

CPG on Consumer Affairs

Minutes

Wednesday 24 September 2015

Q1.03, Scottish Parliament

Present:

Cameron Buchanan MSP
Steven Bunch (Competition and Markets Authority)
Adam Gaunt (Chartered Trading Standards Institute, Scotland branch)
Joe Glancy (Money Advice Scotland)
Fiona Harper (SELECT)
Patrick Hogan (Citizens Advice Scotland)
Steven Livingston (Citizens Advice Scotland)
Niki Maclean (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)
Graeme Paton (Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland)
Fiona Richardson (Trading Standards Scotland)
Sheila Scobie (Competition and Markets Authority)
Dave Thompson MSP

Apologies:

David Buchanan-Cook (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)
Ken Daly (Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland)
Susan Love (FSB)
Mark McGinty (Chartered Trading Standards Institute)
Gordon Robb (Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland)
David Wright (SELECT)

1. Introduction

- Dave Thompson (DT) welcomed participants and confirmed that the group had been formally approved by the parliament's Standards Committee.
- Minutes from the group's previous meeting were approved by the group.
- Though catering wasn't able to be arranged for this meeting, Fiona Harper (FH) from SELECT confirmed that they would still provide catering for the group going forward.

2. Group discussion

Threat and impact of scams

- Fiona Richardson (FR) from Trading Standards Scotland gave an overview of common scams and their impact on citizens.

- Explained the current challenges around enforcement of existing legislation and uptake of new processes and technologies designed to limit the effectiveness of scams.
- The elderly can be particularly vulnerable to scams, especially if they have responded to a scam in the past.
- Scots have been found to be targeted more by nuisance calls than those in the rest of the UK and international examples best practice were discussed.
- Greater education and awareness agreed to be key measures to defend against scams.
- FR to forward a new Trading Standards Scotland report on nuisance calls to CAS who will then circulate it around group members.
- Agreed that a letter from DT's office to go to the UK Government and CC'd to Fergus Ewing to ask for an appraisal of work that's being done on call blockers, new scam alert technology (alerts on mobile devices, etc) and possible implementation of opt-in arrangements for marketing calls. CAS to draft the letter and circulate around to group members for comment.

Devolution of consumer protection legislation

- FH discussed SELECT's concerns around the regulation of the electricians and highlighted their calls for greater rules to govern the sector.
- Current regulation/quality assurance mechanisms are falling short and failing to stop cowboy tradespeople from operating.
- Group discussed similar situations in other sectors.
- FH to draft a letter to go to BIS and CC'd to Fergus Ewing from the group (CAS to circulate to members for comment once received) in relation to electrician regulation in the first instance. The group will then examine their response at November's meeting and determine next steps. DT suggested a scheme within the context of Scotland's current powers could be developed to help achieve some of SELECT's consumer protection ends.
- FH to circulate SELECT stats on complaint numbers to group members.

3. Discussion of future topics

- Group agreed that the topics for discussion at the next meeting will be a talk on Trading Standards review reports and on Citizens Advice Scotland's work on rural consumer issues.

4. AOB

- Patrick Hogan told the group he was to leave CAS at the end of the week and that admin of the group would pass to Steven Livingstone of CAS.

5. Date of next meeting

- Wednesday 11 November 2015, CR6, Scottish Parliament.