

CONSUMING PASSIONS

a key stage 4 teacher resource exploring
the consumer strand of citizenship

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www.ncc.org.uk/policy/education.htm

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Foreword

Citizenship education aims to help us all play a more effective role in society. But in today's 'consuming' world, someone lacking consumer skills would fail to do this. Basic consumer skills in economic transactions are now a pre-requisite for active citizenship. To be truly effective and demanding in selecting and using goods and services consumers need to be able to manage resources, obtain information about competing products and services, and they need to evaluate one product against another in order to make a choice.

All of us consume goods and services. Over the years consumer education has moved gradually away from a 'housekeeping' approach where value for money and shopping habits were the focus. As globalisation continues consumer education is increasingly concerned with the wider society and environment in which we all live. This involves exploring the broader dimensions of consumerism beyond pure economic transactions, examining the way consumer issues touch upon social, environmental and political concerns. Citizenship education is an ideal vehicle for learning about consumer issues and value-based decision making. Citizenship education will breath new life into consumer education and has the potential to make a huge impact on the skills of consumers in this country.

Anna Bradley

Director, National Consumer Council

The Institute for Citizenship

The Institute for Citizenship is an independent charitable trust. It was established in 1992 to promote informed active participation in democracy and society. The Institute works directly with teachers and students to develop and pilot effective models of citizenship education and accessible material for lessons. We also provide in-service training for teachers and schools on a range of issues related to citizenship and teaching. We work closely with a range of partner organisations to enable us to continue our work in helping schools deliver good quality citizenship education.

The National Consumer Council

The National Consumer Council is a policy and research organisation with a special focus on the needs of disadvantaged consumers. It looks for the big consumer issues of the future and lobbies to shape today's consumer policy debate. It is independent of government, but benefits from a close working relationship, pressing its case in a way others cannot. And it has sister organisations in Wales and Scotland, and strong links in Northern Ireland, providing a good basis for representing all consumers in the the UK and Europe.

Introduction

The knowledge and understanding element of the citizenship curriculum contains the following strand: (KS4)

1. *Pupils should be taught about: the rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees*

This resource is aimed at helping non-specialist teachers to deliver the specialist area of consumer rights and responsibilities to key stage 4 students. Ideally the consumer strand of citizenship would be taught by a specialist in consumer education. However, this will not always be the case, and many teachers will need support and dedicated resources to help deliver this important element of Citizenship. Consumer education itself has a chequered history in British schools. It has existed in many guises, but has almost disappeared in recent years. The introduction of citizenship education should go some way to ensuring that consumer education is placed firmly on the educational map.

● **WHAT SHOULD THE AIMS OF CONSUMER EDUCATION IN CITIZENSHIP BE?**

One aim should be to provide students with good, basic consumer knowledge and skills. Citizenship education aims to enable young adults to play an effective role in society and, given the importance of consuming in today's world, someone lacking basic consumer skills would fail to do this. Thus, it can be argued that basic consumer skills are a pre-requisite for active citizenship. These skills include pre-purchase planning, managing money, analysis and interpretation of information and negotiation.

A second aim should be to encourage consumers to make responsible decisions. Here students could explore the wider dimension of consuming, examining the ways in which consumer issues touch upon social, environmental, political, local, national and global concerns. From the South African boycott through to ethical investments and organic food, consumer decisions are becoming increasingly political. And for young adults who cannot vote, consumer choice is one of the main ways of actively expressing ethical and political opinion. The number of young vegetarians shows how important this is.

This pack covers both of these aims, focusing on some of the main consumer skills and, where possible, highlighting those that have a strong citizenship feel. Students are usually keen, enthusiastic consumers, so they should relish the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge and skills in this area. Hopefully, this resource will make the process easier and more enjoyable for the teacher as well.

It is worth remembering that, due to curriculum space, this resource can only provide a broad overview of consumer issues. Some of the issues are more complex than can be presented here, but the lesson should nevertheless provide a sound introduction to some of the main consumer issues.

● **USING THE RESOURCES**

Citizenship will be delivered differently in every school. Resources need to be flexible to reflect this diversity. This resource has been designed to be used either as a stand-alone unit or to be dipped into for individual lessons. Most of the lessons contain more activities than could be fitted into a 45-60 minute lesson. This allows teachers to split the materials over two or more lessons or to cherry-pick the elements of the lesson that would be most suitable for their group.

● CONSUMER SKILLS AND ATTITUDES

There is broad agreement among the main consumer organisations in the UK that all people should be skilled and informed consumers. The National Consumer Education Partnership (NCEP), representative of these organisations, has developed a Framework of Consumer Skills and Attitudes. The chart below references the six sections of this pack against the key elements of the framework.

	Consumer values and behaviour				Consumers in the market place				Consumer rights and responsibilities	
	Making responsible choices	Managing resources	Consequences of consumer behaviour	Consumer influence	Product information	Advertising and sales techniques	Sources of advice and information	Using goods and services	Rights and responsibilities	Consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction
Sect. 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sect. 2					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sect. 3		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Sect. 4	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sect. 5				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Sect. 6			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

This framework has purposefully been developed so it is:

- generic and therefore accessible for all those involved in consumer education
- concise in order to identify the desirable skills and attitudes which are achievable in a variety of contexts
- progressive to allow for a number of entry points for the development of consumer skills and attitudes through different life stages.

A copy of the full framework which breaks these headings into levels is available on the Internet by visiting www.ncep.org.uk



I want! I want!

Understanding consumer needs & wants

1. I want! I want!

● **OVERVIEW**

Discussion, short exercises and a worksheet around the idea of needs and wants.

● **AIMS**

- To make students aware of the difference between needs and wants.
- To raise awareness of different reasons for wanting goods and services and focus their minds on prioritising desires.
- To increase students' understanding of how needs and wants may be fulfilled.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- identify basic needs, as opposed to wants
- explain their own needs and wants
- discuss what might influence their choice
- identify how and why wants and needs might differ according to circumstances
- explain why we need to prioritise our needs and wants.

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Basic goods and services are the things we need to maintain a reasonable lifestyle in the society in which we live. Basic goods satisfy our needs. In this country, basic goods and services include clean water, food, shelter, clothes, heating, education and health care.

Luxury goods are things that go beyond our basic needs – things that may make life fun, or easier. These are things that we do not necessarily need but we may want a swimming pool or a fast car, for example.

People today have access to a vast array of consumer goods and services; we are often told we live in a consumer society that encourages a high level of consumer spending. However, not everyone has the same access to such goods and services – what we can afford depends on the resources available to us, so that even in this country some consumer items may be beyond our reach.

In developing countries, many people often exist on limited resources and don't have access to the same range of consumer goods and services that we have here. This may shift perceptions of how certain goods and services are viewed – basic goods here may be seen as luxury goods in another country (e.g. fridges). It is important that we realise that we all have different needs and wants, and that these may vary depending on our circumstances.

We often have to learn to prioritise, to identify what we really need and what is just a desire or want, and then balance it against whether we can afford it. This can often be a difficult decision to make, as there are so many pressures on consumers to encourage them to buy. Young people are particularly vulnerable and may in turn place great pressure on their parents to buy things for them.

● **SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

Photographs illustrating:

- the differences between consumption opportunities in economically developed and less economically developed countries
- a range of goods and services
- adverts for a range of products aimed at children.

● **STARTING POINTS**

The difference between needs and wants

What are our basic needs?

What are our wants?

Do the following goods satisfy needs or wants?

Trousers, Calvin Klein jeans, bread, Quality Street sweets, CDs, electricity, Game-Boys, gas, fridges, Pokémon, heating, cookers, cars, telephones, education, paper, umbrellas, footballs, computers.

How would this change for someone living in poorer countries?

How does consumer opportunity differ in other countries?

What does the divide between economically developed and less economically developed countries really mean?

Do things shift from being essential needs to luxury items depending on where you live?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

ACTIVITY ONE: What do we want?

Students write down five things they want and why they want them. They should then rank the five wants in order of priority. What is their top want and why? Would students describe any of them as satisfying basic needs?

Discussion points

Are there any similarities between the students' answers?

What influences our choice? Why do we want things? (Think of as many things as possible.)

(Possible answers.) Peer pressure – friends have things so we want them too.

Advertising – the art of persuasion.

Has anyone bought something they later regretted or simply didn't use?

Why did they buy it?

ACTIVITY TWO: Thought experiment

A sudden newsflash announces that there is a highly infectious, unknown disease sweeping the neighbourhood. The students are instructed that they will have to remain in this very classroom for one week, with all the windows permanently shut. The door will only be opened once a day to bring in supplies and take away waste. What would the students need in order to survive the week? And what would they want to help them get through the ordeal? Students could discuss in groups and present their findings.

Discussion points

What counts as a basic good, satisfying a need; and what counts as a luxury good, satisfying a want?

These things obviously change in different contexts.

ACTIVITY THREE: I want! I want! worksheet

Students, in groups, have to imagine that they are the parents of the various children described on the worksheet. They have to choose which reason is more likely to persuade them to buy the item as a treat, giving a reason why. The best reason is then carried forward to the next round where they then have to decide again. This is repeated one more time until the most persuasive reason for wanting something is found. This is then fed back to the rest of the class.

Did students agree on their answers?

Discussion points

What reasons did students have for making their selections?

(Possible answers.)

Kyle wanting the bike – it could be argued that this satisfies a need, not just a want. Needs tend to take precedent over wants in parents minds.

Joaquim wanting a keyboard – any goods or services that lead to self improvement will nearly always be popular amongst parents.

Do very young children want what is in their own interest?

At what age are children old enough to know what they want?

Do you think there should be a law banning advertising aimed at very small children? If yes, what ages should this cover?

As a parent would you be strict about what the child can or cannot have?

What pressures are parents under?

What might happen if you gave a child whatever it wanted?

What would happen if you never gave a child what it wanted?

● **HOMEWORK OR ASSIGNMENT**

Sometimes in life our various wants may clash. For example:

Myleene may want to kiss Darren but also wants to stay faithful to Marc.

Danny, 11, has £10. He wants a new CD but also wants to save for a new Play Station 2 game.

We may want to save the environment but also want to drive cars.

We may want to do our homework and do well at school, but may also want to watch TV all evening.

Often many of the clashes are between short-term desires (e.g. watching TV) and long-term desires (e.g. passing exams).

Such short-term vs. long-term clashes are common in life. Often our long-term desires reflect the person we would like to be – healthy, hard working, successful etc. People who are able to prioritise their long-term desires over their short-term ones are often more able to achieve their goals and ambitions. But at the same time we need to satisfy our short-term desires to make life fun along the way.

Try to think of some examples of when your own desires clash and how you prioritise them.

● **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Welsh Consumer Council	www.consumereducation.wales.org
Consumers' International	www.consumersinternational.org
Oxfam Education	www.oxfam.org.uk

I want! I want!

first round

semi-finals

final

winner

A Emma, 7, wants a Malibu Stacy doll with Pony and Pony Beauty Salon because her friend Fiona has one, and then they could have pony trials together.

B Priya, 6, wants a puppy after watching a Dalmatian-related film at Christmas.

C Melissa, 10, wants dance lessons because she wants to be a pop star when she is older.

D Joaquim, 11, wants a keyboard for Christmas so he can learn to play the piano like his uncle.

E Kevin, 15, wants the new Radiohead album because he is a big fan.

F Tamsin, 13, wants a Ministry handbag because 'everyone's got one and they're cool'.

G Nina, 12, wants to buy a new top. She is feeling miserable and a bit of shopping will cheer her up.

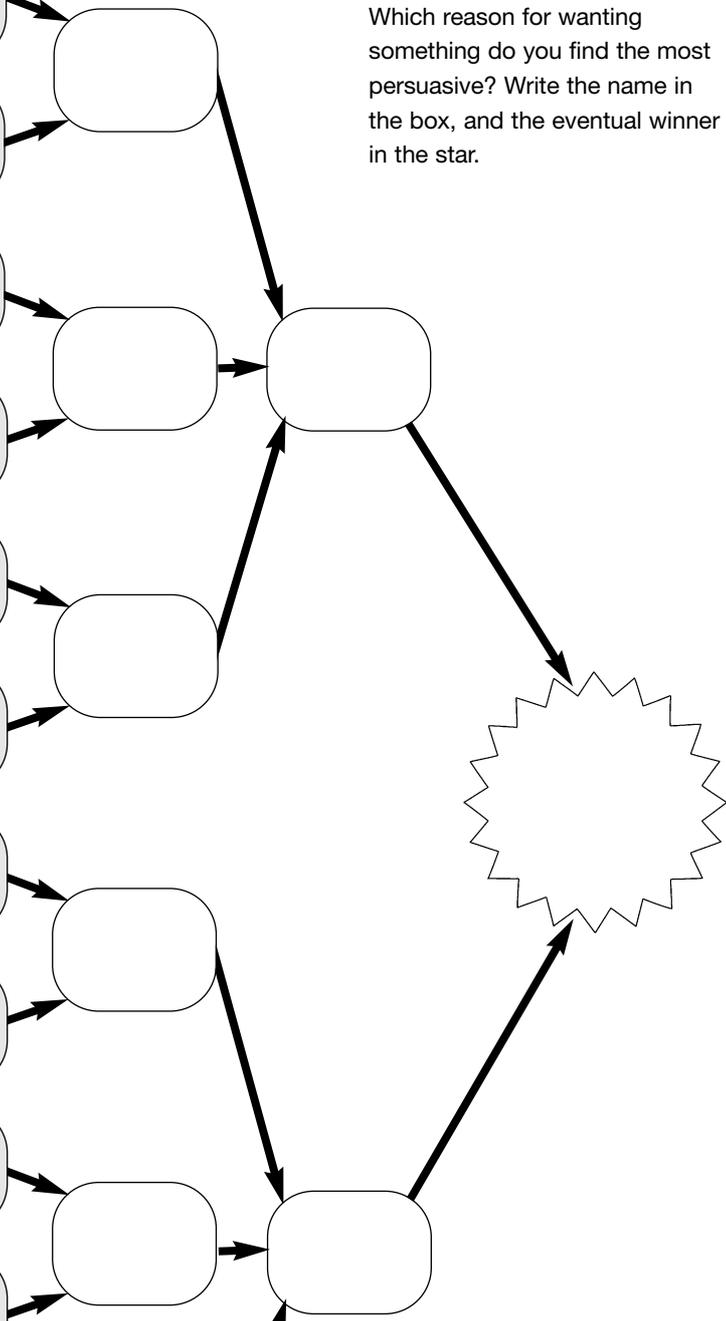
H Jim, 11, wants the Olympia XRi dryweave 185 bhp cross trainer (Bermuda bowl edition) because no one else has them in his class yet, therefore he will look 'the business'.

I Kyle, 8, wants to buy a bike so he can cycle to school instead of waiting for the bus.

J Craig, 5, wants to buy 5 packs of football stickers as he still needs Gareth Barry to complete his collection.

K John, 11, wants a Man U away strip because his old one is now out of date.

L Kirsten, 7, wants to buy the new Hungry Toad game. She saw it advertised on the telly and now really wants one.





Advertising & the consumer

2. Advertising & the consumer

● **OVERVIEW**

Students evaluate arguments for and against advertising. A second worksheet explores the limits of truthful advertising.

● **AIMS**

- To increase students' awareness and understanding of advertising.
- To raise students' awareness of some of the ethical issues surrounding advertising.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- explain the purpose and nature of advertising
- identify the different styles and types of adverts
- explain the difference between advertising and consumer information
- discuss the impact that advertising has on consumer choice
- evaluate adverts and discuss why they might be unacceptable for a range of ethical reasons.

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

We encounter advertising every day, in all areas of our daily lives. Almost from birth we are targeted as potential consumers. Advertising is one of the main influences on consumers' decisions to purchase. Children, in particular, are susceptible as they are more open to suggestion and easily influenced. Advertising gives strong messages and its impact can be seen in young children who will often talk about adverts as much as the TV programmes they have watched. Many of us can remember jingles and promotional phrases from adverts, some dating back many years.

Adverts aim to entice us to buy – each year advertisers spend billions of pounds on the art of persuasion, but what do adverts really tell us? What do we really learn about the product or service? Adverts often only sell us an "image" rather than hard facts. As consumers, we need to be able to understand the purpose of advertising and be able to process the information provided by it.

There are mechanisms in place to protect consumers from blatantly untruthful and misleading adverts. We are unlikely to find adverts trying to sell us miracle cures. However, the truth can often be stretched and advertisements are regulated by a number of bodies. The Independent Television Commission regulates adverts on television, and the Radio Authority regulates those on radio. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) whose remit covers all advertising except that on TV and radio is responsible for the Advertising Standards and Sales Promotion Code of Practice. The ASA states that all advertisements must be legal, honest, decent and truthful. It monitors adverts to ensure that this is the case, and responds to consumer complaints against specific adverts. Companies can be asked to withdraw adverts if the ASA deems them to be unacceptable or offensive.

● **SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

Examples of adverts illustrating:

- the different formats of adverts (e.g. magazine, newspaper, TV, radio, computer games, promotional items, sports sponsorship, boardings etc.)
- range of advertising styles (e.g. comic, sexy, professional)
- range of target audiences (e.g. housewives, young children, teenagers, young men, young women)
- adverts which have been withdrawn – see ASA website www.asa.org.uk

● **STARTING POINTS**

Nature and purpose of advertising

How many different ways of advertising can you think of?

(Possible answers.) Newspapers/magazines, TV, radio; outdoor displays (posters and buses etc), and leaflets/direct mail. Through Internet sites, and through unwanted emails (spam). Through logos on clothing and equipment. Through sponsorship of sports and other events.

Why do companies advertise?

To make potential customers aware of their product. To position their product within a market i.e. up market, exclusive, value for money etc. To sell more.

What are brand names? Give some examples?

Are brand names better than supermarket own brand labels?

Do students believe every claim that advertisers make?

Information or advertisement

What do adverts tell us?

Where else might consumers find information about goods and services?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Activity One: Advertising: for and against

This activity seeks to raise awareness of some of the debates around the topic of advertising.

Divide the class into groups. Each group is given the *Advertising: for and against* worksheet. Students have to discuss each argument and decide how convincing they found the argument. At the end of the sheet students should add up the total scores for and the total scores against to see which came out on top.

Extension

Can students think of any other arguments for or against advertising?

Discussion points

Is advertising a good or bad thing?

What scores did the groups arrive at?

Is this a good way of settling debates?

(Possible answer.) Its not very scientific. Doesn't take into account all the arguments. Doesn't allow for the fact that some arguments are more powerful than others.

What would the world be like without advertising?

Activity Two: The limits of advertising

Can students think of any controversial advertising campaigns? Why were they controversial?

Have students ever seen/heard advertising claims that they simply didn't believe?

On the Limits of Advertising worksheet students are presented with various advertising situations. They have to consider whether they would allow each advertisement to appear on TV/ posters, in magazines or whether they are unacceptable. Students are then asked to come up with an advertisement themselves.

Discussion points

Should there be boundaries on advertising?

Did students agree with the verdicts from activity two?

Why might an advert be considered unacceptable?

(Possible answers.) Might be offensive, may make untrue claims, may encourage dangerous activities.

Are there any controls to restrict what adverts are allowed?

Some countries in Europe are keen to restrict advertising aimed at very young children. Why might they want to do this?

What do the students feel about this issue?

● **HOMEWORK OR ASSIGNMENT**

How many adverts are students exposed to in one day? Ask students to compile a diary, noting down all the adverts they see in one day. The adverts could be on posters, TV, radio, cinema, in magazines, on computer screens, on books, bags etc. They may be found in school, at home or out and about.

- How many adverts does it amount too?
- How many of them were targeted at their age range?
- Which one was best and why?

● **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Advertising Standards Authority www.asa.org.uk

Independent Television Commission www.itc.org.uk

Office of Fair Trading www.offt.gov.uk

Advertising: for and against

How convincing do you find each argument? Circle the appropriate number (10 = very convincing)

Arguments for:

A In 1998 £14,307 million (£14.3 billion) was spent on advertising in Britain. Many thousands of jobs depend on this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

B Advertising on television is often very innovative and experimental. This improves the standard of television in general. Many famous directors (eg – Ridley Scott – Aliens, Blade Runner, Gladiator) learnt their skills through making advertisements.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

C The media relies on advertising. Without advertisements there would be no ITV, Channel 4, or 5, Sky TV and few magazines. Without that there would be less freedom of speech and expression.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

D Through advertising, companies sell more products. This means they can produce them on a larger scale and thus actually lower the price.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

E Adverts are often fun and amusing, sometimes more enjoyable than the programmes themselves.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

F Advertisements are a good source of information about products, sales, records etc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Total:

Arguments against:

1 Advertising creates 'artificial' desires in us. We start to want things that previously we never thought about.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2 Advertising is bad for competition. It is hard for new products to compete against established brand names. This means that there is less innovation and progression in the market.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3 Advertising twists our values. Generally it implies that happiness can only be found through certain goods. This makes for a materialistic, shallow culture.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4 Advertising is expensive. This is inevitably added on to the price of the products so we are paying for the adverts ourselves.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5 Advertising invades our personal space. You wouldn't choose to let salespeople in to your house 24 hours a day. Well that's more or less what advertising is.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6 Adverts are misleading. They often give the impression that one product is much better than another, when in fact they are virtually identical.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Total:

The limits of advertising

1. Skindeep – a new shampoo aimed at teenagers

(It is basically the same as all other shampoos on the market.)

Adverts	Acceptable?	Unacceptable?	Why?
<p><i>TV advert:</i> Two boys are shown – one uses Skindeep, the other doesn't. The one using Skindeep has clean, shiny hair and is popular with the ladies! The one not using Skindeep has dirty hair and is ignored by the ladies. Tag line 'Beauty is Skindeep'.</p>			
<p><i>TV advert:</i> A shy-looking boy sitting by himself receives his homework back with an E grade. He slumps forward. At home, his older brother gives him Skindeep. He uses it and starts to notice people admiring him as he walks down the street. Cut to the boy with lots of girls sitting around him receiving his mark back – it's an A+ Tagline – 'Skindeep gives you confidence and confidence breeds success.'</p>			
<p><i>Poster campaign taglines</i></p>			
'Skindeep is the best shampoo around'			
'Can you get better than Skindeep?'			
'Skindeep: a better life is only a rinse away'			
A picture of happy smiling boy – 'Skindeep – wash and glow'			

2. Wrestle Bears – a range of cuddly bears/animals that 'wrestle' each other, aimed at the under 8's.

There are hundreds of different bears for boys and girls, each with different names such as T-Rex Ted, Baad bear, Shema the Evil Weasel. Some toys are goodies and some are baddies. The bears' arms and legs move so the bears look as if they are wrestling (in a rubbish sort of way) when placed together. When a button is pressed, or when they are near another bear, a voice is activated saying such things as 'I'm gonna get you', 'You're history', 'You a baby?'

Adverts	Acceptable?	Unacceptable?	Why?
<p><i>TV advert:</i> Proper wrestlers in animal outfits wrestle each other. The camera work is fast and furious. Voice says – 'Wrestle bears – are you big enough?'</p>			
<p><i>TV advert:</i> Children playing and laughing with their toys. A quiet, sad looking girl in the corner of the room is left out of the fun. A voice says 'Make sure you get a wrestle bear this Christmas.'</p>			
<p><i>Magazine advert:</i> A sad-looking child empty handed. Underneath it reads 'If your parents loved you they would get you a Wrestle Bear'</p>			
<p><i>Magazine advert:</i> A picture of two Wrestle Bears – Captain Koala and Dirty Dog – facing each other. 'Wrestle Bears – let the war begin!'</p>			

'Whatever' is a new magazine aimed at girls aged 11-13. It claims to be bit different from other magazines. It will be a bit more alternative, featuring more sarcasm and humour. It will look at wider issues than just pop stars.

Design either
 A) A poster with a caption, or
 B) An advert (write a story board) with the voice over

Try to make the advert as effective as you can without crossing the line, of what you think is acceptable



Purchasing power

The consumer as global citizen

3. Purchasing power

The consumer as a global citizen

● **OVERVIEW**

Students examine and discuss the wider implications of our consumer behaviour on society as a whole. Consisting of several exercises to focus debate and discussion on so-called 'sweatshops'.

● **AIMS**

- To raise students' awareness of some of the ethical issues linked with consumerism.
- To increase students' understanding of their consumer responsibility within the wider community.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- discuss how individual consumption can have a global impact
- explain how consumer information might help identify issues that concern them
- identify a range of ethical issues that might concern consumers
- explain why there might be a range of views on a particular issue
- discuss how consumer action might bring about change
- prepare a reasoned argument in support of a given issue.

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Our consumer activities may have far-reaching effects. Do we really think about where products come from or who makes them before we buy? What is the true impact of our purchasing decisions on other people or the economies of other countries? Thinking about what you buy – in terms of the effect on the political and economic systems, environment and people – is known as ethical consumerism.

By buying from one company or another, you are, in effect, financially supporting that company's policies and practices. Many consumers are starting to ask about the ethics of some of the big multi-national companies. Do they invest in armaments, support political dictatorships, destroy the environment, displace local people to build factories etc? Companies are increasingly recognising that consumers want to know more about their trading habits.

As consumers, we have the right to decide how we spend our money. So we can choose to use the power of the consumer pound to influence how companies trade, or indeed how certain countries behave. For example, South Africa used to have a system of apartheid. Many people around the world refused to buy goods from South Africa because of this system. This was a key factor in apartheid being abandoned – a real example of how consumer power helped to change a whole political system. Consumer power has also resulted in environmental labelling on goods, the withdrawal by many companies from using animals to test products and the use of dolphin friendly nets to fish tuna.

It is the realisation of our responsibilities as global consumers that is starting to result in many fair trade products reaching the market – e.g. coffee, tea, chocolate. But on a more local level, our increased awareness as consumers is also resulting in changes to farming practice and the increased purchasing of organic products.

● **SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

- Newspaper articles on current consumer issues (e.g. food safety, UK prices compared with European prices, boycotts, global warming, animal testing etc.)
- Examples of specific campaign material (e.g. against animal testing, boycotting particular products etc.)

● **STARTING POINTS**

The impact of consumer decisions on the global community

How do things you buy affect the world?

What do we mean by the term ethical?

Should we be concerned about the impact our decisions have on others?

What other ethical issues can you think of which might concern consumers?

Do you stop and think about where goods come from? Do you care?

Would you buy products that were tested on animals?

How would you know if products have been tested?

Why is consumer information important in helping consumers identify and select goods and services?

Protecting the environment

What would happen if everyone bought environmentally friendly goods?

Are there any reasons why consumers might not buy them?

What are the costs and benefits of environmentally friendly products?

Should we be prevented from driving our cars into the centre of cities?

Do you think increased tourism causes damage to the environment?

Consumer Power

How might consumers bring about change?

Can you think of any examples of how consumer action has resulted in change?

Would you join a campaign to protest against a particular product or issue?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Activity One: The souls of your shoes I

Introductory questions

Students could look at the inside labels of some of their garments. Where are they manufactured?

Why are they manufactured in these countries?

(Possible answers.) Cheap labour costs

A hundred years ago the UK was one of the world's leading textile manufacturers. Why are these garments not made in the UK?

Expensive labour costs

What is meant by the term 'globalisation'?

Globalisation is a loose term for the increase of free trade and the tendency of companies to spread out beyond the boundary of any one nation. Setting up factories, offices or projects in other countries with the main driving factor being the search for cheaper labour costs and overheads

How much were the workers that made your clothes paid?

Hourly compensation for apparel manufacturing in 1998, in U.S. Dollars.

This includes wages and other benefits.

Country	USA	Malaysia	Mexico	Thailand	Indonesia
Hourly wage	\$8.00	\$1.15	\$0.85	\$0.65	\$0.15

Data from Kurt Salmon Associates as found in www.sweatshopwatch.org

(UK pounds would be about one third less, making the hourly figure for Indonesia in the region of 10p.

It should be pointed out, however, that the cost of living in many of these countries is much lower than in the UK. In other words the equivalent of a pound in Indonesia will buy much more than a pound in the UK.)

Students should then read the two worksheets: *Clothes and Globalisation* and *Kim's Story*.

Discussion points

Why do many fashion houses produce most of their clothes and shoes in countries like Bangladesh? (Possible answers.) *Because wages and other costs such as transport, power and raw materials are all low.*

Why are wages so low in countries such as Bangladesh?

There are many reasons. For one, the cost of living is much cheaper in such countries, so wages will naturally be lower. However many countries also want to attract foreign investment into the factories so are not inclined to raise the minimum wage.

How can this be changed?

Tricky one! In the UK during the industrial revolution working conditions were appalling. (www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/IRchild.htm has lots of accounts of child labour in Victorian times. The case of Robert Blincoe is particularly harrowing.) Improvements in pay and working conditions were achieved through, increased legislation establishing greater rights for workers and the establishment of unions and collective bargaining. However, in many factories textile workers are not allowed or are discouraged from joining unions, so this route is not an option for improving working conditions. Perhaps large companies could be persuaded to only use the factories with the best working conditions? Already consumer pressure has led to some improvements in this area.

Would you be prepared to pay more for goods if you knew that the company was using this income to make improvements for its workers and other people in the local community?

Activity Two – The souls of your shoes II

Introduce the briefing cards for Simasia. This could be through projection on an OHP; reading through the background information then rotating the cards around the groups; or the cards could also be used as the basis of a roleplay with each card being assigned to one student. The other students have to question all the witnesses one by one to find out their opinions.

The students could then add another card, that of their own opinion as a consumer in the UK. These could be read out and discussed.

Discussion Points

Do you think the workers want people in the UK to stop buying trainers?

How can the life of the workers be improved?

Difficult question! Possible answers could include: by allowing the countries fair access to all our markets, so they can sell processed food products without heavy tariffs. Imposing a global minimum wage. The clothing manufacturers could agree a code of conduct.

Activity Three: Ethical consumerism: is it my responsibility?

This activity focuses around research and debate. One way to do this would be to split the class into three groups, assigning each group a topic from the *Student Debate Worksheet*. Half of each group should be assigned to debate for the relevant motion and half against. This should make a total of six groups.

Students could then research the topic and prepare some arguments to bring to the debate.

The subsequent debates could be informal, but here are some rules for running a formal-style debate.

- Before each debate the students should be reminded of the motion.
- Each debate will consist of two sets of speakers (three per team) – those arguing for the motion and those arguing against.

- The first speaker will speak for the motion, and then another speaker will speak against it. This continues until all six speakers have finished.
- Questions are then invited from the other students (the floor.)
- The students then either vote for or against the motion.

Tips

Allow each speaker a maximum time to speak (90 seconds should be long enough for these debates. Being strict with the time keeping can add to the sense of fun).

Students should write down their main points and not rely on memory. It is best to begin the speech by reminding the students of the motion before going on to say why they support or reject it.

After the first speaker, each subsequent speaker should try to think a little on their feet and quickly respond to the arguments put forward by the previous speaker. If they try to imagine the sort of arguments the other team may put forward before hand, then this should make things easier.

Afterwards the other students could say what was good about the speakers, and what they would improve.

For more details about formal debate, contact the English Speaking Union www.esu.org 020 7529 1550. They run debating competitions and have useful materials on formal debates.

● ASSIGNMENT OR HOMEWORK

Students will need to research and prepare their arguments. This could be done as research during the lesson, during an ICT lesson or as a homework assignment.

Consumers wield considerable power these days, and there are often high-profile media stories of how consumers are being ripped off or misled. Identify a relatively current (from the past 6 months) consumer issue and discuss how and why it affects the consumer and what action might be taken. Try and find some appropriate newspaper articles dealing with the issue.

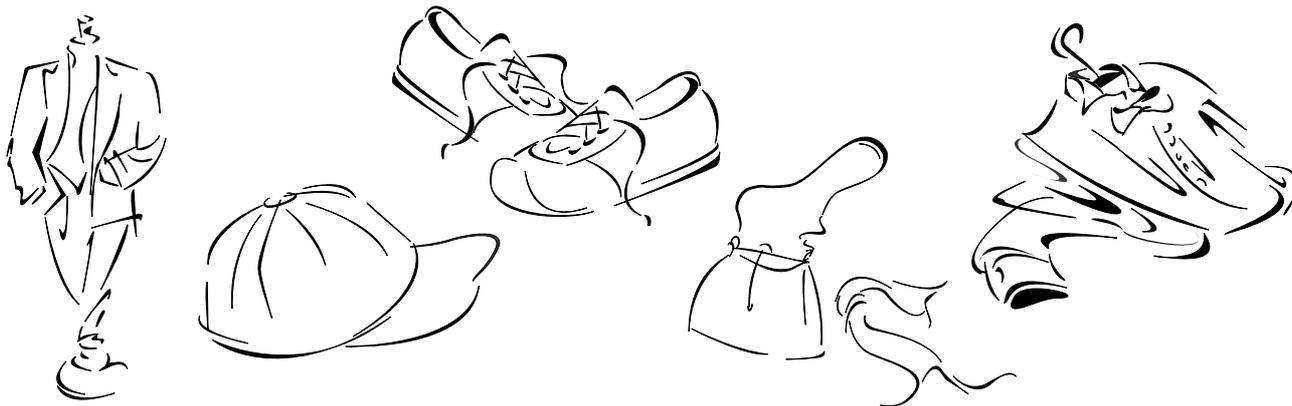
● FURTHER INFORMATION

Oxfam Education	www.oxfam.org.uk
Consumers' Association <i>Which?</i> Magazine	www.which.net
Consumers' International	www.consumersinternational.org
Ethical Consumer Research Association	www.ethicalconsumer.org

● FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON SWEAT SHOPS:

www.sweatshopwatch.org
www.labourbehindthelabel.org.
www.nosweat.org.uk

Clothes and globalisation



In the last 25 years, the number of jobs in the UK clothing and textile industry has fallen from a million to 271,300. This number is falling all the time. However, as a nation we are buying more clothes than ever. So where are all the clothes being made?

Many clothes are now made in economically developing countries such as Bangladesh and Indonesia, and more recently in China and Vietnam. In Bangladesh alone a million new jobs have been created in the garment industry over the last 15 years. So why are so many garments made in these countries and not in the UK?

The main reason is that the wages are lower in these countries. Wages for textile workers in the UK are about £6 an hour. However, in Indonesia, workers are paid about 10p-30p an hour. In western countries wages can account for 75% of the cost of making a garment, but in countries such as Bangladesh wages can account for as little as 5% of the cost. So it is cheaper for companies to make clothes in these countries.

Why are the workers paid so little?

The clothing industry in Bangladesh is very important to the economy. Garments account for 73% of the country's export earnings. The government have set a minimum wage for workers, but this is very low. They are worried that if they raise the minimum wage then the factory owners will be tempted to move to another country with lower wages. So one reason for low wages is the competition between countries all wanting to attract foreign contracts to their factories.

What are the working conditions like?

Read Kim's story

Why do the fashion labels allow people to work in these conditions?

The western corporations do not actually employ the workers. A fashion label may approach a buyer in Hong Kong to provide a certain amount of shirts to their new design. The buyer then makes a contract with a South Korean owned factory in Bangladesh who will make the clothes. The workers in the factory are not employed directly by the fashion label or even by the Hong Kong buyer.

Partly because of pressure from consumers, some of the labels and retailers have made codes of conduct that set out how its sub-contracted workers in the factories should be treated. These codes have made some difference, as the factories will not win the contracts unless they can meet the code of conduct. However, the fashion labels are not always able to constantly check on the factories to see that the codes of conduct are actually being met. So they are not always effective.

Information gathered from *Sewing it Together – a practical guide to globalisation in the garment sector* produced by War on Want. This is available to download from their website (www.waronwant.org) and also from the labour behind the label website (www.labourbehindthelabel.org).

Kim's story

"I came from a very poor family living in the countryside, in Indonesia. However, my parents saved enough money for me to go to high school. After leaving school I decided to get a job to help pay back some money to my family.

A friend was working in a factory outside West Java and said she would help me get a job, so I moved 200 miles away to work. The factory makes shoes for a famous fashion label. As a trainee, my wages were below the minimum wage, so I only had enough money to live and could not send any home. As a single person I lived in a dormitory room (6m x 3m) with ten other girls. This was not very nice. The only toilet was far away and you always had to queue. After training I worked on the sewing machines from 7am – 4pm. However, there was usually the option of overtime work, so most days I would not stop until about 7pm. With overtime I could earn \$55 a month. After paying for accommodation, food and living, I could send \$9 home to my family.

Two years ago I married another worker at the factory and had a baby boy. However, we both needed to work, so I had to leave the boy with my mum. We rented a small factory-owned house with one bedroom. We now have to work a lot of overtime to send just a little money home to my mum to pay for the upkeep of my boy. Travel is expensive, so I only visit him once every three months. Childcare at the factory would make me so happy.

The work is very hard on your hands and many people are injured. We have to work hard all day. We only have 30 minutes for lunch and very short breaks for the toilet. We also need to keep working when we feel sick, as we really need the money. In the past the supervisors have been very bad, shouting and hitting people if they did not work hard enough even if they were ill. Last year some of the workers started to complain about the working conditions and the supervisors. However the management threatened them, and the protests soon stopped. I wanted to get involved with the protests, but with a child could not afford to lose my job. I think many other workers also felt like me.

Recently things have improved a little. We now have longer toilet breaks, fire and safety drills and the new supervisors have been much nicer. However, I do worry about the future. We are not able to save much money, so can see no life beyond the factory. In many ways we are lucky to be working. Some of the other factories have closed down recently and life for the unemployed is much worse."

In January 2002, local governments in Indonesia raised minimum wages, but workers say that cuts in government subsidies for fuel and other essentials mean that the workers are "no better off."

This is a fictional account of a textile worker in Indonesia, based on many different true accounts that can be read on the Web.

Simasia briefing cards

Background

Simasia is a very poor country. For a long time now it has been troubled by civil wars, drought, famine and a crumbling infrastructure. In the last 40 years, the birth rate has rocketed, and bad housing and sanitation has led to frequent outbreaks of disease. Whilst country dwellers struggle to grow enough to eat on land that is dry and infertile, the largely unemployed population in the cities is increasingly angry and restless. Ten years ago, there was an uprising against the king and his government – a leadership that many believed cared nothing for the suffering and starving people. The revolution was crushed by the army (always loyal to the crown), and today the country is ruled by the king, the army and a small group of wealthy and influential advisers. However, a degree of stability has returned to Simasia since the new, tougher regime began.

The general economy is in dire need of investment and agriculture is still in decline. But many small independent factories have sprung up all over the country. These factories make clothes on behalf of western clothes manufacturers that need a large supply of unskilled, low-paid workers. Simasia's many social, political and economic problems have left it with an uneducated, but eager to work, population. This makes the country an ideal place for foreign companies to employ cheap labour.

Factory owner

Pol owns the factory where Sowon and Geger work. He employs 100 people – mostly children. He makes 500 simmies a week.

“Because I pay low wages, I can employ a lot of people in my factory, which is good for the local community. If I paid higher wages then I would lose the contract to make the shoes, the factory would close down, and so would all the other businesses that depend on us. No one is rich, but things are much better now foreign companies are giving us work. I make my employees work hard, but it's clean and no one is beaten. In some factories, guards beat lazy workers. I am a good boss, though, and look out for my workers. They are lucky.”

Worker 1

Sowon, an eight-year-old girl living in Simasia, has begun work at a factory in the south of the country. She works a 12-hour day, with half an hour for lunch. She gets a ten-minute break every three hours. She can only drink or use the toilet during one of these breaks. She earns eight Simmies a day – the equivalent of one pound.

“I start work at seven in the morning, stitching labels on to trainers. I do this for six days a week. It is very boring and hurts my fingers, but I talk to my friends so it's ok. I need to work, and give the money I earn to my mother, brothers and sisters, who I live with. We are paying for my little sister to go to school. Things are cheap here in Simasia, so eight simmies is ok. But I was shocked to find out that the trainers are sold in the UK for £70: that's over 500 simmies! Where does all this money go?”

Worker 2

Gregor is also eight. He works at the same factory as Sowon, but only gets five simmies because he just puts stickers on trainer boxes. He is considered less skilled than Sowon, who can use needle and thread.

“I also start at seven, and finish work at nine at night. I live near the factory, although my family lives 100 miles away. I send them most of my money, but because I have brothers and sisters, it is not enough. I have to stay here, but couldn't afford the bus home even if I wanted to go. Food and rent takes most of my wages. I earn so little that a bottle of Coke would take me two hours to pay for.”

Union representative

Artur was the representative of the Union of Unskilled Workers at the factory. In the last five years, however, the union has been banned.

“I am 28 and used to be the union leader here. But since the factory wanted to get foreign work, my union has been banned. We had begun to get higher wages, but as soon as the foreign work arrived the union was closed and wages fell. The workers have no rights or voice. If they are very unhappy, they have to leave. Plenty of other people want the jobs and are prepared to live and work like this. I am very old here. Many of the workers are children. They make less fuss than adults, so the boss likes youngsters. No skills or experience are needed, and children can be paid even less.”

Consumer 1

Tristan lives in Notting Hill and works for a new Internet company. He likes skiing, mountain climbing and para-chuting. He has just bought a car and is going to Aus-tralia next month for an amateur surfing competition.

"I love extreme sports, so I have to have quality stuff to get the best performance out of my body. A good mental attitude is important when skiing or sky diving – you need to be totally focused – but slack gear is a no-brainer. I don't care how much I have to pay for trainers or high-quality clothes and equipment. You get what you pay for, so I'm happy to fork out £100 for running shoes. I don't really think about chaps who actually make the trainers.

After all they probably don't think about the guy who makes all those slick looking websites. Besides, they couldn't grasp what I do – it's beyond their mindscape. The main thing with footwear is the quality. It makes me laugh when I see a guy half way up a mountain whose shoes are falling apart. They deserve what they get, if they're going to dress like a homeless."

Consumer 2

Nina works for a charity and has recently had a year off work. She spent that time in Peru, where she taught English to children in remote rural areas.

"Working in the charity sector, and seeing poverty first hand in Peru, has made me realise how what we do here really affects people in other countries.

We in the west consume most of the world's resources, polluting the planet and keeping all the wealth to ourselves. When I heard about the sweatshops in developing countries, kids working long days for hardly any pay, I decided to start buying Fair Trade food and boycotting bad clothes companies. I don't earn that much, but I really can afford to pay a bit more for things so that other people have a better quality of life."

Consumer 3

Jeremy lives in Ilkley with his girlfriend. He is a student at University studying computers.

"I do worry a bit about the environment and globalisation and that. It's terrible what we're doing to this planet really. But I don't really agree with the anti-globalisation movement. They just seem like a bunch of whiners, who don't really know what they're even whining about. I thought about boycotting some of the high street labels – but, to be honest, what difference is it really going to make if I don't buy this or that pair of trainers? I can't really afford to shop around for clothes and I don't have much time to either. Besides, it's the whole system that's at fault, not a pair of trainers. If I shop somewhere else, I'm just shifting exploitation from one area to another. The whole world's a market now – there's nothing a bunch of protesters can do about that. We might as well try to have fun while we can."

Simasian government

"When we started getting the economy of Simasia back on its feet again, we were very pleased at the interest shown by western businesses. We were happy to talk to union leaders to make them see reason, and explain to people that all wages are good wages. Business leads to more business. If people have to work hard and tighten their belts for a while, so be it. In the long run, everyone will be better off.

We can only build schools and hospitals if our people are working and paying the small taxes we ask. If we increase the minimum wage then the western companies will just use factories in other countries, and our workers will have no jobs. Slowly, people are becoming better trained and used to using new technology. Eventually, our own businesses will grow and become more competitive."

Businessman in the UK

Bob used to be a manager of a factory near Leeds that made high quality trainers for the top end of the fashion market. Last year, the factory closed because of cheaper, foreign competition. Bob had to make 200 people redundant.

“It was a good business. Relations between management and employees were excellent. We were like a family more than anything – people’s kids would come and work here, so you might get three generations of a family all working here at the same time. People here earned £180 a week – not much, but a decent amount – but when foreign workers only want £1 a day, you can’t compete. Most of the punters don’t care. They’re only interested in price, not in keeping local jobs going. Still that’s business, if you can’t compete get out the market.”

Representative of sports clothes company

Sportzods is proud of the quality products we deliver to consumers. We listen to what people want, and then find the finest materials to fashion precision goods for the modern athlete. But more than that, we give value for money. We understand that looking good and feeling great has to be within the reach of everyone. Sport is life, and life is a game. We play to win, but don’t want empty pockets. Here at Sportzods, we are proud to be helping poor people realise their dreams too. We can help these kinds of people to work. We don’t employ any workers in Simasia directly: we ask the factories to quote a price per item and run with the best offer. However, the workers are important to us, and we try to ensure that we only use factories with the highest working standards. We also try to visit the factories regularly to check that there is no exploitation. We have nothing to hide as a company.

World Trade Organisation (WTO) official

The WTO is an international body of voluntarily participating countries that deals with rules of trade between nations. It operates around a series of agreements, signed by most of the world’s nations, providing legal ground rules for international trade.

The main purposes of the WTO are to help trade flow as freely as possible, serve as a forum for trade negotiations, increase economic growth and to help resolve disputes.

Donald Biggs is an official of the WTO. He is a fierce critic of sweatshop labour. However, he regards the involvement of western business in developing countries in a positive light.

“The philosophy of the WTO is that there should be no artificial barriers to trade. Countries should specialise in producing what they are good at, and exchange these commodities honestly for goods and services which other countries are good at producing. It’s as simple as that. With the whole world working on this basis, each country will be an expert in a particular field, offering excellence to other countries in exchange for other first-class products. In this way, everyone – rich and poor – has access to the world’s incredible resources. No one is excluded, war becomes a thing of the past, and all nations are healthier and wealthier. Trade, I tell you, is the way to justice and equality amongst nations.”

Activist

Jay Zeeman is an anti-globalisation activist with a special interest in the links between the WTO and sweatshops.

“The idea behind the WTO is good, in some ways. Everyone should produce what they do best and share it with others. By abolishing trade barriers, wealth could be distributed more evenly throughout the world. But the reality is very different. Many southern hemisphere countries have little to offer the rich west – apart from masses of cheap labour.

When it comes to low-wage labour, the developing world is the best! So, by doing what it’s good at, the developing world has, in effect, locked itself into a position in which it’s the slave of the west. Add to that the fact that if the west does something well – like invent essential drugs or micro-technologies – it won’t share its innovations with the developing world. You have a situation in which the hypocritical west keeps its wealth to itself and turns the rest of the world into a sweatshop. The west is so rich that it can also boost any industries it has that might be better than in developing countries. For example, agriculture in the west is struggling to compete with agriculture in other countries, yet is kept artificially afloat by governments paying subsidies to farmers. This stops poorer countries from selling us food, which has the effect of increasing their economic dependency on selling cheap labour. “

Ethical consumerism | student debate

Motion 1

'This class believes it is wrong to download copyrighted music for free from sites like Napster'

For	Against
It is illegal.	Record companies make far too much money, as do most bands.
If you spent a long time creating something, you would want people to simply copy it off the web.	Music is a right we all enjoy, you shouldn't charge not people for it.
If record companies can't make enough money off bands then no new bands will ever be discovered and promoted.	Napster has not affected the sales of music, it has just acted as free promotion for bands.

Motion 2

'This class believes that unethical clothes brands should be banned from school premises'

For	Against
Around the world, thousands of people are suffering in sweatshops.	People should choose what they wear.
The company makes huge profits while workers suffer.	Other companies have factory conditions which are just as bad.
Some brand names charge stupid prices fooling us into believing they are better than other products – don't believe the hype.	You can't stop globalisation. The workers don't have to work if they don't want to. If they were paid more the prices would go up.

Motion 3

'This class thinks that the world would be a better place if everyone ate organic food'

For	Against
The fertilisers used on farms pollute our rivers.	It is a lot more expensive so everyone would be poorer.
Pumping animals full of chemicals is not good for us or for the animals.	Fertilisers and pesticides help to grow food much more efficiently. Without them there would not be enough food to go round.
Organic food tastes nicer.	You can't stop the progress of science.

I would argue that (insert motion) _____

My first reason is because _____

My second reason is because _____

My third reason is because _____



Buying and selling

Empowering the consumer

4. Buying and selling

Empowering the consumer

● **OVERVIEW**

Students examine the art of buying through a ranking exercise. Various selling techniques are then explored, culminating with students writing a short play based around a hard sell.

● **AIMS**

- To raise awareness of the skills and knowledge a consumer needs in order to be able to purchase goods and services confidently.
- To raise awareness of the sophisticated selling techniques employed to captivate unsuspecting consumers.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- explain the need for consumers to have adequate information before making a purchase
- identify the various sources and methods for obtaining consumer information
- evaluate how we might be persuaded to make purchases
- identify some 'hard sell' techniques.

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Better-informed consumers make more effective choices. Making choices is quite a complex process. It can best be described as a series of steps: identifying a need (or want); identifying if you can afford it (having a budget to work within); looking at the range of products first (window shopping); asking the right questions and finding out the features etc.; and then deciding what features you want before setting out to buy. Finally, if you don't have the money to buy the product outright – how you might fund a purchase.

Consumers need to be able to make informed choices, but in order to do this they need access to good quality information on the goods or services they are purchasing. This information may be acquired from a variety of sources. Manufacturers provide information, but it will be specific to their product range rather than more general information about the particular types of products. Advertising provides some information, including alerting consumers to the range of products available. Other information from consumer magazines e.g. *Computer Weekly* or *Camera World* or even *Which?* magazine is also available. These magazines will test products and compare one against another. They are also useful for identifying the range of models available. Finally, many consumers gain information about goods and services from friends and family. This is a useful way of learning about good service or easy-to-use products – but remember, what suits one person doesn't necessarily suit everybody.

Consumers need to be able to access and make sense of the full range of information available. They need to be able to evaluate and make their own assessment of what they need, so they can make the right choice for them. This process is essential in order to prevent inappropriate decisions being made. It is even more important if consumers have limited resources, as the opportunity to purchase an alternative product may not be possible.

Sales people can be very persuasive. After all, that is their job, and for many of them their salary is based on commission. Consumers need to be aware of the fact that sales people are really there to sell them something, and that this might be a hard sell and difficult to resist. The more information consumers have before entering into a purchase the better equipped they will be to make an effective and appropriate decision.

● **SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

- A range of product information for a selection of products
- Advertising literature.
- Manufacturers product information.
- Consumer information (e.g. Product test reports from *Which?* magazine, *Good Housekeeping* or other specialist consumer magazines).

● **STARTING POINTS**

The art of buying

What things might you need to know or do before making a purchase?

Where could you go for information?

When buying something, do you shop around for the best price?

Why should you do this?

If you were buying something expensive like a computer, what information would you need before deciding what to buy?

Who would you ask?

Would you need more or less information when making an expensive purchase?

Would you buy something through the Internet?

Sell! Sell! Sell!

Do you like it when an assistant or sales person approaches you?

What do you do?

Do you ask questions to find out about a product?

Would you challenge a statement made to you about a product?

Do you feel under pressure to buy?

Have you ever bought something because you didn't know how to say 'No' to the sales assistant?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Activity One: Buy! Buy!

Students in groups have to imagine buying a fairly expensive product, e.g.:

- a computer
- a television
- a car.

Each group should fill out the *Buy! Buy!* worksheet, ranking each purchasing factor in order of importance, and then justify their choice.

Discussion points

Factors that influence choice:

Think back to the first activity in section one of the pack – I want! I want! What factors did you identify as influencing choice?

How do they relate to the factors you have selected this time round? Which factor was the most important? Why?

Which factor was the least important? Why?

Would your answers have been different if the item to be purchased was a smaller, less expensive product? If so what would have influenced you?

Information points for feedback

It looks right:

(Possible answers.) Consumers often make a 'gut reaction' purchase, and it can be part of the fun of impulse buying. For some consumers aesthetics, or how something looks is the most important issue. However, a car that looks wonderful but doesn't go is not a wise purchase! So this course of action may not be the best one, particularly if the purchase is a substantial one. What happens if you make the wrong choice?

It has been advertised a lot.

Advertising has immense power, as discussed in section two. Adverts often only sell us an image or style. They tell us little about the actual product. It is up to consumers to find out more before making the purchase.

Friends recommend it.

This can be a good source of information, particularly on how well a product works and whether it is easy to use, or if it has drawbacks. Buying on recommendation is often a good way of getting a reliable product. However, beware of falling for the 'I must have one because my mate's got one' pressure!

Which? magazine recommends it.

Which? magazine is an independent consumer magazine. It provides test reports on a wide range of products and services. Rating them against set criteria, such as performance, safety, usability and durability. Which? identifies best value buys – which may not always be the best performing, as they balance cost against performance. It is available by subscription and held in the reference section of most public libraries.

It comes with extras.

Extras add value to a product, but some may not be necessary for you. Does the product do what you want it to do? Would you be paying more for the extras when a cheaper version would meet your needs just as well?

It's the cheapest around.

Price is a big factor for most people. However, the cost may not give an accurate indication of value-for-money. Cheap things can be very good and expensive things very poor. However, if products are very cheap then there is often a reason for this – the products may not be genuine or they may be stolen. It is good to get a good price, but be on your guard if it seems very cheap.

It comes with a money-back guarantee for the first two months.

Money-back guarantees are useful if you are not sure that the product will be suitable. This guarantee means you can get your money back if not satisfied. However, if there were something wrong with a product you would be entitled to a refund anyway.

It comes from a local shop.

Shopping locally can be useful if you need to take the product back. It is a way of supporting your local community and the local economy. However, local shops can be more expensive. If possible you should always shop around – use a telephone if necessary.

It has the features I need.

Before purchasing, you should always be clear about what you want from a product. Does it do what you want it to do? Are there particular features you want? Identify these things first, as it will help you select a product more easily.

I could take it home today.

This depends on whether you have an urgent need for the product and, of course, if you have the means of getting it home – not much use if you are expected to take a new washing machine home on the bus!

The salesperson could answer all the questions I asked.

This is useful. It means you find out more about the product. But have you shopped around in terms of price and range available?

I can buy it second-hand.

Second-hand goods can be bought much more cheaply. But make sure the goods are in working order before buying, as you won't be able to get your money back. Buying new gives you many more rights.

Activity Two: Sell! Sell! Sell!

Students explore the art of selling through various exercises.

Stage One

The *Art of selling* worksheet. Students, in groups, practice various aspects of selling. These can be fed back to the group.

Stage Two

After completing the worksheet, each group is given the *Hard sell* sheet. This describes various closing techniques that some sales people may use when pushing the hard sell. A closing technique may be used on a customer who is wavering and not quite sure whether to buy or not. It is worth pointing out to students that most sales people are genuinely there to help and would not use such techniques. The students have to choose one of the techniques, and then write out a short play, starting from the sales person approaching the customer and ending with the final sale. They have to use one of the closing techniques from the *Hard sell* worksheet. Ideally the short play should incorporate some of the lines from the earlier *Art of selling* worksheet. The *Sale of the century* sheet starts a play off, if students are having difficulty.

Stage Three

Students have to act out their plays. The class have to decide how the customer could have got out of the sale, what they could have said, and when they would have said it.

Stage Four or possible assignment/homework

Your best friend, who is a bit gullible, has decided to spend £120 of their hard earned savings on a new CD player. What advice would you give them before they make a purchase and where else might they go to find out the best buy? Devise a checklist to take with them when they go to make the purchase that will ensure they ask the right questions and obtain enough information to make a wise purchase. Would the check list be sufficient to prevent a dodgy sales person taking advantage?

● FURTHER INFORMATION

Consumers' Association – *Which?* magazine

Good Housekeeping magazine

Trading Standards leaflets

Office of Fair Trading

Buy! Buy!

How important are the following factors when buying a product? Rank each factor on a scale of 1 – 10 (really important = 10). You must be able to justify your choices for the most and the least important.

It looks right

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It has been advertised a lot

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Friends recommend it

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Which? magazine recommends it

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It comes with extras

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It's the cheapest around

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It comes with a money back guarantee for the first two months

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It comes from a local shop

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

It has the features I need

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I could take it home today

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I can buy it second-hand

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The salesperson could answer all the questions you asked

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Tip: It is a good idea to write a list of questions before going into a shop, otherwise you may forget to ask.)

The art of selling

Selling can be an art. Many books have been written about selling, and top companies spend a lot of money training their sales staff. This sheet will take you through some of the key skills in selling, and it's free! It is worth watching out for some of these techniques, as one day a sales person may use them on you!

Task one

Engage the customer. obviously when approaching a customer it is important to be friendly and smile, but the words you use are also important. If you are approaching a customer from cold (never met them before) don't ask a question to which the answer could be 'Yes' or 'No'. As it is likely the conversation would end there.

Bad examples

'Do you need any help?' (a 'no' ends the conversation)
'Do you want to buy a bed?' (Obviously only of use in a bed shop, but even here a 'no just looking' is the most likely response.)

Good examples

'When is the last time you bought a bed?'
'What do you think of this bed?'
(In both of these cases they cannot answer 'yes' or 'no', and you will gain more information.)

- Think of an opening line for selling either a bed, TV, computer or car. And make up a response from the customer.

Task two

Painting the picture. Ok, so you've engaged the customer and found out a bit about what they are looking for. Now you must sell them a product. You must start by making the customer want the product. To do this you must appeal to their emotions. Do not start by giving technical information. Instead, try to get the customer to imagine owning it.

A table *'Just imagine this sitting in your lounge. It will look amazing. Imagine having people over to dinner.'*

A mobile phone *'Everyone will be jealous, it feels so smooth. Just imagine getting this out of your pocket on the train.'*

- Using the same product as you used before, paint the picture for the customer

Task three

Win over the brain. The customer has now formed an emotional bond with the product. Their heart wants it, but their brain may still be worried. Now you must give the customer all the facts and figures about the product that make it the right one to buy (they should always be true!). Here are some areas to go for:

- A) Point out the USP (the unique selling point, whatever it is that makes the product different from any other)
'Its got the quickest graphics on the market.' *'It's the cheapest there is.'*
- B) Show approval from others
'It's a big seller.' *'The people who make the plastic also make plastic for the military.'*
- C) Give specifications but in a way the customer understands
'Its got a Pentium 5 – that means the graphics will look smooth.' *'Its got a 24 inch woofer, which means the bass will be thumping!'*

- Using the same product as before, have a go at winning over the brain, using one or more of the ideas above.

Task four

Reassure the customer. The customer is now won over, but may need to be reassured that they are making the right decision. Saying things like *'Trust me, you are making a wise choice,'* or *'This is the one I would go for myself,'* can help. The customer will usually want reassuring about the price so it is best to have an answer ready:

'It may seem high but you have to pay for quality.'

'The cheaper ones always break down.'

'You could maybe save a few pounds in another shop, but here you get really good customer service.'

- Using the same product as you used before, what would you tell the customer if they were worried about the price?

The hard sell

Most sales people are there for your benefit, to help you buy the right product. However, at some point in your life you may well come up against a different sort of sales person. One that may try to sell you something you don't particularly want or need, or try to get you to make up your mind there and then. These are some of the techniques they may use.

The reverse psychology

A risky trick that might cause offence. If a customer is not keen on buying, then agree with them and add something like:

'Yep, that's probably out of you're price range anyway.'

'Yep, that's out of your league'

'I can see you're more interested in price than quality'

By slightly insulting the customer they may buy the product just to prove you wrong.

Pity close

Make the customer feel sorry for you, for example:

'I only need one more sale and I pass my probation. If I don't get the sale then I will lose my job "Please, I really need this sale, I'm falling behind with my mortgage repayments'

Another 'pity' close may be this. Disappear out the back, pretending to ask the manager to get a lower price (you know that this price is acceptable anyway). If they still hesitate, then say, *"The manager was really angry when I asked him for that price. He's never done this before, if I don't get the sale I'm in trouble."*

Guilt close

Try to close the sale by playing on the customer's fears. For example:

'Can you afford not to buy this bed?'

'Do you want back pain in ten years?'

'Don't your children deserve it?'

'When is the last time you treated your wife/husband?'

This way they may feel that they ought to be buying the product. They may well feel bad if they don't.

Concession close

Don't lower the price, but offer them something extra if they buy today. For example:

'If you buy today, I can chuck in free delivery.'

'I can throw in a set of pillows.' (Most places will have free things they can offer to tempt customers.)

It is surprising how many people will spend hundreds of pounds on a product just because they get a free make-up bag, or something similar, with it!

Puppy dog close

Let the customer try the product – give them a free trial. (The name comes from the idea that if you let the customer hold a puppy dog they won't want to give it back.) For example:

'Take the bed home with you today, leave us a cheque – we'll wait a week before cashing it. If you don't like the bed just bring it back and we'll rip up the cheque. If you like it we'll bank it.'

The chances are the customer won't be bothered to bring the bed back.

Limited availability

Make them think it's now or never. This could be with the price or with the product. For example:

'We've only got three left in stock and we don't know when the next lot will come in.'

"The people who make them have already sold out – these are some of the last in the country.'

'The price is going up at the end of the week.'

Many customers may feel as if they have to buy them then and there.

Sale of the century

Closing the Deal

Sales person Hello, when is the last time you bought a bed?

Tip: Top salespeople rarely ask "Can I help you?" as the customer usually says "No" and the conversation ends. However, if you ask a question which cannot have a yes/no answer the conversation is guaranteed to continue and the sale can begin!

Customer Ages ago.

Salesperson Is it for yourself or for someone else?

Customer It's for me.

Salesperson Do you ever have back pains?

Customer No, not really.

Salesperson Excellent, its best to keep it that way with a really good bed. Most people spend over a third of their lives in bed, yet they are not willing to spend more than a couple of hundred pounds on a bed - it's crazy! Trust me, a good bed is the best investment you will ever make, let me show you this bed - it's the Sleepmaster 5000 gti...

Now finish the play off. Paint the picture for the customer and use one of the closing techniques to close that deal.



Know your buying rights

Point-of-sale law

5. Know your buying rights

Point-of-sale law

● **OVERVIEW**

Four short plays highlighting various aspects of consumer law. Students, armed with the necessary information, have to decide whether the customer has any legal right to redress.

● **AIMS**

- To raise students' awareness of the laws which exist to protect them as consumers.
- To increase students' understanding of specific consumer law and how it relates to them.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- explain some of the ways in which the consumer is protected by law
- identify key elements of consumer law
- apply relevant consumer law to appropriate situations
- identify a number of agencies that enforce consumer legislation
- discuss how legislation benefits both consumers and business.

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

It is vitally important that consumers are aware of their rights. Without an understanding of how the law protects them, consumers will be more likely to be exploited. A good knowledge of their basic rights empowers consumers to take action to put things right when something has gone wrong.

The laws protecting consumers are sometimes quite complex. Local authorities – Trading Standards and Environmental Health Departments, enforce most of these laws. However, there are a few key laws which give consumers their statutory rights and require the consumers themselves to take action. It is these buying rights that are examined in this section.

When you make a purchase, naturally you expect the item to look and perform satisfactorily. Whether you make a purchase in a shop, street market, mail-order catalogue or from a door-to-door sales person, the law is there to uphold your reasonable expectations. Even sale, seconds, and shop-soiled items must work according to the sellers description. Goods should satisfy three conditions. They must be:

- 'of satisfactory quality' according to the sales description, cost and any other relevant factors. The rule covers look, safety and how long you can expect the goods to last. Items should be free from defect, except when openly sold as sub-standard such as 'shop soiled'.
- 'fit for purpose' and perform as described. If you're told a computer game can be used on a particular machine it must do so – or you have good reason to complain.
- as described by the packaging, sales display or according to what the seller says. A 100% cotton shirt must be 100% cotton.

Remember the law gives you these minimum rights (sometimes called 'statutory rights'). However, these days many traders offer additional services by changing products that are not faulty (wrong size for example) to build customer loyalty. This is purely offered on a trader's goodwill and is not a legal right. So just because one shop will refund your money if you change your mind, don't expect every shop to do so.

People rely on all kinds of services: dry cleaning, travel agents, car repairers, hairdressers, plumbers and builders. The law says any service, repair work for example, must be carried out with reasonable care and skill, to a proper standard of workmanship. It also says the work must be carried out within a reasonable

time and at a reasonable cost. You should agree a time and a price for what you are buying. But if this hasn't been fixed in advance, then this means you may have a case if you think the trader is taking too long or is charging what you consider too high a price. It does make sense to get a fixed price quotation at the outset. If you get a quotation that is the price you have agreed, an estimate is the trader's best guess about how much it might be. Any materials or components fitted during the service should satisfy all the rules already outlined.

Finally, it pays to check whether you are dealing with someone who belongs to a trade association. It's no guarantee but could help you if things go wrong.

● **SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES**

Information from various consumer protection agencies and organisations e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau; Trading Standards Department; Office of Fair Trading.

● **STARTING POINTS**

If things go wrong

Has anyone bought something that has been faulty or broken?

Has anyone ever taken goods back to the shop to complain?

What happened?

What happens if it is a service that has gone wrong? (e.g. a dry cleaner or a hairdresser)

Do you think it is important to know your rights?

The legal situation

Does anyone know what our rights are in these situations?

Are there specific laws that protect the consumer?

Why might consumers need to be protected by law?

Who enforces this legislation?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Activity One: Know your rights!

Three students should be selected to act out a series of short plays. Each one raises a consumer issue. The remaining students working in groups have to decide which element of law applies to the situation and advise the consumer on their rights. The actors/readers will need a copy of the scripts (see *short plays* worksheets). If acting is not appropriate then the plays could be read through or passed around in groups.

The other students in the groups will need to read the *Point-of-sale law* sheet. Whilst they are waiting for the actors to finish preparing they could answer the following questions:

Give a further example of goods not matching the description given.

Give a further example of goods not fit for the purpose intended.

The actors then present the four scenes to the class as a whole. At the end of each scene the students should decide which element of law applies and what action the consumer might need to take.

Tip: Whilst the groups are discussing the first case the actors could be preparing the second.

Solutions to the cases:

At the nightclub

The nightclub offered a paid cloakroom service. The law says you can expect a competent performance for a service. As they failed in the delivery of the service, then Martha is entitled to compensation – in this case the value of her coat. (However this may not be the amount it cost new.) Having a notice

saying, 'Management accepts no responsibility' does not change anything. You are still entitled to compensation.

In the clothes shop

Tracy is not entitled to a refund, as the goods are not faulty. It is the responsibility of the consumer to ensure that the purchase they are making is actually an item that they want. Many shops now offer a money-back policy in these circumstances. However, this is purely a customer service issue rather than a legal requirement. In this particular case the shop does not give refunds and Tracy has no rights to insist on one.

At the trainer shop

James is entitled to his money back. The trainers were clearly not fit for their purpose. However, if they had been labelled as 'not to be worn' then James would not have been able to claim a refund. However, trainers labelled in this way would not sell very well!

At the camera shop

As the camera is clearly faulty, James is entitled to either a refund or a repair. As James purchased his camera from the shop it is their responsibility not that of the manufacturer. James' s contract remains with the retailer.

Discussion points

Do consumers have responsibilities as well as rights?

Do you think consumers have a duty to act responsibly?

Have you ever purchased something that you then decided you didn't want?

What did you do about it?

Why do some shops offer money back guarantees?

What is the difference between good customer service and consumer law?

Why might businesses benefit from effective consumer law?

● ASSIGNMENT OR HOMEWORK

Design a leaflet on consumer rights and responsibilities for students in school. The leaflet should clearly identify relevant points of law and explain how consumers might take action. It should also explain why consumers should also behave responsibly when making purchases to ensure that they have made the right decision before paying for the goods or services. Include a list of organisations and agencies who might be able to help.

● FURTHER INFORMATION

Office of Fair Trading www.ofthelp.com

Local Trading Standards Dept www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureaux www.adviceguide.org.uk

Consumers' Association/*Which?* magazine www.which.net

DTI Consumer Gateway www.consumer.gov.uk

Point-of-sale law

When you buy any good or service, you are in fact making a contract (it is rarely written down). These are some of the basic laws covering such contracts.

GOODS (These three rights also apply to goods that you may hire, such as a bike or a paddle boat.)

- **The goods have to match the description given to them**
(e.g. if a seller says a shirt is 100% cotton then it must be 100% cotton.)
- **The goods must be of a satisfactory quality**
They must do the job they were intended to. They should not have any defects and should be safe and last a reasonable time. However, the price you pay will affect the quality you are entitled to. Any goods marked 'shop soiled' or 'seconds' or 'rejects' will obviously not be perfect. You will have no comeback if the seller had pointed out that a product was not perfect in the first place.
- **The goods must be fit for their purpose**
For instance, wellington boots must not leak. Blue Tac must be sticky.

SERVICES

If you are paying for a service (such as a hairdresser, a plumber, a dry cleaner, a car wash) then you are entitled:

- **to the competent performance of the ordinary skilled operator**
- **to expect the service to be carried out with reasonable care and skill and it must be done in a reasonable time for a reasonable price**

If goods/services are faulty

- **If the goods are faulty, the law says the shop has to give you your money back, but ONLY if you take the goods back within a week or two of buying them.** If you put off going back, or the fault develops later, you may have to agree to a repair or replacement. Whatever happens, if they are faulty, you do not have to accept a credit note or voucher.
- **If, as a result of faulty goods or services, you are injured or your possessions are damaged, then you will also be entitled to compensation for these losses.** For example, if a new washing machine ruined your clothes because it was faulty then you can claim for all the damaged clothes.

Other important points

- **You do not need a receipt to claim your rights.** However, you will need to prove that you bought the goods/services and a receipt is the easiest way to do so.
- **The law does not entitle you to anything if you change your mind and decide you don't like the goods or because something doesn't fit you** (unless it was advertised as the wrong size). Many places will offer your money back, or vouchers, in these circumstances but check that you can change goods or get refunds before you buy them.
- **These laws do not protect you from buying items off individuals through private small ads or through friends** – they only cover you for buying from an official retailer.
- **When purchasing a product, you are making a contract with the retailer.** The retailer is the one responsible for refunding or repairing the goods, not the manufacturer, even if there is a manufacturer's warranty.
- These are the basic laws concerning the sales of goods/services. People offering goods or services cannot get around these basic laws by putting up notices saying such things as 'the management do not accept responsibility for any damage', or 'we do not offer refunds'. If you were sold faulty goods or services (without being told they were faulty) then you are entitled to a repair or your money back.

1. THE CLOAKROOM

Narrator It is very late at night. All the clubbers have left Rudy's discothèque 'n' dance emporium. Only Martha remains, trying to retrieve her coat.

Martha Hello I came here earlier to get my coat. You couldn't find it and said come back at the end of the night. So here I am. Now where's my coat?

Attendant One minute, I'll have a look. (Goes back from the counter and approaches manager)

I've got this lady here, she came in earlier and I couldn't find her coat. So she started giving it all that (makes a motion with his hand). I told her to come back at the end in case it showed up, but all the coats have gone. Can you deal with her boss. She's doing my head in.

Manager OK, Danny, leave it to the professionals. You watch her melt.
(Walks to the counter)

Hello, madam, my name's John. I'm the manager of this fine establishment. What seems to be the problem?

Martha The problem is you've lost my coat, it's got my keys in and everything, and I want to know what you're going to do.

Manager Woah, easy tiger, what do you mean we lost your coat? How do we know you ever had a coat?

Martha First of all, don't call me tiger. And second, I've got my ticket here. You gave me this when I gave you my coat. I've still got the ticket- that means you've still got the coat. Do you get it, Einstein?

Danny (off stage) She's melting boss, she's really melting!!

Manager Ok, ok, let's relax, we've got a situation here, but let's keep our heads. I can see you've got a ticket there, but you could have got that anywhere - you can buy raffle tickets like this in any newsagents.

Martha You lose my coat, and now you're calling me a liar. What sort of place are you running here?

Manager Hey, no-one's calling anyone anything. I'm just saying can you prove you left a coat here?

Martha I gave the man a pound, he gave me this ticket, I had two friends with me. What more do you want?

Manager Ok maybe you left your coat, maybe you didn't. There's no coat here now so what can I do? I can't wave my magic wand and make your coat appear.

Martha I can't believe you guys. It's like you don't care.

Manager Hey lady, you're breaking my heart, but what am I going to do? It's late I want to go to bed. There's nothing more I can say, you've just been unlucky, that's all.

Martha I'll tell you what you can do. You can find me my coat or buy me a new one, and everything that was in it. It's that simple.

Manager Slow down, slow down. What do you think we are, a charity? Look at that sign (points to a spot nearby) - 'Coats are left at owners risk, management accept no responsibility for any loss or damage that may occur'. And, like the sign says, you took the risk, and I take no responsibility.

Martha I can't believe this, you've stolen my coat, now you say it's my fault.

Manager Hey you watch what you say. Don't call me a thief or I'll sue you.

Martha Not before I sue you, I'm taking this further.

Manager You can take it where you want. Why don't you start by taking it out the door now?

Martha You haven't heard the last of this. (Goes to leave)

Manager Hey one minute, maybe there's been a big mistake. Let me see your ticket again.

Martha Satisfied. (Hands it over)

Manager (Rips up the ticket). Very satisfied, now it's your word against mine. Goodbye, hope you're not too cold on the way home.

2. THE CLOTHES SHOP

Tracy Excuse me, I bought these clothes last week and I don't want them. I want my money back instead.

Manager Why don't you want them?

Tracy They didn't look right, they were a bit loose, the colour didn't match my bubble gum, whatever. Just give me the money back.

Manager I'm afraid I can't take them back.

Tracy You saying I smell or something. Look (holds clothes out) I haven't even worn them. They're as good as they were when I bought them. Which isn't saying a lot. So if I could just have the money, then I'll be on my way.

Manager I'm sorry, but like I said, I can't take them back.

Tracy Yes you can. Just hold out your hand, I'll give you the clothes, and then you give me my money. It's really that easy, there's nothing to it.

Manager What I mean is I can't give you the money back.

Tracy Yes you can. You just reach in the till and hand it over. It's not rocket science.

Manager You know what I mean.

Tracy One minute (looks in bag) - there's the receipt. Right, there's nothing you can do now, you've got to give me my money.

Manager I'm sorry - no money.

Tracy You are breaking the law. I should get the police. Just give me your vouchers then, you must have something decent in the shop.

Manager I'm sorry, madam, I can't do that either.

Tracy Have you gone mad? What are you talking about? I do this all the time.

Manager I'm sure you do but it's not our shop's policy to take clothes back.

Tracy Like I care what your shop policy is. The law is the law.

Manager I'm sorry I can't help. Now if you don't mind there are customers waiting.

Tracy Ok I'll just swap them for a size smaller. I'm letting you off here. I really should report you to the police.

Manager I'm afraid you can't do that either.

Tracy You think you're all that. Well you ain't. You are in big trouble. Just get me the manager, and you might as well hand in your notice now.

Manager I am the manager.

Tracy Well you are in big trouble. You haven't heard the last of this.

3. THE SHOE SHOP

James Hi, I came in here two weeks ago and bought some trainers - but some of the stitching has come out already. I wondered if I could change them.

Assistant Let's see them.

James (Gets out imaginary shoes. Real shoes however, would be funnier)

Assist. Right, the Olympia XR3i, dryweave185 brake horse power, air conditioned, alloy trim rear drive cross shoe. Limited Picasso edition, if I'm not mistaken.

James Actually it's the Bermuda bowl edition, with the graphite infused lacing mechanism.

Assist. Bermuda bowl you say. Nice choice. However...(looks at the trainer, shakes his head) they're in a very bad way sir. What did you do to get them in this sorry state?

James I wore them.

Assist. On your feet?

James Yes, on my feet. Where else?

Assist. Well if you will go wearing them, what do you expect? Personally I wouldn't classify the Olympia as a foot trainer at all.

James What are you on about? Of course it's a foot trainer. What else are you supposed to put in it?

Assist. Well obviously your everyday trainer would take a foot quite happily, but special trainers require special treatment. I mean, imagine you won the FA Cup and you took it home with you. You wouldn't start drinking tea from it would you? I mean you wouldn't actually use it as your everyday, normal cup?

James Meaning?

Assist. Well, sir, there are certain trainers in life that rise beyond the mere status of shoes. They become icons, symbols of an age; they represent the hopes and dreams of an entire generation. They become, dare I say it, art. The Olympia is one of these sacred trainers. This isn't just a shoe - this is a sculpture for the new millennium. A beacon of hope in a troubled world

James (pause) You need to get out more.

Assist. I think you're right.

James Let's get this in perspective. I've worn these about three times, and they're falling apart, the stitching has come out and they're starting to leak. I've got a receipt and I want a new pair.

Assist. I'll go ask the manager. (Goes off to the manager, comes back.)

Good news and bad news. Good news, yes, although they're very worn, the manager says you can still change them. Bad news, we haven't got any more in your size, and I'm afraid as they're a limited edition, we won't be able to get any more, so we can't actually replace them.

James So what can you do?

Assist. As a special favour, we're prepared to offer you vouchers, for use in this store, so you can buy another pair of trainers.

James But I want the Olympia, I don't want a different trainer.

Assist. With due respect sir, a trainer is a trainer. Just pick another pair.

James Hang on a minute I thought you said these were icons for a generation, these were art. Now you're saying they're just another trainer.

Assist. I was simply being nice sir. To be honest, the Olympia's are yesterday's news, they're fish and chip wrapping, so to speak. You'd be better off with something else.

James You're lying, if they're so out of date, why are you wearing them? (Points to assistant's shoes)

Assist. They are so out of date they're almost retro, and thus cool. I, being one step ahead, am wearing them before this actually happens.

James Well, like I say, I want some Olympias.

Assist. But we don't have any.

James But they have some down the road. If you gave me my cash back I could buy them.

Assist. That I cannot do. If they were good as new we could resell them and thus give you your money back. Because they're so worn we have to send them back to the makers and they will give us a credit note. All we can do is give you a voucher and that is doing you a favour.

James I can't believe this. I bought some trainers and they're no good and now you tell me I can't get my money back.

Assist. No, you could have got your money back, but since you ran a marathon in these, (holds up trainers) the best we can do is vouchers. Take it or leave it. If you come back tomorrow the voucher offer will be no more, so if I were you I'd make my mind up quickly.

4. ELECTRICAL RETAILER

Douglas Excuse me, where's the customer services section?
Assistant Right, we don't actually have a separate section as such, but I can probably sort you out. What's up?
Douglas I bought this digital camera from you last week and it's not working properly
Assist. What's the matter with it?
Douglas It's supposed to have a panoramic mode, but it doesn't make any difference to the shot.
Assist. Right, I see. (Pause). Did you get any paperwork with the camera?
Douglas I've got my receipt, if that's what you mean?
Assist. No, not that. Did you get a little book with it saying the word instructions in eight different languages?
Douglas Yes.
Assist. Well what you want to do is take yourself off to a quiet room somewhere and give that a good reading. Get your mum to help you with any of the long words. Then give the camera another quick try, and I wouldn't be too surprised if that little old panorama problem suddenly sorts itself out. You'd be amazed how often that works.
Douglas Are you being funny or something?
Assist. I like to think I'm quite amusing.
Douglas Right. Can you get your boss for me, please?
Assist. I'm afraid he's not here at the moment.
Douglas I think you'll find he's over by the computers wearing a badge saying 'branch manager'. You should recognise him.
Assist. Er right. One minute (goes to get the manager).
Manager Sorry about that. Now I hear you've got a problem with the panoramic function.
Douglas That's right.
Manager Now have you damaged the camera in any way?
Douglas No.

Manager Phew. That's good, we should be able to help you then. Now did you take out our three-year extended warranty when you bought the camera?
Douglas No.
Manager Right, now that means that if you want us to fix the camera for you, it's going to cost you. If you had the policy then it would have cost you nothing. But don't worry you should still be covered by the manufacturer. Now have you got all the paperwork that came with the camera?
Douglas Yep.
Manager Great. Now, in there is the manufacturer's warranty. It covers you for any mechanical failure in the first year. What you need to do is photocopy your receipt and your warranty and send the camera to the manufacturer's address. They will fix the problem and send it back to you. The whole process should only take a few weeks. If you have any problems just come in here and we'll see what we can do to chase them up.
Douglas Er right. Hang on a minute. Am I going to have to pay for the postage?
Manager I'm afraid so, you can always write to the manufacturer and ask them, you might get some joy.
Douglas Right, thanks.
Manager You're welcome.



Make your voice heard

Praising and complaining

6. Make your voice heard

Praising and complaining

● **OVERVIEW**

The lesson explores the world of complaining and praising. After discussion, students write a short play highlighting a verbal complaint and then write a letter of praise or complaint based on given scenarios.

● **AIMS**

- To encourage students to be more actively involved in communicating satisfaction and dissatisfaction to businesses.
- To raise awareness of the different methods of achieving a satisfactory outcome to a problem.
- To increase understanding of the interaction between consumer and business.

● **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be able to:

- recognise when it is appropriate to either praise or complain about products and services
- discuss how commenting on good and bad service provision can lead to improvements for all consumers
- explain the processes involved in making a formal complaint about products or services
- understand the principles of setting out a letter of praise or complaint
- confidently articulate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction in order to seek redress

● **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

We are often called a nation of complainers, but in reality few of us do actually make formal complaints. Indeed, many people don't want to make a fuss, although there are some people who like nothing better than to complain about everything and anything. On the other hand, how many people ever bother to formally praise good service provision?

Good companies welcome comments both good and bad. It is one of the ways they can identify what consumers want and so can provide products and services to meet consumer needs.

Consumers have responsibilities as well as rights. Therefore, it is essential for consumers to ensure that they have got their facts straight and that they are absolutely certain of their consumer rights (some people think they have more rights than they actually do!). If you're not sure what the law entitles you to, find out. If, at any time, you need some advice or help about what to do contact:

a consumer advice centre

Funded by local authorities – often as part of the Trading Standards or Consumer Protection Service. They offer free advice to all consumers and help consumers to take appropriate action if necessary against traders in order to seek redress. Unfortunately not all local authorities provide this form of service.

citizens advice bureau

Citizens Advice Bureaux offer advice on all sorts of matters – not just consumer issues. Paid staff and volunteers run the bureaux. They usually have at least one legal specialist available. Staff will help consumers interpret the law and write letters in order to resolve disputes.

trading standards department

The Trading Standards Service is a statutory local authority function. The service is responsible for enforcing most consumer law. Officers visit factories, shops and other retail outlets ensuring that they are complying with relevant requirements. Trading Standards also receive and follow up complaints from consumers, help secure redress and take legal action if necessary.

If you want to make a complaint, remember the following points: only complain when necessary – when you feel that your comments are justified, and that you perhaps have rights under consumer law. When making a complaint, be clear, calm and collected (the three Cs). Being rude and aggressive will get you nowhere! You can choose to complain in person, by letter or by phone (in reality you may end up using a combination of all three).

● **STARTING POINTS**

In praise of good service

Has anyone ever commented to sales or service staff about good service?

What sort of actions have you been impressed by?

Do you think it is important to not only recognise good service but to acknowledge it?

Wrong again!

What sort of thing would you complain to a company about?

How do you set about making a complaint?

Have you ever made a complaint that you felt was not dealt with properly?

What do you think would happen if nobody ever complained about anything?

Improving goods and services for consumers?

Do you think we have a duty to complain or praise?

Do you find it embarrassing to complain?

Why might companies find this sort of feedback useful?

Would you tell your friends and family if you were satisfied or dissatisfied with a product or service?

Why do you think companies might strive to ensure that customers are always satisfied?

● **STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Activity One: Taking action

Would you complain in the following situations and what would you want to happen?

You buy an Easter egg from a local newsagent. When you get home you find it has passed its sell by date – it was left over from last year's stock. You were never given a receipt at the time.

You buy a hamburger and find three hairs in it.

You buy a CD, but when you take it home you find the casing is cracked at the back.

Discussion points

The three Cs

Why should you be clear, calm and collected when making a verbal complaint?

Activity Two: Talking confidently

Talk through the following with the students.

Scenario One

You and four friends go bowling, which costs a total of £16. Halfway through your game a ball gets stuck in the return lane and you have to wait 30 minutes for the problem to be fixed. Eventually it gets fixed and you finish your game.

Questions

- Would you complain if this happened to you?
- What would you hope to achieve by complaining?

At the bowling alley

Ask two students to read this out

David Excuse me, I'd like to make a complaint.
Assistant What's the matter?
David Halfway through our game the ball got stuck and stopped any other balls coming back. We kept pressing the button and told the man on the other end of the radio. He said he'd come down but he never came. Eventually we called again. He finally turned up after half an hour.
Assistant But he did fix it in the end right?
David Well, yes.
Assistant And you finished your game?
David Yes.
Assistant Well it turned out all right then?
David No, we had to wait half an hour. That's not good enough.
Assistant I am sorry about that but one of our engineers had to go to a funeral, so there's only one working today. It's been a bit mad.

Ask the class what should happen next

David I'm sorry to hear about that, but that's not my fault. My friends and I had to wait half an hour, and now we've missed a film we wanted to watch.
Assistant Well, like I say, I'm sorry. What more can I do?
David I'd like a refund or something.
Assistant I'm sorry but we can't give refunds. But I'll get the engineer up here if you'd like to have a go at him yourself.

Ask the class what should happen next

David No, I'll leave it.

- Was he right to leave it?
- Was it David's fault that the bowling alley is short of staff?

Scenario Two

Working in groups the students have to construct a dialogue of their own using the *Verbal complaints* sheet.

Each group can then act out their scene to the rest of the class.

Discussion

- Have you ever lost your temper in a shop?
- Have you been on the receiving end of an angry customer? What does it feel like?
- Why should a consumer ask to speak to the manager?
- Why should you be clear about your facts before making a complaint?

Activity Three: Putting pen to paper

In groups, the students should write one letter of complaint and one letter of praise (the two tasks being divided within the group). For the letter of complaint read or act out the two scenarios from the previous lesson, *Know your buying rights* – either the cloakroom or the electrical retailer. The students should take notes for their letters of complaint. They should write the letter from the point of view of the consumer in the play.

Students will need the *Writing letters* worksheet – which explains some of the key points to include when writing to a company.

Discussion points

If you don't get a reply or the complaint is not dealt with to your satisfaction what else can you do?

● **ASSIGNMENT OR HOMEWORK**

A friend has bought a new camera. Once they get it home they find that the flash mechanism doesn't work. Advise your friend what they should do by identifying the various steps in making a formal complaint. Give them some tips on the information they might need to provide and how they should behave.

● **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Office of Fair Trading	www.offt.gov.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau	www.adviceguide.org.uk
Local Trading Standards Department	www.tradingstandards.gov.uk
Welsh Consumer Council	www.consumereducation.wales.org
How to complain	www.howtocomplain.com
DTI Consumer Gateway	www.consumer.gov.uk

Verbal complaints

● SCENARIO

You go to the cinema with 3 friends. Your tickets all have the seat numbers on and are good seats in the middle. However, a group of older lads were sitting in your seats. You ask them to move and they say 'no'. You tell the usher but he tells you to sit anywhere you can. Because there aren't many seats left that means the four of you can't sit together. After the show, you decide to complain. Half the fun was to see the film with your mates.

Write a dialogue complaining about this. Try to make both sides of the dialogue as good as you can. In other words make it hard to get a refund.

Before you complain, make sure you have a clear understanding of the facts – when you bought the goods, what went wrong etc. Make sure you have a clear idea of what you want the outcome to be.

Make sure you agree on this before you start writing.

Try to include some of the following elements in your dialogue:

Tips for complaining	Tick if included in your dialogue
Make sure you have an idea of what you want the outcome to be	
When talking, keep calm	
Be polite	
Avoid threats	
Make sure you are not deflected or fobbed off. Keep on repeating the question or facts	
If possible, use the phrase ' <i>Can I speak with your line manager?</i> ' (This is another term for your boss – it means the person who is immediately in charge of you.)	

Writing letters

● WHEN WRITING A LETTER OF COMPLAINT

- 1) Get organised. Gather all the information you might need. Receipts, serial numbers etc.
- 2) Work out what your complaint is and what you want to happen.

Tips for writing the letter

- Address the letter to someone senior in the company and, if possible, find out their actual name.
- Include your name, address and contact number.
- Be pleasant but firm.
- Make the letter neat (type it if you can).
- Include copies (not originals) of all relevant documents.
- Keep a copy of your letter.
- Keep to one page if possible.

Essential information for your letters of complaint

The night-club (see the cloakroom scenario from section 5, *Know your buying rights*)

After a few phonecalls and a search on the internet you find out that the owner of the nightclub is Mr. Graham Day. The Manager's name was John Swain. You attended the nightclub on March 14. Write a letter from the point of view of Martha (make up an address for her). The name of the nightclub is Rudy's Discothèque 'n' Dance Emporium (a.k.a. Rudy's), 151 Davy Street, Newtown NT32 6TY.



Mr Graham Day
Rudy's Discothèque 'n' Dance Emporium
(a.k.a. Rudy's),
151 Davy Street,
Newtown
NT32 6TY



Clare Bennet
Heskey's Electricals
Graveny Building
The Mews
Dorchester
Wessex
WS4 9YU

The camera (see the electrical retailer scenario from section 5, *Know your buying rights*)

The assistant is called Tony Knowles. The manager was Steve James. You bought the camera on 5 January and then went to complain on 9 January. The camera is the Sokia panorama 150slr digipix. The shop was the Newtown branch of Heskey's Electricals. The Chairman of the company is Sir Ray Reardon. The Head of Customer Relations is Clare Bennet. The company's head office is Graveny Building, The Mews, Dorchester, Wessex WS4 9YU.

Information for letter of praise

You were flying back from America with your two children, Zak, aged 9, and Geri, aged 4. Zak was feeling sick so you had to help him in the toilet. Luckily an air stewardess called Marie-Anne Walsh, played with Geri for nearly an hour. The plane had a 'Hear'say-go-a-skipping-in-the-magic-fairy-forest play set' with large magnetic trees and figures (although Noel was missing). The stewardess kept Geri so happy that she cried when they had to stop. Geri still talks about it now (you've had to go and buy your own fairy-forest set!).

The airline was Avia-tours. The address of the head office is 15 Chase Mews, Croydon, England CR5 6TY. The Chairman's name is Colin McStott.



Colin McStott
Avia-tours
15 Chase Mews
Croydon
England
CR5 6TY

Useful contact addresses

Advertising Association

Abford House
15 Wilton Road
London SW1 1NJ
020 7828 2771
www.adassoc.org.uk

The Advertising Association is a federation of trade bodies representing the advertising and promotional marketing industries including advertisers, agencies, media and support services.

Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)

2 Torrington Place
London WC1E 7HW
020 7580 5555
www.asa.org.uk

The ASA is the independent, self-regulatory body for non-broadcast advertisements in the UK. It administers the British Codes and Sales Promotion to ensure that advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

See telephone directory for your local centre
www.adviceguide.org.uk

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) service, founded in 1939, comprises some 2000 outlets in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offering free, confidential, impartial and independent advice. CAB help to solve problems which are central to people's lives, including debt and consumer issues, benefits, housing, legal matters, employment and immigration.

Consumers' Association

2 Marylebone Road
London NW1 4DF
020 7830 6000
www.which.net

Consumers' Association's (CA) mission is to empower people to make informed consumer decisions and to achieve measurable improvements in goods and services, primarily through its campaigns and publication of Which? magazine. CA researches and campaigns on behalf of all consumers, identifying practical policy solutions to consumer problems and exerting pressure on government, regulators, industry

and others to effect real change through legislation or better practices.

Consumers International

24 Highbury Crescent
London N5 1RX
020 7226 6663
www.consumersinternational.org

Consumers International supports, links and represents consumer groups and agencies all over the world. It has a membership of more than 260 organisations in almost 120 countries. It strives to promote a fairer society through defending the rights of all consumers, including poor, marginalised and disadvantaged people, by supporting and strengthening member organisations and the consumer movement in general, and campaigning at international level for policies which respect consumer concerns.

Consumer Support Networks

10 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SP
020 7840 7223
www.csnconnect.org.uk

Consumer Support Networks are a Department of Trade and Industry initiative designed to improve the help available for consumers by providing a framework for better and more joined up advice services. At the core of the networks are bodies who provide free advice – local authority providers (generally working through the Trading Standards teams), Citizens Advice Bureau, local independent advisers (including gateway to parts of the community that may be difficult to reach such as Age Concern and agencies supporting minority groups), other bodies which give specialist advice on issues such as debt, housing and welfare.

Department for Trade and Industry

Consumer Affairs Division
10 –18 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0NN
www.consumer.gov.uk

The Department of Trade and Industry works with a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations, to increase UK productivity and competitiveness.

Useful contact addresses

Environmental Health Departments

Listed under local authorities in phone book

Local authority environmental health departments are responsible for monitoring and enforcing a wide range of legislation on issues such as food safety, pollution, housing standards, safety at work and infectious diseases, and to educate the public on matters of hygiene and safety.

Financial Services Authority

25 The North Colonnade
Canary Wharf
London E14 5HS
020 7676 1000
www.fsa.gov.uk

The Financial Services Authority is an independent body that regulates the financial services in the UK. Its stated aims are to: maintain confidence in the UK financial system, promote public understanding of the financial system, secure the right degree of protection for consumers and contribute to reduce financial crime.

Independent Television Commission (ITC)

33 Foley Street
London W1P 7LB
020 7255 3000
www.itc.org.uk

The ITC licenses and regulates commercially funded television services in the UK. It aims to put viewers first by setting and maintaining standards for programmes, advertising and technical quality

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Myddleton House
115 – 123 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LZ
www.nacab.org.uk

Each CAB belongs to the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB), which sets standards for advice, training, equal opportunities and accessibility. NACAB also co-ordinates national social policy, media, publicity and parliamentary work.

National Consumer Council

20 Grosvenor Gardens
London SW1W 0DH
www.ncc.org.uk/policy/education.htm

The National Consumer Council is a policy and research organisation with a special focus on the needs of disadvantaged consumers. It looks for the big consumer issues of the future and lobbies to shape today's consumer policy debate. It is independent of government, but benefits from a close working relationship, pressing its case in a way others cannot. And it has sister organisations in Wales and Scotland, and strong links in Northern Ireland, providing a good basis for representing all consumers in the the UK and Europe.

Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

Fleetbank House
2 – 6 Salisbury Square
London EC4Y 8JX
www.oft.gov.uk
Tel: 020 7242 2858

Consumer Information Line
Tel. 0345 224499 (local call rates apply)

The Office of Fair Trading also has a series of free leaflets. For an up-to-date list, write to:

Office of Fair Trading
PO Box 366
Hayes UB3 1XB
Tel. 0870 60 60 321
Fax. 0870 60 70 321
oft@echristian.co.uk

The OFT is responsible for making markets work well for consumers. It seeks to achieve this by promoting and protecting consumer interests throughout the UK, while ensuring that businesses are fair and competitive.

Radio Authority

Holbrook House
14 Great Queen Street
Holborn
London WC2B 5DG
www.radioauthority.org.uk

The Radio Authority licences and regulates independent radio in accordance with the statutory

Useful contact addresses

requirements of the Broadcasting Acts of 1990 and 1996. It plans frequencies, awards licences, regulates programming and radio advertising and supervises the radio ownership system. The Authority takes an active role in the development of policies which affect the independent radio industry and its listeners, in accordance with its statutory remit to ensure the provision of high quality services offering a wide listening choice.

Trading Standards Departments

Listed under local authorities in phone book
www.tradingstandards.net

Some 200 local authority trading standards departments in Great Britain are responsible for monitoring and enforcing consumer protection and fair trading legislation at local level. They cover areas such as: weights and measures, trade descriptions, fair trading pricing, consumer credit, product safety, consumer advice and education, anti-counterfeiting, age restricted sales, business fraud and dishonesty, e-commerce and motor trade standards. They also provide advice and information to consumers about their rights and how to obtain redress when things go wrong.

