members and organisations to ensure that the residents within their community have the information and knowledge to:

- Recognise a scam and protect themselves from them
- Say no to rogue traders and ensure the vulnerable in the community are safe from them
- Access advice and information on consumer issues.

Community Champions

We also run a parallel scheme designed for organisations, to ensure that the customers and clients with whom they connect have information and knowledge about staying safe from scams and rogue traders.

3. Protecting consumers and supporting legitimate businesses by tackling non-compliance, focusing on the most detrimental trading

Most Detrimental Traders and Sectors

We receive a wide range of information, intelligence and data from our partner agencies, including CACS, industry bodies, national and regional professional bodies and enforcement agencies. We monitor this data and identify trading malpractice by individual traders or market sectors. We target our resources towards those businesses or sectors which are causing the greatest detriment to consumers. We do this by providing information, advice and support to the businesses, or sometimes, by taking formal enforcement action.

Enforcement action is undertaken in accordance with our [Enforcement Policy](#). Whilst recognising that most traders want to comply with legal requirements, we also recognise that some will operate outside the law (both intentionally and unintentionally). A staged approach to enforcement is adopted with advice and informal action fully explored to resolve the matter in the first instance, if appropriate. However, we will consider taking immediate formal action for the most serious breaches, which include:

- Where there is a significant risk to public health, safety or wellbeing, or damage to property, infrastructure or the environment, or
- Fraud or deceptive/misleading practices that affect the collective interests of Norfolk based businesses or consumers.

What we can't do – enforcement

We are not able to investigate or take action on all matters reported to us. We prioritise our finite resources to tackle the issues which cause the most detriment to Norfolk businesses and consumers.

Where we take enforcement action because of information we receive the focus is on bringing the business(es) into compliance with trading standards. We do not resolve individual disputes with a trader; although our enforcement action will provide support to victims. This may include seeking compensation during legal proceedings.

4. Through programmes of intelligence-led market surveillance, education and enforcement activities:

- **Safeguarding communities and public health by tackling the supply of age restricted products to young people**
- **Ensuring fair trading of products and services, and the safety and legal measurement of products.**

We provide advice and support to Norfolk based businesses to ensure they comply with trading standards.

We undertake intelligence-led market surveillance programmes to monitor traders and their practices and products to ensure that trading standards are being maintained in the county. This includes inspections at high-risk businesses, sampling and analysis of food against legal standards, test purchasing and testing of consumer products against safety standards and testing of weighing and measuring equipment.

We focus on new and existing threats, identified through intelligence, local strategic and tactical assessments and working collaboratively with partners.

We take steps to prevent illegal and/or unsafe products from entering the marketplace or to remove them from the marketplace. This work is undertaken in line with our [Enforcement Policy](#).