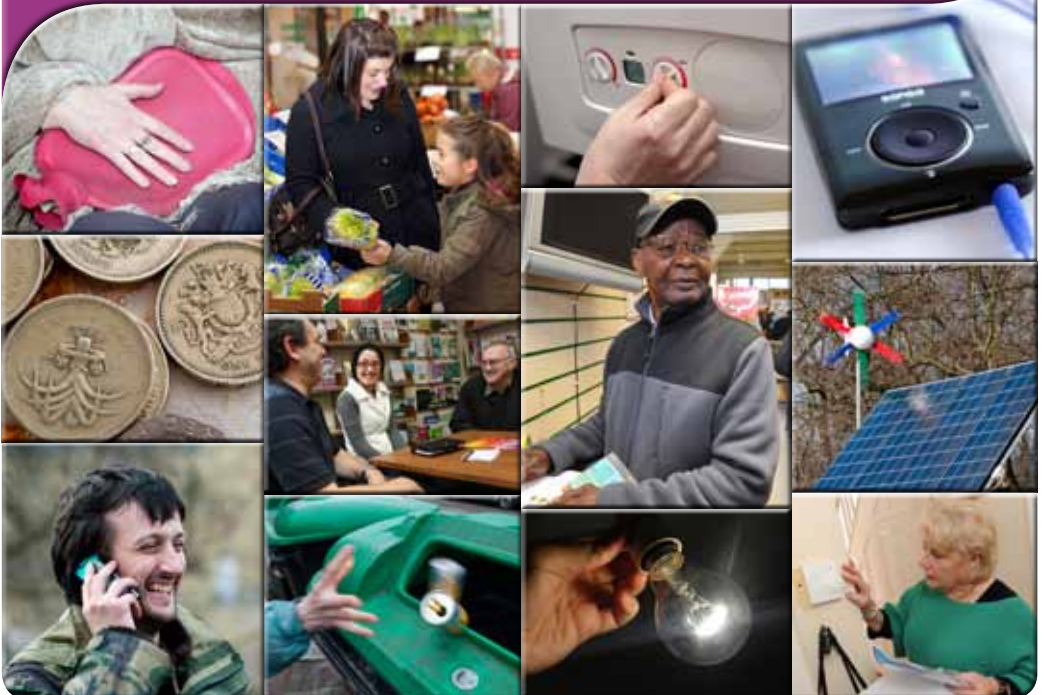


# Who we are, what we do



# Our work

Consumer Focus is the consumer champion for England, Wales, Scotland and (for postal consumers) Northern Ireland. We operate across the whole of the economy, persuading businesses and public services to put consumers at the heart of what they do.

Consumer Focus gives a strong voice to consumers on the issues that matter to them and works to secure a fair deal on their behalf.

We work with consumers and a range of organisations to tackle the problems customers face and to achieve creative solutions that make a difference to peoples' lives.



# Consumer Focus

- Identifies issues of concern within various markets and services that don't work for consumers
- Engages with issues through research, policy development, and working with stakeholders and consumers
- Campaigns to bring about needed change

We work with companies and the public sector to ensure they put consumers first, and challenge those who fail to do so.

## Helping vulnerable

With strong powers set out in law, we are well positioned to help vulnerable consumers. Our powers include the right to investigate any consumer complaint if it is of wider interest, the right to demand information from providers, and the ability to make an official 'super-complaint' about failing services.

## Our priorities

Consumer Focus has four strategic aims to achieve a fair deal for consumers:

**Access for all** creating an economy in which everyone can access the essential services they need and where the poor no longer pay more or get less for their money

**Quality of service** improving customer service and removing unnecessary problems that generate complaints from consumers

**Value** helping people get better value by increasing the influence they have over the goods and services they receive

**Sustainability** harnessing the appetite of consumers to adopt more sustainable lifestyles

# people

Support is also available, for staff at consumer advice agencies (eg Citizens Advice and Trading Standards officers), with energy or postal queries. We have a range of tools including our online Knowledge Base, our telephone based Ask the Adviser service and a dedicated email network and website.

Our Extra Help Unit works with vulnerable consumers to help resolve individual complaints in energy or post – for example, if someone is facing disconnection. Vulnerable consumers can be referred to the Extra Help Unit by Consumer Direct, their MP, Member of the Scottish Parliament or Member of the Welsh Assembly.

## Our work makes a difference

**Through our evidence, research, campaigning, advocacy and partnerships we have either delivered or contributed to:**

- We provided direct help to the most vulnerable energy consumers, winning more than £700,000 in compensation for more than 7,000 people and ensuring the rules on disconnecting vulnerable consumers were rewritten
- We identified the barriers to low-income consumers accessing the web. Along with lack of access to banking services, this is the main cause of the ‘poverty premium’ which means that low-income consumers pay up to £1,000 per year more for goods and services
- Energy suppliers have now said they will respect the wishes of people who say they do not want to be disturbed by cold calls from sales staff. We continue to work to address concerns about doorstep selling
- By using our legal power to make a super-complaint to the Office of Fair Trading, we raised the profile of the difficulty of switching cash Individual Saving Accounts (ISAs). More than 15 million people have such accounts with £168 billion on deposit

- We revealed that more than half of consumers surveyed had received a 'sorry you were out' card even though they were at home. Royal Mail is now taking action to stop this happening
- We drew attention to significant gaps in the way Jobcentre Plus provides information and the lack of a consumer-focused strategy for Directgov
- Consumer Focus Scotland's work on user involvement in the scrutiny of public services was critical in the adoption of a user focus duty in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill. The Bill's main purpose is to simplify Scotland's public bodies and regulatory landscape. Our work will ensure consumers are at the heart of public services
- Consumer Focus Wales has worked with a range of partners to publicise the progress on the recommendations in the Pennington Report on an E.coli outbreak. By revealing progress to date, we have highlighted the pressing need for more money and stronger leadership to prevent a repeat outbreak
- Consumer Focus Post (Northern Ireland) released the groundbreaking *Cross-border post* report to widespread media coverage and support from influential stakeholders and politicians throughout Northern Ireland. No information was previously available publicly about the performance of mail services between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; this survey brings to light the lacklustre mail service between these two neighbouring jurisdictions
- Our National Social Marketing Centre produced the first online social marketing planning guide and toolbox. Its training programme provided over 4,000 NHS staff with the skills to deliver effective and healthy interventions at local and national levels. This work is a core part of the Department of Health's social marketing strategy 'Ambitions for Health'
- To make sure people get the best value from their mobile phone contract we have made our *Mobiles best deal* advice leaflet available through Carphone Warehouse and every local library in the country

For more information on our work see our website  
[www.consumerfocus.org.uk](http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk)

If you require this publication in Braille,  
large print or on audio CD please contact us.

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired consumers  
can contact Consumer Focus via Text Relay:

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