



# Borderwise:

## Consumer Issues

This information sheet aims to provide a general overview of consumer advice for those who have a problem with goods or services they bought, or paid for, in Northern Ireland



### Consumer Advice

If you are not satisfied with the quality of goods or services you receive there are certain laws that can help you sort it out. In most cases traders will try to resolve the problem. However, if you are not satisfied with their response there are a number of statutory and voluntary consumer bodies in Northern Ireland that can inform you of your rights as a consumer and help you enforce these rights.



### How to complain?

If you need to make a complaint about poor service or faulty goods make sure you:



- Know what your rights are
- Return the goods to the supplier who sold it to you (you should not return the goods to the manufacturer)
- Deal with the issue as soon as possible
- Do not attempt to repair the item yourself or give it to anyone else to repair it
- Make sure that you have a proof of purchase
- If your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may want to pursue an alternative course of action.

### Ombudsman

Some professional services are covered by an ombudsman scheme. If you have tried to resolve the dispute by using the company's complaints procedure and are not satisfied with the response you can approach the relevant ombudsman to investigate the decision. Further information can be found at [www.bioa.org.uk](http://www.bioa.org.uk)

### Small Claims Procedure

The Small Claims Court is particularly important for dealing with consumer complaints. It allows certain types of claims to be decided informally by the county court, usually without the need for a solicitor or barrister. You may take a claim to the Small Claims Court if the amount involved is less than £2,000. The procedure involved is simple; application forms are available from any county court office, Trading Standards office or the Northern Ireland Court Service website [www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

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## Main Consumer Agencies

Your chances of getting your complaint resolved successfully are much better if you know your rights. The consumer agencies outlined below can inform you of your rights as a consumer and help you enforce these rights.

### General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland is a statutory body whose aims are to promote and safeguard the interests of consumers. The Council campaigns on behalf of consumers for the best possible standards of service and protection; undertakes research and data collection; gives advice, information and issues publications. It deals with individual complaints about passenger transport, coal, natural gas and electricity. Complaints Line: 0845 601 6022

Website: [www.consumerCouncil.org.uk](http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk)

### Consumer Line

Consumer direct is a telephone helpline and online service offering free advice on consumer issues.

The website contains advice and information on consumer rights and what to do if you have a problem. Tel: 0845 660 6262 or by visiting the Website: [www.consumerline.org](http://www.consumerline.org)

### Citizens Advice (CAB)

This service is a registered National charity with many local offices throughout Northern Ireland.

Citizens Advice Bureaux provide comprehensive free information, advice and advocacy on a wide range of consumer rights and entitlements. Website: [www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk) or [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

### Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is a government department whose aim is to protect consumers by ensuring that trading practices are fair and by encouraging competition between businesses. The OFT produces leaflets for consumers giving information and advice on various subjects, for example, buying by post, obtaining credit and using estate agents. Further information can be found by visiting the Website: [www.oft.gov.uk](http://www.oft.gov.uk)

### Utilities – Gas, Electricity, Telephone and Water

If you have a problem with your utility supplier contact the company first to give them an opportunity to resolve the problem. If you are not satisfied with their response you can contact the organisation below.

### Utility Regulators

Gas, electricity and water are regulated by Ofreg. Tel: 028 9031 1575 or by visiting the website: [www.ofreg.nics.gov.uk](http://www.ofreg.nics.gov.uk)

Telephone services are regulated by Ofcom. Tel 020 7981 3040 or by visiting the website: [www.ofcom.org.uk](http://www.ofcom.org.uk)

### Other Useful Resources

[www.bbc.co.uk/watchdog](http://www.bbc.co.uk/watchdog) includes information on how to make a complaint, write a letter of complaint and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

## Contact Details

Borderwise, Fermanagh House, Broadmeadow Place, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, BT74 7HR  
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Email: [borderwise@citizensadvice.co.uk](mailto:borderwise@citizensadvice.co.uk)

