



National Consumer Week 2018

Know your online marketplace rights

26 November - 2 December

Summary

National Consumer Week (NCW) is an annual campaign which aims to raise awareness of consumer issues, rights and resources available to help people when they need it. Every year the campaign covers a different topic, and this year our theme is online marketplaces, specifically focussing on those that sell goods.

Online marketplaces are platforms (websites/apps) which generally don't own the goods being sold. Instead they're a place for people and traders to sell items online. This means that sales are often consumer to consumer or small or medium enterprises (SME) to consumer sales.

This year's campaign will be launching on 'Cyber Monday' a big pre-Christmas shopping day where there will be millions of people shopping online, including using online marketplaces. Online shopping is now a big part of everyday life in the UK. In 2016, £154 billion was spent on the internet in the UK,¹ and the vast majority of consumers (84%) are considered online shoppers.² This shift to online spending is increasing, and while many online sales will be with established businesses, a significant proportion are from small or private sellers via online marketplaces.

While there are also benefits, **people are having a range of problems when using online marketplaces.** The main issues consumers reported to the Citizens Advice consumer service were:

- being sold faulty goods, or goods that went faulty shortly after sale.
- goods not arriving or not being sent by the seller.
- goods being misdescribed in the sales adverts.

When problems occur, consumers often don't know their rights might be different.

- Nearly half of people (48%) didn't think there was a difference in their consumer rights when buying online compared to buying in a store, despite the fact that they usually have enhanced rights on returns for online purchases.
- A significant proportion of people didn't know their rights changed depending on the type of seller - for example a trader or private seller - with over a third (35%) saying there wasn't a difference in their rights and a further 9% saying they didn't know either way.³

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39655039>

² https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/global/migrated_documents/corporate/online-delivery-rights-report-final-230315--2-.pdf

³ [BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker August 2018](#)

Buyers can have problems when seeking redress.

- The most common redress issue reported to the consumer service is where the consumer wanted a refund but was struggling to get one.
- 4 in 10 people (39%) said they were unaware of the consumer dispute resolution services that may be open to them.⁴

This rise in online purchasing, combined with the problems reported to the consumer service, show a clear need to make sure that consumers are aware of their rights when using online marketplaces.

Campaign aims

1. Raise awareness and understanding amongst consumers about their rights when buying goods on online marketplaces.
2. Raise awareness of avenues of redress amongst consumers in cases where something has gone wrong.
3. Raise awareness and understanding amongst private sellers of their responsibilities when selling goods on online marketplaces.
4. Effectively support local campaigners to further the aims of the campaign, and provide resources, including materials and messaging, to maximise the impact of the campaign.

Messaging and resources

NCW 2018 will run under the campaign strapline of “Know your online marketplace”. The hashtag for the campaign will be #NCW.

We'll be raising awareness of consumer rights when using an online marketplace and how these might be different compared to when shopping elsewhere, particularly if the transaction is with a private seller as opposed to a trader or business.

We'll also be increasing understanding of the responsibilities private sellers have when selling through an online marketplace, with a particular focus on delivery. For example, not all private sellers are aware that they must buy the correct type of postage for the good and they are at fault if they don't.

Finally, we'll be informing people what they can do if an online marketplace purchase has gone wrong, and signposting them to avenues of redress. This will include advice pages, the consumer service and where appropriate alternative dispute resolutions.

Citizens Advice will be providing resources, including leaflets, posters, a model press release and a social media pack. There will also be a variety of resources from our partners including tips, graphics and videos you can share online. Please share these resources with other consumer campaigners in your area.

Resources and more information on the campaign can be found at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/NCW18.

⁴ [BEIS Public Attitudes Tracker August 2018](#)

How you can get involved

Whether you only have an hour to spare or the whole week, there is lots of ways your organisation can get involved in National Consumer Week. Below are some ideas, set out with the Citizens Advice service and local partners in mind - although other organisations are welcome to join in and use the resources.

If you have an hour:

- Place National Consumer Week 2018 posters in your public areas.
- Make leaflets available in your reception/waiting area.
- Use notice boards and electronic displays to highlight top tips for consumers when using online marketplaces.
- If you attend regular meetings with your local authority, Trading Standards or other community groups, let them know the campaign is happening.
- Feature National Consumer Week on the front page of the website.
- Update your social media graphics (Facebook cover image, Twitter background etc.) to campaign images.

If you have a day:

- Schedule regular posts on your social media channels using #NCW.
- Contact local MPs, Assembly Members and Councillors to highlight the campaign.
- Send a press release to the local media.
- Invite other organisations, libraries, and community centres to promote the key messages in their premises.

If you have a week:

- Hold an event or put up a stall in your local area to raise awareness of consumer rights when using online marketplaces.
- Contact your local radio stations in advance to pitch for an interview about the campaign. Case studies will really help highlight the problems people can have when using online marketplaces and why they need to know their rights.
- Run a live online marketplace advice Q&A or discussion in your local area using social media, for example Twitter or Facebook.

Help, support and advice for the campaign

Whatever you do for National Consumer Week, please let us know about it:

- If you are tweeting remember to use #NCW.
- You can email us pictures and updates directly to campaigns@citizensadvice.org.uk.
- If you are part of the Citizens Advice service you can let us know about your activities by sending a Local Action Reporting Form - www.citizensadvice.org.uk/cablink/larf.
- If you have any questions about this briefing or National Consumer Week more generally please contact us at campaigns@citizensadvice.org.uk.