



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

CONSUMER RIGHTS

**Implementing the Consumer
Rights Bill**

OCTOBER 2014

Implementing the Consumer Rights Bill

Background

The Consumer Rights Bill is the biggest overhaul of consumer law for a generation. However, the Bill will not achieve its full impact unless consumers and traders know about the new regime and are adept at using it. This is why planning for implementation has been a key part of work on the Bill for over a year.

We intend the Consumer Rights Bill to come into force on 1 **October 2015**, although this is of course subject to the will of Parliament. This strikes the right balance between allowing sufficient time for businesses to understand and implement the changes the Bill proposes with the need to avoid delay in consumers and businesses benefiting from the new law.

We have drawn together a wide spectrum of consumer, business and enforcer representatives to work with us on a co-ordinated approach which will consider the content, channels and timing of guidance, advice and publicity for the new consumer law. The Implementation Group includes:

- British Chambers of Commerce
- British Independent Retail Association
- British Retail Consortium
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Communications Consumer Panel
- Competition and Markets Authority
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Interactive Media in Retail Group
- Law Society
- Money Saving Expert
- OFCOM
- PhonePay Plus
- Resolver
- Tech UK
- The Association for UK Interactive Entertainment
- Trading Standards Institute
- Which?

Businesses

Businesses have told us that they will need six months' notice to make changes to processes and information required under the Bill. Guidance for businesses should therefore be available from **April 2015**. This guidance will be easy to access and to understand. Businesses will be able to see at a glance the key changes in the law, as well as being able easily to find more detailed guidance as and when they need it.

Our plan is to communicate the changes well to businesses and consumers. There will be a high level summary on Gov.uk with links to other websites with more detailed guidance and where to get help.

The primary source of business guidance will be the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) **Business Companion** website. This will present high level advice and short guides focusing on the key changes, which will be aimed at SMEs. Businesses will also be able to delve deeper into the detail of the law on a particular issue if they wish. The content and presentation of the Business Companion advice will be tested rigorously to ensure it meets the needs of businesses, particularly SMEs.

Guidance on the unfair terms and private actions elements of the Bill will be produced and hosted by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), with summaries available on Business Companion and effective signposting to the more detailed advice.

In addition to generic guidance, the Implementation Group will support regulators and trade bodies that wish to develop sector specific business guidance between April and October 2015.

Business guidance will be supplemented by ongoing support from trading standards authorities, who already work with their local businesses or through the prime authority scheme.

We will continue to work closely with the TSI, CMA, trade bodies, HMRC and others, using a variety of channels, including social media, to ensure as many businesses as possible are aware of the changes and are ready for the new law.

Consumers

Consumers will need a basic awareness of their updated rights, and should also know where to get advice on a specific problem with faulty goods, services or digital content. Unlike businesses, consumers will not need this until the new law comes into force; to publicise the new law too early could lead to confusion about which rights apply.

The Citizens Advice website will therefore be updated for 1 **October 2015**, and we will be working closely with consumer groups to develop effective publicity campaigns, including the use of social media.

We have also worked with the consumer and business groups to produce a high level summary of consumer rights for businesses to use in their customer communications. This summary will also signpost consumers to more detailed advice on specific problems from the Citizens Advice website and helplines. Consumer advisers for the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline will be trained between April and October 2015.

Consumer Law Enforcers

Enforcers will need to understand the new law both to ensure compliance and to provide advice to businesses. Training and advice to local and national enforcers will be provided, so that they are ready to assist businesses in advance of the new law coming into force.

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