



Enquiries

We logged 76 consumer enquiries where we provided advice, but the number assisted will have been higher as we improved our call logging in 2019.

In many cases, the consumer had not yet properly complained to the business concerned and we explained the process they should follow. Approximately a quarter of the enquiries this year related to problems with deliveries and a further quarter to repairs or faults.

Just 3 escalated to our formal mediation process.

Complaints mediation

Number of consumer complaints for which we provided mediation during the year:

- 43 received
- 44 closed

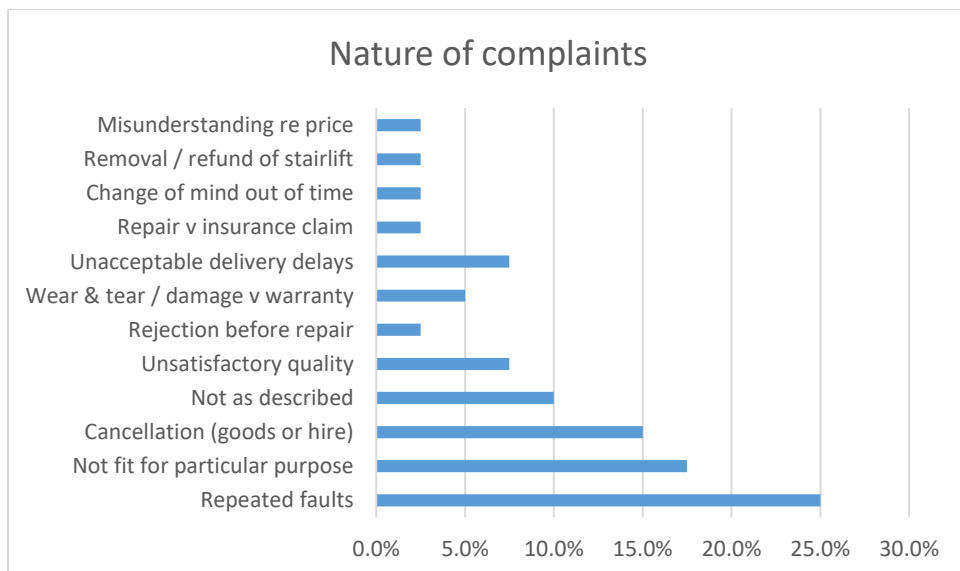
Average number of days to resolution: 41

Number of complaints we declined to handle or found not valid: 10

Arbitration

Just one case was referred to our independent arbitrator, relating to whether a riser recliner chair was of satisfactory quality. The arbitrator found in favour of the complainant, who received a replacement chair.

Summary



Consumer detriment avoided: £17,869

Other solutions offered and accepted included repairs, extensions of warranty, annual service, and replacements free of charge.

Mystery shopping

Mystery shopping was conducted for us by the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers [RIDC](#), who organised 30 tests which were a mix of shop visit, home visit, and telephone calls. This provides a snapshot of how a business performs.

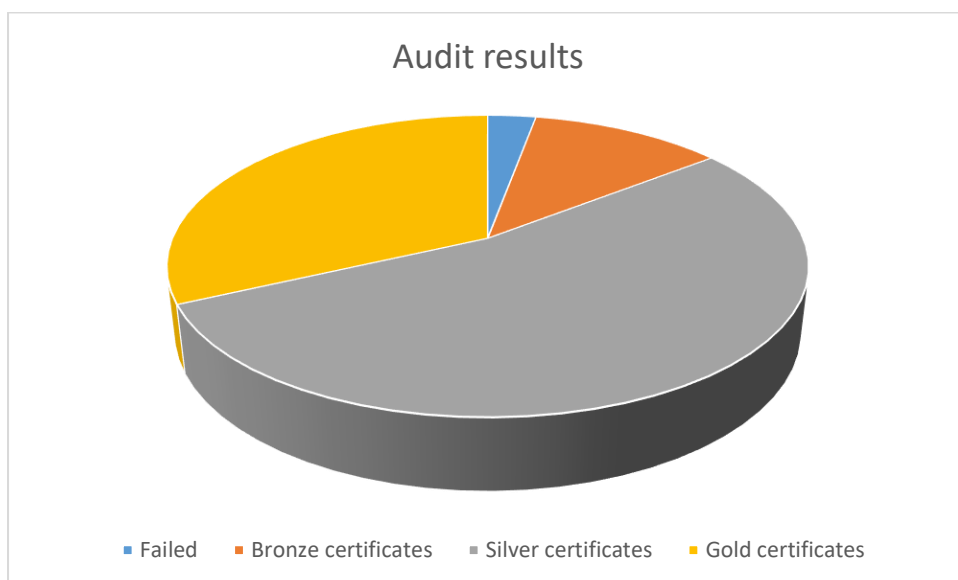
Summary of findings:

- 1 tester reported the shop they were to test was closed during normal hours 2 times in 2 weeks
- 9 cases the tester did not think their needs were adequately discussed
- 11 cases staff did not clearly identify themselves (on the phone / in shops)
- 17 cases the testers had to push for price information

The need for staff to clearly identify themselves has been highlighted before and businesses need to make sure their staff understand how much people value knowing who they are talking to. It is also essential for any follow-up by the customer.

Audits

Our small team of auditors conducted 69 face-to-face audits of member businesses. We grade the results so we can assign businesses with a certificate reflecting how well they are complying with the requirements in the Code.



The two businesses which failed their audit did not renew their membership.

An increasing number of businesses in our sector that we would primarily class as manufacturers or business-to-business distributors now occasionally sell direct to consumers. The audits evidence that they need to understand the differences for terms and conditions, for example not being able to charge re-stocking fees and that time can be of the essence for delivery to a consumer. The absence of a written complaint procedure was also a theme for rectification.

The results overall were very encouraging.