ConsoMag
Monthly Magazine of the Consumer Protection Bureau (CPB)
INAUGURAL ISSUE
Issue 1 | November 2026

ANWAR FAZAL

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE GLOBAL CONSUMER MOVEMENT

Five decades of consumer activism and the choices facing a new generation.



TAP OR BOTTLE?
WHAT ARE WE REALLY DRINKING?

BEFORE YOU BUY:
THE QUESTIONS THAT COULD SAVE YOU MONEY

THE PETROL POUND:
HOW FUEL PRICES REACH YOUR WALLET

WHISTLEBLOWING: WHO PROTECTS THOSE WHO SPEAK UP?
Simon Andriesz's Story

Free publication • No commercial advertising

CONSUMER HELP IS NOW FREE!



The Consumer Protection Bureau (CPB) provides consumer assistance free of charge, with no activation fees or success fees.

Consumers seeking help can contact CPB to explain their concerns and share relevant documents. CPB will review the information and assess what assistance it can provide.

Voluntary contributions help sustain the service, but they are not required to seek or receive assistance.

ConsoMag brings the same purpose to its journalism. We investigate products, services and market practices, explain what the evidence shows, and provide practical information to help consumers make informed decisions. We also welcome responses from organisations whose practices we examine.

www.consumerprotectionbureau.co.uk info@consumerprotectionbureau.co.uk

The CPB Investigative Magazine

THE PEOPLE BEHIND ConsoMag

Editorial Leadership

David Clarke
Production Director and
Chief Editorial Adviser

Yousouf Jhugroo
Founder and Editor-in-Chief
Editorial and Investigations

Alain Eid
Francophone Editor and
Contributing Writer

Ella Collins
Lead Investigations Editor

Jenny Oliver
Field Investigations Editor

Publications and Digital Production

Mehwish Gul
Publications Manager

Hussain Kumbekandam
Digital Production
Design and Production

La Sentinelle, Mauritius
Magazine Design,
Layout & Production

Publisher

CPB Europe CIC
Consumer Protection Bureau
London, United Kingdom

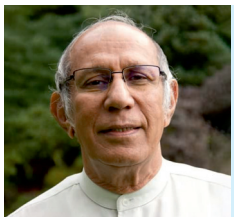
Editorial Independence
ConsoMag is an independent consumer publication dedicated to investigating consumer concerns, promoting consumer rights and encouraging accountability in the marketplace.

Published by CPB Europe CIC,
a not-for-profit community
interest company.

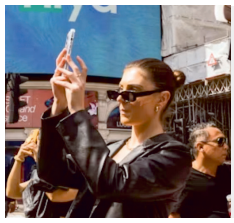
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The Future of Consumerism: Who Holds the Power?

By Yousouf Jhugroo | Founder & Editor-in-Chief, ConsoMag



Technology has given consumers unprecedented convenience and choice. But has it given them greater power? That is perhaps the defining question for the consumer movement of the twenty-first century.

The traditional principles of consumer protection, including safety, information, choice, representation and redress, remain essential. Yet the marketplace in which these rights must be exercised has changed profoundly. A transaction once conducted between a customer and shopkeeper may now involve algorithms, platforms and businesses operating across borders. Prices change within seconds; personal information has become a valuable commercial asset; and artificial intelligence can influence what we see and buy, often without our knowledge.

How meaningful is informed choice when purchasing decisions are shaped by opaque algorithms? Where does accountability lie when a transaction involves several intermediaries? And how effective is redress when the responsible business operates beyond national borders? These are not questions for tomorrow. Consumers face them today.

Governments, regulators and consumer organisations must respond. Laws designed for conventional markets cannot always address digital commerce. Enforcement must become more effective, international cooperation stronger and consumer education better adapted to emerging risks. The consumer movement must look beyond individual complaints and challenge practices that undermine fairness.

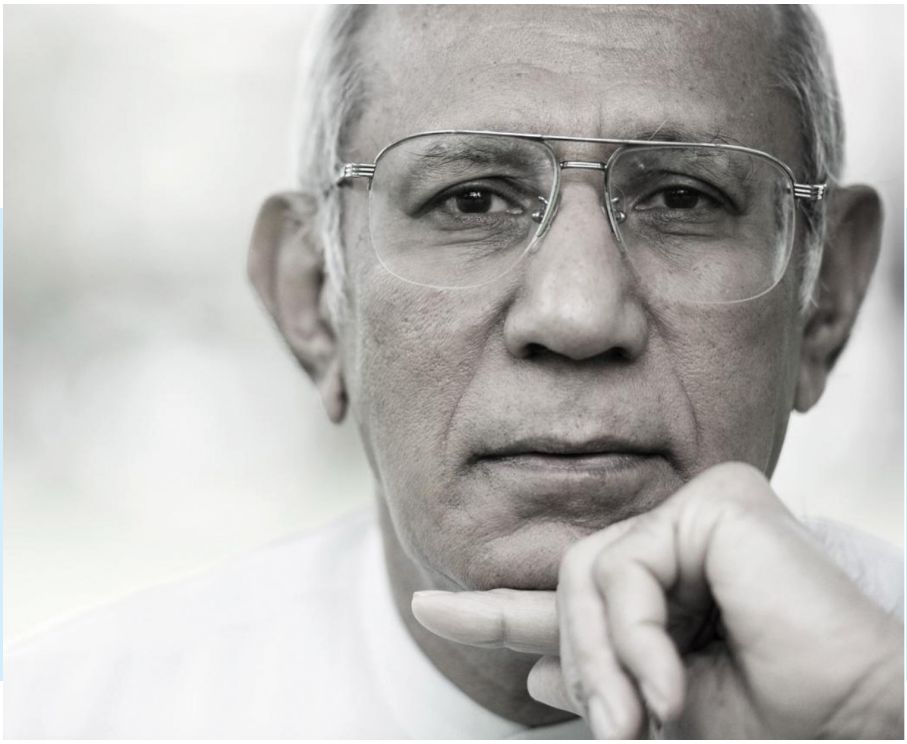
In this inaugural issue of ConsoMag, we feature Dr Anwar Fazal, whose pioneering work helped shape the international consumer movement. His vision reminds us that consumer protection embraces social justice, public health, environmental responsibility and the right of people to influence decisions affecting their lives.

Through independent investigations, informed analysis and practical advice, ConsoMag will examine familiar problems and emerging threats. Our investigation into drinking water raises questions about safety, pricing, transparency and the claims influencing everyday choices. We will examine evidence, challenge misleading practices and give businesses and institutions a fair opportunity to respond.

Our ambition is not simply to report what goes wrong, but to contribute to a better informed, more responsible consumer movement. The future of consumerism must not be determined by technology, corporations or regulators alone. Consumers must have a voice in shaping it. The question is no longer simply what consumers can buy, but how much control they have over the markets shaping their choices.

ANWAR FAZAL

The man who helped change consumerism



Some people spend their lives fighting individual injustices. Others challenge the systems that allow those injustices to happen. Dr Anwar Fazal belongs to the second category.

For more than half a century, the Malaysian consumer advocate has helped redefine consumer protection. His work took the movement beyond faulty products, misleading advertisements and unfair prices into questions of public health, corporate accountability, environmental protection and human dignity.

His central conviction is simple: people should have the knowledge, organisation and power to influence decisions affecting their lives. That conviction helped transform consumer activism from a largely national concern into an international movement able to confront powerful commercial interests. In an age of artificial intelligence, digital platforms and global corporations, it remains remarkably relevant.

A different understanding of consumerism

For many people, consumer protection begins when something goes wrong: a defective appliance, an unfair charge, a misleading advertisement or a service that fails to deliver. Fazal saw such experiences as symptoms of wider problems. Why was an unsafe product allowed onto the market? Who benefited from a misleading claim? Why did oversight fail? And how can others be protected before they suffer the same harm?

These questions reveal a philosophy grounded in prevention. Resolving an individual complaint matters; changing a harmful practice that might affect thousands matters even more. Consumer advocacy, in this view, must examine the structures, policies and commercial decisions that permit harm.

The movement that began in Penang

The roots of Fazal's international influence lie in Penang, Malaysia, where the Consumers Association of Penang was established in 1969. Rapid economic and social change was transforming daily life, yet many consumers lacked reliable information, institutional support and collective influence.

Consumer protection was not merely about improving shopping conditions. It was connected to poverty, access to essential goods, public health, environmental damage and unequal bargaining power. Fazal recognised that these concerns crossed borders.

His enduring contribution was to help turn local experience into a shared international cause — and to show that ordinary people, working together, could challenge systems far more powerful than themselves.

FROM PENANG TO THE WORLD



When ordinary people became an international force

The international consumer movement did not gain influence simply because organisations existed in different countries. Its strength grew when they began sharing evidence, coordinating campaigns and speaking collectively about problems that crossed national boundaries.

An unsafe product could enter several markets. A misleading marketing strategy could be repeated across continents. Multinational businesses operated internationally while consumers often relied on fragmented national safeguards. Anwar Fazal understood that the response had to match the scale of the problem.

Turning information into influence

During his leadership of the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU), Fazal championed the exchange of research, experience and practical knowledge. Penang became an important centre for international consumer activity, connecting advocates across Asia, Africa, Latin America and beyond.

This cooperation mattered particularly to organisations facing powerful commercial interests with limited funding, little technical expertise and weak regulatory support. Findings about dangerous products could be shared with campaigners elsewhere. Research on medicines, food marketing and pesticides could strengthen public debate and regulatory action in several countries.

Knowledge became a collective resource rather than a privilege of better-funded organisations. Yet information alone was not enough. Consumers also needed representation, organisation and a meaningful role in decisions that affected them.

The significance of World Consumer Rights Day

One of Fazal's important contributions was his role in initiating World Consumer Rights Day, observed internationally on 15 March. The annual occasion gave consumer organisations a platform to highlight shared concerns, mobilise public attention and call for stronger protection.

Its importance lies in a principle that remains relevant: consumer rights are not confined to individual purchases or private disputes. They concern health, safety, fairness and the public interest. They therefore deserve political attention, international cooperation and collective action.

World Consumer Rights Day also helped give a diverse movement a recognisable international identity. Campaigners separated by geography and resources could speak with a common purpose. The lesson of Fazal's work is enduring: evidence becomes more powerful when it is shared, and consumers gain influence when they organise beyond national borders.



TAKING ON POWERFUL INTERESTS

When consumer protection became a matter of life and death

Few campaigns illustrate Anwar Fazal's philosophy more clearly than those concerning infant feeding. The marketing of breast-milk substitutes became a defining consumer and public-health controversy of the twentieth century.

Campaigners questioned promotional practices that could discourage breastfeeding or encourage unsafe preparation of substitutes, particularly where clean water, sanitation and reliable information were not always available. The consequences could be serious, especially for vulnerable infants and families. This was not merely a dispute about advertising or product prices. It concerned public health, commercial influence over feeding decisions and the responsibility of governments to protect people from avoidable harm.

From campaigning to international standards

Established in 1979, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) united organisations campaigning for responsible infant-food marketing. The movement helped build international pressure for stronger safeguards, including the World Health Organization's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, adopted in 1981.



IBFAN
protecting breastfeeding
International Baby Food Action Network

Fazal's involvement reflected his belief that advocacy should address the causes of harm rather than simply compensate people afterwards. The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), established in 1991, further strengthened international mobilisation. Initiatives including World Breastfeeding Week sustained public attention and encouraged cooperation among consumer groups, health professionals and institutions.

Medicines, pesticides and the right to safety

Fazal's advocacy also extended to access to appropriate medicines, pharmaceutical marketing, pesticide hazards and the unequal distribution of health risks. These issues raised difficult questions about evidence, commercial incentives and regulation.

Who determines whether a product is safe? How clearly are risks communicated? Can consumers make informed choices when essential technical information remains in the hands of suppliers? What happens when commercial priorities conflict with public health?

The importance of prevention

Successful consumer protection cannot be measured only by complaints resolved or compensation obtained. A dangerous product withdrawn before causing injury, or a misleading practice stopped before reaching vulnerable people, can prevent harm on a far greater scale.

Complaints often reveal wider patterns, but prevention requires independent research, effective standards, responsible business conduct and regulators willing to act. Fazal's legacy is a challenge to the consumer movement: do not merely respond to injustice; confront the conditions that produce it.

CONSUMERISM BEYOND THE MARKETPLACE



A vision of justice, responsibility and human dignity

For Anwar Fazal, consumerism has never been simply about better products at lower prices. It concerns the relationship between people, institutions, economic power and the natural world. Every purchase exists within a wider system.

Food depends on agriculture, manufacturing, transport and regulation. Medicines depend on research, commercial interests and public-health safeguards. Drinking water depends on environmental protection, infrastructure and responsible management. Consumer protection must therefore ask more than whether a product performs as advertised. How was it made? Did its production cause harm? Was it marketed responsibly? Did affected communities have a voice?

The consumer as a citizen

Conventional consumerism can reduce people to purchasers, giving those with greater spending power more influence while overlooking people who struggle to afford essentials. Fazal challenged that narrow view.

Every person is a consumer, whatever their income or social position. But each is also a citizen and member of a community. Consumer rights connect with access to information, public participation, environmental responsibility and social justice. This broader understanding explains Fazal's longstanding concern with responsible and sustainable living.

The power of organised communities

Individual choices matter, but they cannot correct structural inequalities on their own. Consumers should not need laboratory tests before every purchase. Families should not bear sole responsibility for detecting misleading advertising. The duty to make truthful claims rests with those selling goods and services.

Communities may protest against pollution, but prevention requires enforceable laws, corporate accountability and institutions prepared to protect the public. Real empowerment means giving people both reliable information and organisations capable of representing their interests.

A different measure of progress

Economic growth, technological innovation and wider product choice are often celebrated as progress. Yet more consumption does not automatically mean better lives. Growth can coexist with environmental damage, unsafe working conditions and persistent inequality.

Fazal's philosophy asks different questions: Does economic activity improve human welfare? Does it protect health and the environment? Are benefits distributed fairly? Are affected people treated with dignity?

These are not arguments against enterprise or innovation. They are questions about purpose and responsibility. A consumer movement guided by them becomes more than a complaints service: it becomes an independent voice for the wider public interest.

THE FUTURE HE CHALLENGES US TO BUILD

From multinational corporations to artificial intelligence: who will protect tomorrow's consumer?

The movement Anwar Fazal helped shape confronted multinational corporations, hazardous products, misleading marketing and unequal access to essential goods. Today's marketplace presents many of the same challenges in more complex forms.

Digital platforms connect buyers and sellers across continents. Algorithms influence which products people see, what prices they are offered and which advertisements reach them. Personal information has become commercially valuable. The fundamental question remains: who holds the power, and how can consumers exercise meaningful control?

A new generation of vulnerabilities

Technology has expanded opportunity. Consumers can compare products instantly, obtain services remotely and organise collective campaigns across borders. Yet new risks accompany these advantages. An online advertisement may conceal who is responsible for it. A purchase may involve several intermediaries in different jurisdictions. Automated decisions can be difficult to understand or challenge.

Artificial intelligence can generate persuasive marketing, personalise offers and influence choices without adequate transparency. The issue is no longer simply whether information exists, but whether consumers can understand decisions affecting them, contest unfair outcomes and secure remedies.

Can the consumer movement keep pace?

Fazal's principles remain relevant: independent information, collective organisation, public participation, prevention and international cooperation. Applying them now requires technological expertise and closer scrutiny of digital business practices. Cross-border markets also demand cross-border cooperation: rights written into law mean little if people cannot enforce them.

Independence will matter more than ever

Consumer organisations must examine evidence, challenge powerful interests and resist improper commercial or political influence. As information is shaped by sponsored content, advertising and algorithms, the public needs trusted voices that distinguish evidence from promotion and genuine risks from exaggerated claims.

> **Never surrender independence. Do not allow money, power or position to silence your conscience. Never surrender evidence. Passion is important, but evidence gives advocacy credibility. Never surrender compassion. Behind every statistic is a human being.**
>
> *Dr Anwar Fazal, from his interview with ConsoMag.*

The responsibility of the next generation

Fazal helped demonstrate that organised people can influence institutions and markets. Future advocates must build on that achievement, not assume earlier victories are permanent. New technologies will create fresh challenges, and the movement must develop the skills, independence and courage to respond.

As ConsoMag begins its journey, Fazal's example offers both inspiration and a demanding standard. Consumer organisations must not simply document injustice; they must identify its causes and work to prevent harm.

Anwar Fazal helped give consumers a voice. The next generation must ensure that voice continues to be heard — and has the power to change things.

THE SALE BEGINS BEFORE YOU DECIDE





A consumer sees a product advertised at half price. A countdown clock warns that the offer is about to disappear. A message announces that only two items remain. Five-star reviews appear beneath a reassuring promise of quality. The purchase takes less than a minute.

But how much of that decision was genuinely independent? Modern selling is increasingly designed around consumer behaviour. Retailers, digital platforms and advertisers understand that urgency, scarcity, social approval and apparent savings can influence purchasing decisions. None of these techniques is necessarily unlawful.

A genuine clearance sale may offer excellent value. Limited stock may genuinely be running out. Reviews can provide useful information. The problem arises when consumers are given misleading impressions or pressured into decisions they would otherwise reconsider.

The illusion of a bargain

A product advertised at £60 instead of £120 appears to offer a substantial saving. But the important question is not how impressive the discount looks. It is whether £60 represents good value for the product.

Was the higher price genuine? How long was it charged? What do comparable products cost elsewhere? A large percentage reduction is not proof of a bargain. The same applies to promotional bundles. Buying three items for the price of two saves nothing if the consumer needs only one and the remaining products go unused.

When urgency becomes pressure

Online countdown clocks and stock warnings deserve particular attention. A genuine deadline may be useful information. A misleading deadline that repeatedly resets can distort a consumer's decision.

Consumers should distinguish between an actual limitation and a marketing technique intended to discourage comparison.

The most useful response is often simple: leave the page, compare the product elsewhere and return only when satisfied.

Reviews: evidence or persuasion?

Customer reviews can reveal recurring problems, but their reliability varies. Consumers should examine the content rather than relying exclusively on the average star rating.

Repeated complaints about delivery, durability, customer service or refunds may be more revealing than enthusiastic but vague praise. Look for detailed experiences, a spread of ratings and how the business responds to criticism.

The ConsoMag Test

Before accepting an offer, ask three questions:

- Is the saving real?
- Is the urgency genuine?
- And would I still buy this product without the promotional pressure?

A purchase should begin with the consumer's needs, not the seller's deadline.

THE SUPERMARKET SHELF:

The cheapest-looking product may not offer the best value.

Supermarket prices can be difficult to compare. Pack size, unit price, ingredients and shelf life may tell you more than a promotional sticker.



The shrinking pack

A familiar price can conceal a smaller quantity. This is shrinkflation: the shelf price stays the same, but each gram costs more.

In an illustrative example:

A 500g pack at £2 costs 40p per 100g. Reduce it to 450g at the same price and the unit cost becomes 44.4p per 100g, an increase of approximately 11.1%.

Does bigger mean better value?

Compare the price per kilogram, litre or item before choosing a larger pack. Then consider how much you will use. A bulk purchase saves little if part of it ends up in the bin.

Read beyond the promise

Words such as “natural”, “traditional” and “premium” should not replace checking ingredients, allergens and quantity. Dates matter too: a use-by date concerns safety; a best-before date generally concerns quality.

Before choosing, compare similar products using the same unit of measurement and check promotional conditions. The revealing figure is often the price of what is inside the package.

HEALTH PRODUCTS AND THE EVIDENCE BEHIND THE PROMISE

An attractive label cannot establish that a product works.



Consumers seeking relief, better sleep or improved wellbeing encounter confident claims, enthusiastic testimonials and social-media endorsements. These can be persuasive when someone is worried about their health. They are not a substitute for reliable evidence.

Natural does not mean suitable for everyone

Herbal and plant-based products may cause unwanted effects or interact with medicines. Similar-looking products can contain different ingredients or strengths. Ask what the product contains, what it is intended to do and what supports its claims.

Medicines and food supplements are regulated differently. A supplement should not be assumed to have been assessed for effectiveness in the same way as an authorised medicine.

Be cautious about dramatic promises

One person's positive experience does not establish that others will benefit. Claims to treat many unrelated conditions, or advice to abandon prescribed treatment, deserve particular caution.

When buying medicines online, check the seller's legitimacy and whether an appropriate prescription is required. Seek advice from a pharmacist or another qualified healthcare professional if uncertain.

Keep the packaging, batch number, expiry date and purchase record if a concern arises. A health claim should stand on its evidence, rather than the confidence of its advertising.



THE HIDDEN COST OF OWNERSHIP

The purchase price may be only the beginning.



A cheaper appliance can become the more expensive choice if it consumes more electricity, needs costly parts or is difficult to repair. The same principle applies to cars, electronic devices and heating systems.

Compare the cost of using it

For appliances, consider energy and water consumption, maintenance, repairs and expected use. For cars, include insurance, fuel or charging, servicing, tax and depreciation.

An illustrative comparison shows the difference.

Appliance A costs £300 and uses £90 of electricity annually: £750 over five years.

Appliance B costs £380 and uses £55 annually: £655 over five years.

B costs £80 more initially but £95 less overall, before repairs.

Actual costs depend on use and tariffs.



Ask about repairs

Are replacement parts available? What do consumables and servicing cost? A minor fault can become expensive if it requires specialist labour or replacement of an entire component.

Before buying an extended warranty, check what it adds, its exclusions and any excess. Commercial warranties sit alongside statutory rights; they do not replace them. Page 15 explains that distinction.

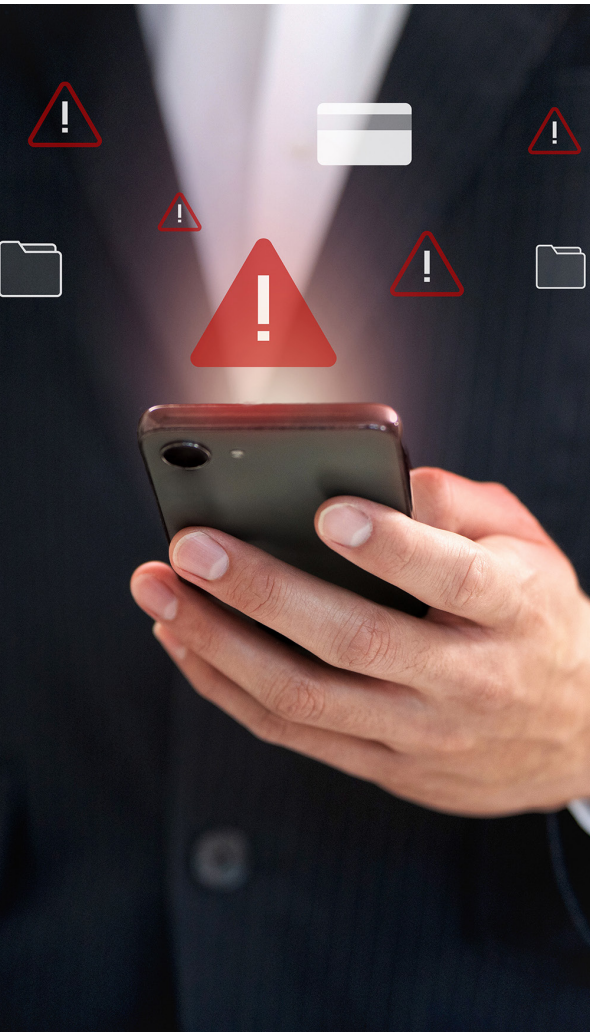
The useful comparison is what a product costs to buy, run and maintain throughout its working life.



THE SUBSCRIPTION TRAP

When does a free trial become an expensive habit?

Joining takes seconds. Weeks later, a payment appears: the free trial has become a paid subscription. Software, fitness services, cloud storage and entertainment can all create recurring commitments that are easy to overlook.



Small payments add up

A service costing £7.99 a month costs £95.88 a year. Four at that price cost £383.52, assuming no price changes.

Before signing up, establish when charging begins, the regular price, billing frequency, renewal arrangements and cancellation conditions. Set a reminder before a trial expires.

Can you leave easily?

Complicated account settings and repeated cancellation screens can make leaving difficult. Retain the terms agreed at registration and obtain written confirmation when cancelling. Check later statements to confirm that charges have stopped.

What happens when access ends?

Paying for a digital service does not necessarily buy permanent ownership. Find out what happens to stored files and purchased content if the subscription ends, especially where software supports work or study.

Also examine what personal information the service collects and why. A free service may still make commercial use of your data.

Review subscriptions regularly. Convenience should remain a choice you make, rather than a charge you have forgotten.



WHEN THE PURCHASE GOES WRONG

Your rights do not necessarily end with the warranty.



A retailer says the manufacturer's warranty has expired. That does not, by itself, settle a complaint about faulty goods. Commercial warranties and statutory rights are different protections.

What remedies may be available?

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, goods bought from traders must be of satisfactory quality, fit for purpose and as described.

For qualifying faulty goods, a short-term right to reject generally lasts 30 days, subject to the rules governing the purchase.

Repair or replacement will commonly follow after that period. A price reduction or final rejection may become available in specified circumstances.

A fault appearing within six months is generally presumed to have existed at delivery unless the trader establishes otherwise or that presumption is incompatible with the goods or fault.

Six years is not a warranty

In England and Wales, contractual claims generally have a six-year limitation period from breach. This does not guarantee that every product must last six years. Durability, use, the fault and supporting evidence matter. Scotland has different rules.

Put the complaint to the seller

Keep proof of purchase, the product description, photographs and any repair assessment. Explain when the fault appeared and the remedy sought. Ask for any refusal in writing.

The manufacturer's warranty may add protection. Its expiry does not automatically remove the seller's responsibilities.

The water we drink

Behind the promise of purity.

Mountain landscapes, clear springs and carefully designed bottles sell a reassuring image. But what evidence supports the impression that bottled water is safer or healthier than the water supplied to our homes?

Consumers may choose a bottle for taste, convenience or portability. Those preferences are understandable. Claims of superior purity deserve separate examination.

Confidence needs evidence

England's public drinking water has a strong compliance record, yet local failures and ageing infrastructure still require scrutiny. A reassuring national average cannot explain every household's experience.

Bottled water also comes in different categories, with different requirements concerning source, composition and treatment. A natural source or premium price does not, by itself, establish a health advantage.



Illustrative image — label details are for demonstration only.



What this dossier examines:

Across pages 17–21, ConsoMag reviews official water-quality findings, explains bottled-water categories, examines contamination concerns and compares supermarket prices.

This review combines documentary evidence with selected supermarket price observations. It does not include independent laboratory testing or a comprehensive retail price survey.

Our questions are practical: what does the water contain, what standards must it meet, how is it monitored and what information reaches the consumer?

Water is an essential purchase. Consumers should be able to distinguish a product's measurable characteristics from the image used to sell it.

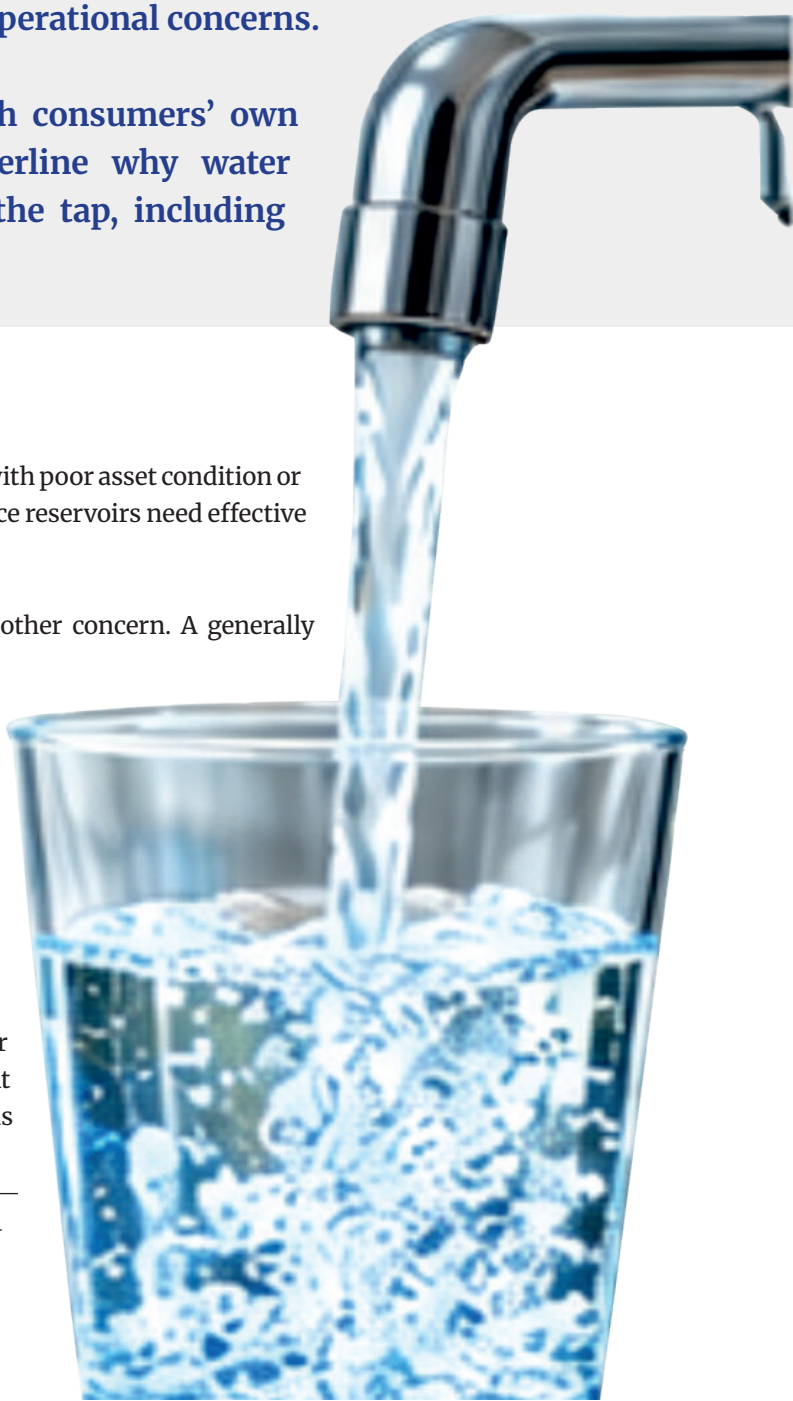
PUBLIC WATER UNDER SCRUTINY

High compliance must be matched by effective local protection.



The Drinking Water Inspectorate's 2025 report records 99.97% compliance for England's public drinking water. It also records 982 regulatory test failures and 586 reported water-quality events. These measure different things: one event may involve several tests or wider operational concerns.

Of the failures, 447 were associated with consumers' own distribution systems. The figures underline why water quality depends on the whole route to the tap, including plumbing within properties.



The importance of infrastructure

The Inspectorate identified 47 events directly associated with poor asset condition or plant failure. Treatment facilities, storage tanks and service reservoirs need effective maintenance as well as monitoring.

Lead in older supply pipes and internal plumbing is another concern. A generally compliant public supply does not guarantee that every property's pipes are free from contamination.

What households need

Unexplained changes in colour, taste or smell should be reported to the supplier. They do not automatically establish that water is unsafe, but consumers need prompt investigation and clear advice.

The national record offers substantial reassurance. For households affected by a local failure, however, the relevant questions are what happened, whether their supply was affected and what is being done to put it right.

Official source: *https://www.dwi.gov.uk/7-july-drinking-water-inspectorate-chief-inspectors-annual-report-2025-england/*

BEHIND THE BOTTLED-WATER LABEL

Natural mineral water, spring water and drinking water are different categories.

A mountain on a bottle can suggest exceptional purity. The product description gives a more useful starting point. In England, the three principal bottled-water categories carry different requirements.



Natural mineral water

This comes from a protected underground source, requires official recognition and must have stable composition. Strict conditions govern its treatment and labelling, including declaration of mineral composition.

Spring water

This also comes from an underground source and must meet source, bottling and safety requirements. It does not undergo the same recognition process as natural mineral water.

Bottled drinking water

This may come from various sources, including a public water supply. It can be treated, provided the applicable requirements are met and consumers are not misled about its origin. Its label does not generally have to declare mineral composition or treatments.

What does the distinction tell us?

- The categories explain source and production requirements. They do not establish that one product provides greater health benefits than every other compliant water.
- CPB calls for clear, accessible information about source, category and treatment. Consumers should be able to understand what they are buying without relying on the landscape pictured on the label.

WHAT YOU CANNOT SEE IN A GLASS OF WATER

Understanding contamination requires evidence about exposure.

Clear water can contain substances undetectable by sight, smell or taste. Equally, detecting a trace substance does not, on its own, establish the size of a health risk.

PFAS

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances are a large family of chemicals used in industrial and consumer applications. Some persist in the environment, raising concerns about water sources and exposure. Monitoring results must be assessed alongside concentrations, treatment measures and the water actually reaching consumers.



Microplastics

Microplastics have been detected in tap and bottled water. Research continues into exposure and possible health effects. Differences in testing methods and gaps in knowledge make sweeping claims about individual risk unreliable.

Bacteria and the supply chain

Microbiological contamination can require urgent action. Detections must be investigated in context, including where a sample was taken and what happened before the water reached households.

Safety depends on treatment, infrastructure, hygiene and monitoring. Bottling also requires suitable packaging, proper storage and an intact seal.

The standard for reporting

- ConsoMag will distinguish an identified hazard from measured exposure, a regulatory breach and an unresolved scientific question.
- Neither a reassuring label nor an alarming headline can replace product-specific evidence. Consumers need clear findings and practical advice when a problem is identified.

THE PRICE OF WATER

What are we paying for beyond the drink?



A bottle's price covers more than water. Packaging, bottling, transport, retail margins, branding and convenience all contribute. A higher price does not necessarily demonstrate greater safety.

Bottled-Water Retail Price Comparison

Based on selected UK retail shelf-price observations recorded in early October 2026. Prices include VAT where applicable and may vary by retailer, location, promotional offer and membership conditions.

Brand / Product	Pack Size	Retail Price	Price per Litre
Sainsbury's British Spring Water	6 × 2 L	£3.00	£0.25
Kirkland Signature Sparkling Spring Water	40 × 500 ml	£5.98	£0.30
Buxton Still Natural Mineral Water	6 × 1.5 L	£4.30	£0.48
Aqua Pura Still Natural Mineral Water	12 × 500 ml	£3.50	£0.58
Buxton Still Natural Mineral Water	8 × 500 ml	£2.50	£0.63
ACTIPH Alkaline Water	24 × 600 ml	£9.58	£0.67
S.Pellegrino Sparkling Natural Mineral Water	6 × 1 L	£7.00	£1.17
S.Pellegrino Sparkling Natural Mineral Water	12 × 750 ml	£14.26	£1.58
Acqua Panna Natural Mineral Water	12 × 750 ml	£14.98	£1.66
S.Pellegrino Sparkling Natural Mineral Water	1 L	£1.75	£1.75

Consider the wider cost

Environmental comparisons should examine production, packaging, transport, recycling and disposal. A recyclable bottle or a natural source is only part of that assessment.

What a retail investigation must establish

A useful survey would record actual prices, sizes, product categories, declared sources and marketing claims by retailer and date. Budget and premium products should be compared using the same measures.

These selected retail observations illustrate price differences but cannot establish that any brand is overcharging. Consumers may pay more for convenience, packaging or taste. They should understand what that premium buys.



Editorial note: *These are observed retail prices rather than a comprehensive market survey. Prices may vary by retailer, date and promotion. The comparison includes different water categories and packaging formats; price differences alone do not establish differences in purity, safety or nutritional benefit.*

TAP or BOTTLE

The evidence must decide.

Our documentary review supports confidence in regulated drinking water while identifying questions that suppliers and bottled-water producers should answer.



What the review shows

England's tap-water compliance record is strong, but local failures and plumbing risks need attention. Bottled water comprises distinct categories whose source and production requirements differ. Natural origin and price do not establish superior health benefits.

Emerging contaminants deserve research and scrutiny. Conclusions should reflect measured exposure and the strength of the evidence.



What CPB wants to see

Consumers need clearer disclosure of bottled-water sources and treatment, accessible local water-quality information and effective investigation of contamination complaints. Marketing claims about exceptional purity or health benefits should be supported by evidence.

Consistent product descriptions and price-per-litre information would make comparisons easier.

Before choosing

For bottled water, check the category, source information and unit price. Ask whether an advertised benefit is established or simply implied.

For tap water, consult the supplier's local information and report unusual changes. Where plumbing may contain lead, seek advice about testing and appropriate action.

This review identifies matters for further investigation; it does not rank brands by laboratory results. Consumers deserve safe supplies and honest information, whether their water comes from a tap or a supermarket shelf.

THE PETROL POUND

Where does your money go?

A forecourt price reflects an international chain involving crude oil, refining, transport, wholesale purchasing, taxation and retailing. Understanding those components helps consumers assess explanations for price changes.



Tax and the cost of supply

The UK pump price includes fuel duty and VAT, alongside the fuel itself, distribution, operating expenses and retail margin. The amount remaining after tax cannot all be described as profit.

A retailer still has to pay for fuel, premises, staff, equipment and other costs. Equally, those costs should not shield pricing decisions from scrutiny.

Why oil and pump prices differ

Crude oil and petrol prices do not move in perfect step. Refining capacity, demand, exchange rates and transport costs can affect the final price. Oil is generally traded in US dollars, so movements in sterling also matter.

Retailers may be selling stock bought at earlier wholesale prices. A fall in crude prices will therefore not produce an identical immediate reduction at every station.

The question worth asking

How quickly do consumers benefit when wholesale costs fall? Are increases passed through more rapidly than reductions?

Transparent prices and continuing examination of margins can help establish whether competition is working. The size of the bill matters, but so does the market behaviour behind it.

WHEN WHOLESALE PRICES FALL

Who benefits from stronger competition?



The CMA's 2023 road-fuel market study found weakened competition and increased average supermarket fuel margins over the period examined. It called for stronger monitoring and better access to price information.

A margin is not net profit

A retail fuel margin broadly compares the selling price with acquisition cost. Operating expenses still have to be met. Nevertheless, sustained changes in margins can help identify whether competitive pressure has weakened.

The relevant question is whether higher margins have an adequate explanation in costs and market conditions.

Local choice matters

National averages can conceal substantial differences between nearby forecourts. Competition, location, demand and operating costs influence prices. Rural motorists may have fewer practical alternatives than drivers in towns.

A six-pence difference per litre saves £2.70 on a 45-litre fill. This is an illustrative calculation, before any extra travel costs.

Make comparisons useful

Compare the same fuel grade, check how recent the price is and include the cost of reaching a cheaper station. A saving can disappear if it requires a lengthy detour.

Accessible information helps motorists choose and gives retailers a reason to compete. Monitoring remains necessary to establish whether changes in wholesale costs reach consumers fairly.



THE PETROL POUND BEYOND THE PUMP

Households without cars can also feel rising fuel costs.



Food, parcels and household services depend on transport. When fuel becomes more expensive, businesses may absorb the increase, change their operations or pass some costs to customers.

The effect depends on how much fuel contributes to overall costs, as well as contracts and competition. A rise in diesel does not explain every increase in a delivery charge or grocery bill.

Ask what changed

A business may have a reasonable explanation for higher prices. Consumers can still ask how a surcharge was calculated and whether it will be reviewed when costs fall.

The same scrutiny should apply in both directions: households should benefit when lower operating costs and competition allow prices to fall.

Fuel Finder and price comparisons

Fuel Finder has made forecourt price information more accessible. In October 2026, the government announced that the data was also being used to show fuel prices on Google Maps.

Such tools can help drivers compare stations before travelling. Check the fuel grade, the age of the information and the cost of any detour.

The wider responsibility

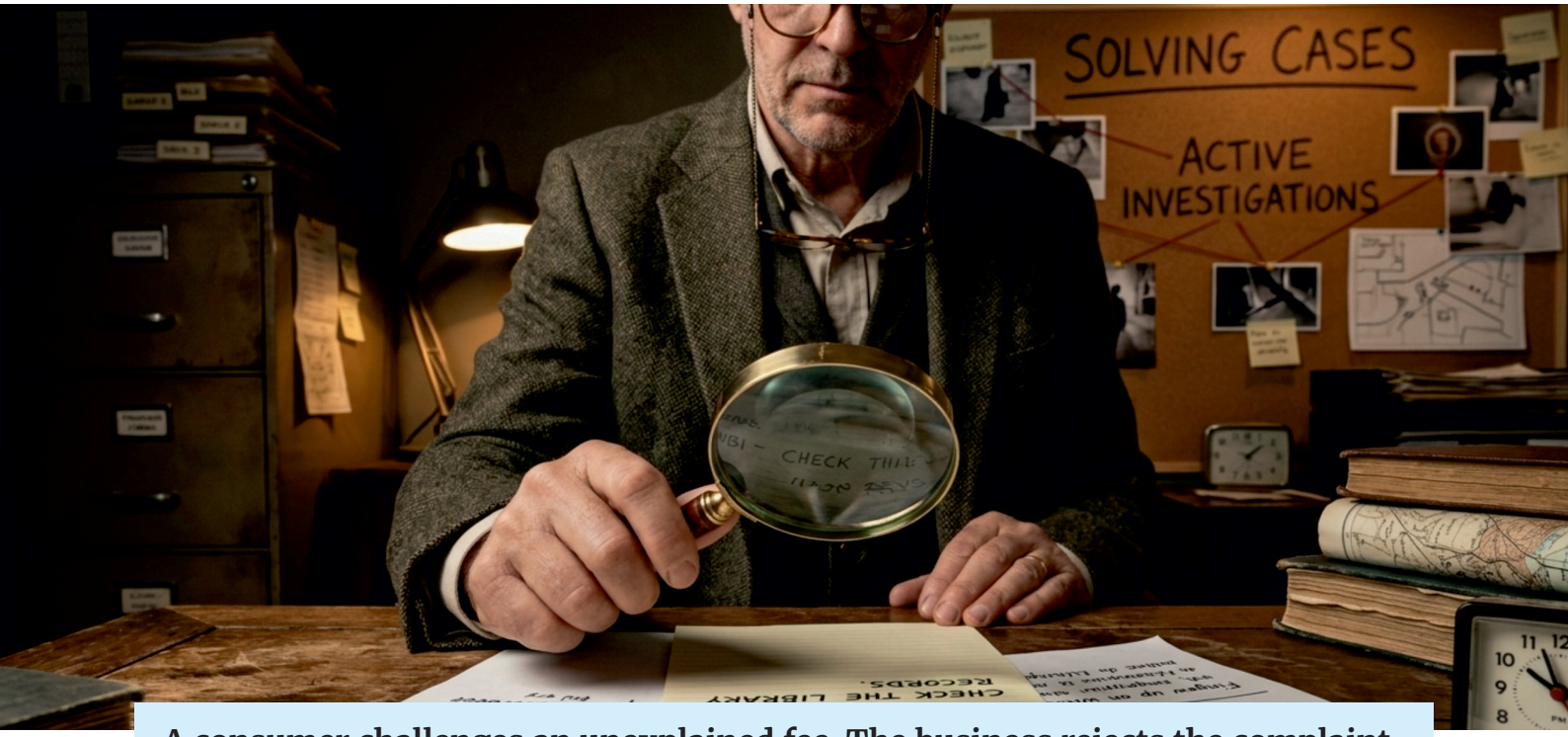
Consumers can compare suppliers and question unexplained increases. Regulators must examine whether competition delivers fair outcomes.

Fuel pricing affects household purchasing power far beyond the filling station. Its transparency is a public-interest issue.



WHEN ONE COMPLAINT REVEALS A BIGGER PROBLEM

A small individual loss can conceal a substantial collective cost.



A consumer challenges an unexplained fee. The business rejects the complaint. The amount may seem too small to justify further effort, and the consumer gives up. But what if thousands paid the same charge?

The scale can change

In an illustrative example, a £25 charge applied to 10,000 consumers produces £250,000. This is not an allegation against a business.

It shows why apparently modest losses can deserve investigation.

The total does not prove that a charge is unlawful. Investigators must examine what was advertised, agreed, paid and supplied, together with the company's explanation.

Look for a pattern

Similar complaints may concern an isolated error, different contracts or a recurring practice. Comparing invoices, terms and correspondence helps establish which explanation fits.

A consumer's honest belief that a charge was unfair must be tested against the evidence. Businesses must also be able to explain or challenge the account.

What an investigation can change

A documented complaint may prompt clearer terms, corrected information, improved procedures or a remedy for other affected customers. Evidence of possible breaches may justify referral to an enforcement authority.

The importance of a complaint extends beyond its value to one person. It may reveal how many others are being treated.

HOW CONSUMER POWER BECOMES REAL

Reliable evidence gives collective action its strength.

Businesses analyse customer behaviour and organise their resources. Consumers often act alone, with limited time and little knowledge of similar experiences. Independent consumer organisations can help bring that evidence together.





From complaint to action

The process begins by establishing what happened, who was involved and what outcome the consumer seeks. Contracts, advertising, payment records and correspondence help identify the facts and any gaps.

The business should receive the relevant concerns and a reasonable opportunity to respond. Investigators must then distinguish established facts from disputed allegations and consider appropriate remedies or referrals.

A wider examination may follow where evidence suggests a practice affects others. CPB's role is independent intervention; it is not a court or statutory enforcement authority.

Fairness gives findings weight

A company's response may correct a misunderstanding or change the assessment. An investigation must be prepared to record that, just as it must challenge conduct where evidence warrants it.

Not every complaint needs publication. The decision should reflect accuracy, privacy, proportionality and public interest.

How readers can help

Preserve documents, provide an accurate chronology and report later developments, including refunds or explanations. Separate what you witnessed from what you suspect.

ConsoMag's purpose is to turn credible evidence into information and action that help consumers. Its conclusions must follow the investigation.

NewsFlash

Consumer protection in action

Was a product safe? Was a charge explained? Did the customer receive the service promised? Behind an individual complaint, these questions can reveal concerns relevant to many consumers.

In this edition, CPB opens its case files and sets out developing proposals.

Inside this section:

Pages 28–29	Examine a reported high-value gold purchase and the risks of paying substantial sums before delivery.
Pages 30–31	Examine a disputed garage diagnostic bill, CPB's intervention and the questions motorists should ask before authorising tests.
Page 32	Examine the case of whistleblower Simon Andriesz and the protection and support available to those who speak up.
Page 33	Explore the challenges of cross-border consumer complaints and the proposed cooperation between CPB and COMCO.
Pages 34–36	Cover other casework, motor-insurance practices and a proposal for official recording of practical driving tests.

Work in progress:

These reports include unresolved complaints and proposed initiatives. A consumer's allegation is not a finding against a business. Relevant documents and responses must be examined before conclusions are reached.

Our purpose is to explain what is known, identify the questions still requiring answers and show why they matter. Readers with relevant evidence can contact CPB through the details on page 40.

THE GOLD COINS THAT DID NOT ARRIVE

A reported payment of nearly £194,000 raises questions about advance-payment protection.

A consumer says she ordered 59 one-ounce Britannia gold coins from BG Metals Ltd, trading as Bullion Giant, through two purchases in May and June 2026. The consumer reports that she transferred £193,663.36 but received neither the coins nor a refund.

These are the consumer's reported circumstances. CPB's investigation remains ongoing, with no finding of wrongdoing.

The delivery promises

The complaint describes a discount and deferred dispatch, followed by revised arrangements and a refund proposal that, the consumer says, was not fulfilled.

Advance payment can be legitimate. The questions are what delivery terms were agreed, why they were not met and what happened to the proposed refund.





What must be established

Order records, bank evidence and correspondence must be considered alongside the seller's explanation. A missed delivery date can create a contractual dispute without automatically establishing fraud.

The consumer has also approached her banks and reported the matter to the authorities. Those steps do not determine the legal or criminal character of the transaction.

Consumers making large advance payments need clear terms, reliable delivery arrangements and a workable remedy when goods do not arrive. Whether the obligations were breached here remains under examination.

WHEN A BANK TRANSFER BECOMES A CONSUMER RISK

Understand the protection before making a large advance payment



The gold-coin complaint highlights questions relevant to other high-value purchases: who is the seller, what is being supplied, when is delivery due and what happens if the agreement fails?

Check the business and the terms

Companies House registration establishes a company's recorded identity. It does not guarantee financial stability or fulfilment of an order. Check independent trading information, contact details and the consistency of the documents.

Agree the delivery arrangements in writing. Where a trader misses a delivery commitment, remedies depend on the contract and applicable law, including whether an additional opportunity to deliver is required.

Payment method matters

Bank transfers do not provide the same protection as qualifying credit-card purchases. Recovery may be possible, but is not guaranteed.

APP-scam reimbursement rules have eligibility conditions and exclusions.

An ordinary commercial dispute about non-delivery does not automatically qualify. Equally, a dispute about the classification of a claim requires proper examination of the evidence.

Keep a complete record

Retain advertisements, invoices, payment instructions, delivery commitments and revised promises. A clear chronology helps banks and advisers assess events.

Contact the seller formally if goods fail to arrive. If you suspect a scam, notify your bank promptly and report it to the appropriate authorities. Substantial losses may also require independent legal advice.

£504 FOR A CAR DIAGNOSIS — BUT NO REPAIR

CPB intervenes after a motorist questions additional diagnostic charges and secures an agreement for a £336 refund.

A motorist who paid £504 to investigate a fault with her car's power steering was left with an inconclusive diagnosis, an unrepaired vehicle and questions about charges she says she had not fully understood or authorised.

The dispute arose after the consumer took her vehicle to a garage in Suffolk because of an intermittent power-steering problem.

The garage initially charged £168 for one hour of diagnostic work. A further £336 was added for two additional hours of testing, bringing the total bill to £504.

Despite the expenditure, the garage could not conclusively establish whether the fault lay with the steering motor or the electronic control unit.



A dispute over additional charges

The consumer questioned whether she had clearly authorised the additional two hours of testing. She also expressed dissatisfaction with the time spent at the garage and the fact that the investigation had not produced a definitive diagnosis. The garage maintained that the additional work and associated charges had been explained.

While diagnostic investigations do not always identify a fault immediately, particularly when problems are intermittent, consumers should be informed of additional costs and given the opportunity to approve further work.

CPB steps in

On 14 October 2026, the Consumer Protection Bureau (CPB) intervened on the consumer's behalf, requesting clarification of the additional charges, details of the diagnostic work undertaken and a reconsideration of the garage's initial offer of a £168 refund.
Following further correspondence, the garage agreed in writing to refund £336, leaving the consumer responsible for the original £168 diagnostic charge.

The settlement represented a significant reduction in the consumer's bill, although the underlying mechanical fault remained unresolved.

What motorists should know

This case raises an important question: how much should a consumer be expected to pay for diagnostic investigations when the fault remains unidentified?

Garages are entitled to charge for diagnostic work properly agreed with their customers, even when testing does not produce a definitive answer. However, additional investigations and their costs should be clearly explained before the work proceeds.

Motorists should request written confirmation of diagnostic charges, ask whether additional testing will incur further fees and establish when their approval will be required.

The negotiated settlement does not establish wrongdoing by the garage. It does, however, demonstrate how questioning disputed charges and seeking clarification can lead to a satisfactory financial outcome.



Before you agree to diagnostic work

When your car develops a fault, a garage may need to carry out diagnostic tests before recommending repairs. But how much will those tests cost, and what happens if the garage cannot identify the problem? Before authorising any work, motorists should understand what they are paying for, what the investigation is expected to establish and whether additional charges could arise.

Agree the scope and price

Ask whether the diagnostic fee is fixed or charged by the hour, what tests it includes and whether it covers a repair. Establish how much you could pay if the investigation does not identify the fault.

If further work is recommended, request an explanation of the findings so far, the proposed tests and their cost. Ask whether those tests are expected to confirm the fault or only narrow the possibilities. Agree a spending limit and require approval before it is exceeded.

Understand the standard of service

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 requires services to be carried out with reasonable care and skill. An unsuccessful investigation does not automatically establish a breach. What the trader promised and what the customer agreed also matter.

Where the service fails to meet the contractual standard, remedies may include repeat performance or an appropriate price reduction, subject to the legal conditions. A refund is not automatic simply because the vehicle remains unrepaired.

Keep the evidence

Retain the quotation, booking confirmation, messages, job card and invoice. Request an itemised account of the labour time, tests, findings and recommendations. Distinguish confirmed defects from possible causes before approving expensive replacement parts.

Challenge a disputed bill clearly

Write to the garage, identify the disputed charge, explain the concern and state the remedy sought. Ask for records showing when additional work was authorised. Recognise any work whose scope and cost you accept.

Give the business an opportunity to respond. If the complaint remains unresolved, seek independent consumer advice and ask whether an appropriate dispute-resolution scheme is available.

A settlement can resolve a disagreement without determining legal liability. A promised refund and a refund received should be recorded separately.

NewsFlash casework and cooperation

WHO PROTECTS THOSE WHO SPEAK UP?

The death of whistleblower Simon Andriesz raises urgent questions about the treatment of people who report suspected wrongdoing—and the support available when speaking out takes a personal toll.



Simon Andriesz spent years trying to bring concerns about his former employer to the attention of authorities. A former managing director at financial brokerage BGC, he believed serious wrongdoing required investigation.

His family said he died by suicide on 23 September 2026, aged 57. His death has prompted renewed parliamentary scrutiny of how whistleblowers are treated.

From disclosures to dispute

According to published reporting drawing on his BBC interviews, Andriesz raised concerns internally in 2016 about financial figures he believed were fraudulent. His employment ended the following year. He alleged that he experienced retaliation for speaking out.

BGC disputed his allegations, denied retaliation and gave a different account of the circumstances surrounding his departure.

Andriesz continued approaching authorities in Britain and the United States. Separately, his later examination of documents concerning Jeffrey Epstein drew attention to alleged business links involving Howard Lutnick, formerly BGC's chief executive. Lutnick has denied wrongdoing in connection with Epstein. These later disclosures should be distinguished from Andriesz's original workplace concerns.

The personal cost

At a Transparency Task Force event in July, Andriesz described financial hardship, family separation and fears about losing his home. His public account conveyed the strain he associated with whistleblowing and the treatment he said followed.

Those experiences deserve examination, but they do not establish a single explanation for his death. Reporting must respect his family and distinguish documented events, disputed allegations and unanswered questions.

The Financial Conduct Authority has commissioned board member Lea Paterson to review its interactions with Andriesz and identify possible improvements. Parliamentarians have called for independent scrutiny of the regulator's handling of whistleblowers.

Why consumers should care

People inside organisations can identify risks before customers, investors or the public become aware of them. Their willingness to report concerns can help expose problems that would otherwise remain hidden.

Receiving information is only part of the responsibility. Clear communication, fair assessment and an appropriate response to reported retaliation or distress also matter.

A parliamentary summit scheduled for 2 November, dedicated to Simon's memory, will examine whistleblowing and protection against retaliation.

In our next issue, ConsoMag will report from the summit, examine the support available to whistleblowers and seek detailed responses from the FCA and BGC. The question is straightforward: what happens to the person after they speak up?

Sources supporting the article: *BBC reporting on the family's statement and dispute; Forbes on the disclosures and BGC's position; The Banker on Simon's public account; and the FCA's published review announcement*

WHEN CONSUMER PROBLEMS CROSS BORDERS

Connected markets need effective cooperation.

Goods are ordered from an overseas website, payment passes through another country and the platform is operated elsewhere. When delivery fails, the consumer may struggle to identify who can help.

Different legal systems, languages and contractual arrangements can make redress difficult. A right on paper may be costly or impractical to enforce.



Competition and consumer welfare

Competition authorities examine issues such as market power and anti-competitive conduct. Consumer-protection work addresses misleading practices, unfair terms, safety and remedies. The concerns intersect where limited choice or concentrated markets disadvantage consumers.

Sharing professional experience can help institutions recognise these connections and improve their investigative methods.

What cooperation can achieve

Exchanges can support better evidence gathering, consumer education and understanding of other jurisdictions. The proposed cooperation between the Consumer Protection Bureau (CPB) and the Competition Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (COMCO) offers an opportunity to develop that work.

An agreement does not automatically create enforcement powers or permit unrestricted sharing of confidential information. Practical arrangements must respect legal responsibilities and data-protection requirements.

INSIDE CPB CASEWORK

Three complaints under examination.



1 Electric bicycle assistance

A consumer reports intermittent loss of assistance from an electric bicycle system while cycling uphill and questions the safety information provided. CPB is assessing the circumstances and considering enquiries to the relevant manufacturer and retailer.

Loss of assistance does not itself establish a defect. Technical information, operating limits and the businesses' responses must be examined.



2 An office agreement in dispute

A self-employed customer disputes an electronically signed office agreement, alleging pressure to sign and disagreement over the premises and price. She says she cancelled within approximately 48 hours, never occupied the office and later received a demand for £9,897.36.

CPB is examining the terms, pre-contract communications, cancellation and basis for the demand. The customer's status and the nature of the agreement also matter when considering applicable protections. No finding has been reached against the business.



3 Electric vehicle servicing

Another complaint concerns the work agreed and delivered during a major service on a battery-electric vehicle. CPB has prepared correspondence seeking clarification and is awaiting a response. The booking, invoice, checklist and supporting records should establish what was purchased and performed.

Each case requires the same approach: identify the agreement, establish events, examine documents and seek an explanation before reaching conclusions.

MOTOR INSURANCE

The price of a risk consumers cannot see.

Motorists can face very different premiums despite apparently similar circumstances. Fees, claims history, additional drivers and previous policy cancellations may affect both the price and availability of cover.

Insurers assess risk using complex information. Consumers still need to understand the questions asked, the terms offered and the reasons for significant decisions.



After a non-fault claim

An accident may influence future premiums even where the motorist was not responsible. Consumers can ask whether the claims record is accurate and how relevant information has been used.

When a policy is cancelled

Cancellation can affect later applications. Cancellation by the customer, cancellation by the insurer and non-renewal are different circumstances and should be recorded accurately.

Consumers need a clear explanation of the decision and its consequences.

What CPB intends to examine

CPB is developing an investigation into administration and amendment fees, the effect of claims and motoring records, named-driver charges and difficulties following cancellation.

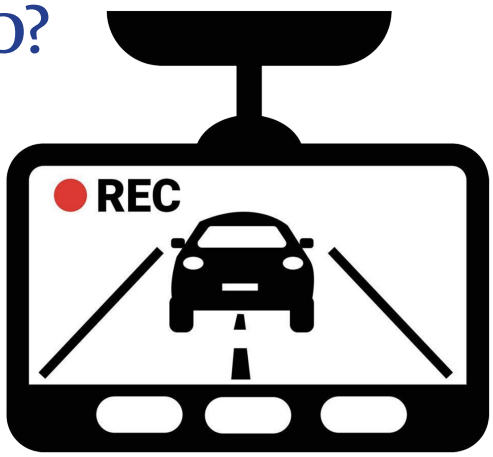
The work will require policy documents, fee schedules, anonymised examples and insurers' explanations. It must distinguish legitimate risk assessment from practices that may raise regulatory concerns.

Insurers need not reveal every commercially sensitive calculation. Clear contracts, accurate records and understandable explanations remain essential to fair treatment.



SHOULD PRACTICAL DRIVING TESTS BE RECORDED?

CPB proposes a controlled pilot to support fair reviews.



A learner driver disputes a serious fault recorded during an April 2026 practical test. DVSA investigated the complaint, sought the examiner's account and maintained the result.

The case does not establish that the assessment was wrong. It highlights the difficulty of reviewing disputed events without an independent visual record.



What CPB proposes

A limited pilot of official recording could examine whether footage helps resolve complaints and protects learners and examiners when accounts differ.

Clear rules would be needed for equipment, access, retention and privacy. Recordings should not become a routine public record of learners, examiners or other road users.

The limits of cameras

Footage may not show every hazard, mirror check or aspect of a driver's awareness and control. It would support professional judgement rather than automatically replace it.

An independent evaluation should assess whether recording materially improves reviews and whether that benefit justifies operational cost and privacy implications.

The objective

Confidence in testing depends on fair assessment and credible complaint handling. A carefully designed pilot would allow the proposal to be judged on evidence before any decision about wider use.

CPB's aim is to strengthen confidence in the process for everyone involved.

CPB at a glance

Consumer protection begins with access.

When goods fail to arrive, a service disappoints or a charge is disputed, knowing where to turn can be the first obstacle.

The Consumer Protection Bureau provides independent assistance, examines complaints and seeks practical resolutions through evidence-based intervention.

Our work in figures

More than 1,200 cumulative consumer enquiries.

More than 90 complex cases handled over the last couple of years.

These are reported activity figures. Enquiries, investigations and successful outcomes are different measures and should not be confused.

What we do

CPB reviews documents, approaches businesses for explanations and considers routes towards a resolution. Where complaints suggest a wider concern, it may investigate further, publish consumer information or refer matters to relevant authorities.

CPB is an independent consumer organisation, not a court or statutory enforcement body.

Assistance is free

Consumers do not pay registration, case-activation or success fees for CPB's consumer assistance service. Voluntary contributions support the work but are never a condition of receiving help.

Access should not depend on a consumer's ability to pay. Readers seeking assistance can use the contact details on page 40 and provide the documents relevant to their complaint.

CAMPAIGNS FROM CONCERN TO CHANGE

Evidence should define the problem and the change sought.

A campaign needs a clear objective, documented examples and a way to assess progress. CPB is developing work in three areas.

Fair financial services

CPB is gathering evidence about transparency and fairness in financial-services complaints. This includes disputed decisions, explanations given to consumers and whether relevant material was properly considered.

Recurring concerns may justify engagement with firms, complaint-handling bodies or regulators.

Financial Ombudsman Service accountability

The proposed #FOSFailings campaign will examine concerns about accessibility, consistency and transparency. It must assess documented examples alongside the statutory framework and relevant procedures.

Disagreement with an ombudsman's decision does not itself establish a failure. Wider findings require an examination of the reasons, evidence and process.



Fair terms for fair travel

Travel-related consumer complaints raise questions about booking conditions, unexpected charges, cancellations and refunds. CPB intends to examine whether consumers receive clear information before making payments and whether travel service providers take appropriate responsibility when services are not delivered as agreed.

How progress will be measured

Each campaign should identify the evidence, the improvement sought and the response of the organisations concerned. Clearer information, corrected practices and better complaint procedures matter more than publicity alone.

Consumers with relevant documents can help build a reliable picture of recurring problems.

PRODUCT SAFETY WATCH

Preventing the next incident

A potentially unsafe product may present a risk beyond the person who first reports it. Product Safety Watch aims to examine reported concerns and identify matters requiring referral to the appropriate authorities.

A reported fault may arise from a defect, misuse, poor maintenance or another cause. Investigation must establish which explanation the evidence supports.

Make the report precise

Identify the product, model, serial or batch number and where it was bought. Explain what happened and in what conditions. Purchase records, photographs, instructions and communications with the supplier can help investigators assess the concern.

Accurate identification also helps establish whether similar incidents have been reported.

Obtain the technical response

Manufacturers and suppliers should have an opportunity to explain operating limits, provide technical information and address the evidence. A consumer's experience must be distinguished from a confirmed defect.

Where a potentially serious risk is identified, prompt referral may be more important than waiting for a magazine investigation to finish.

What consumers can do

Check official recall information and follow safety instructions. Stop using a product that appears to present an immediate danger and seek appropriate advice. Report concerns through the relevant consumer-advice and product-safety channels.

The purpose is early identification and prevention, supported by evidence and timely action.



Consumer Protection Bureau

Informed consumers. Fair markets.

Independent consumer assistance, investigations and public-interest advocacy.

Every consumer deserves fair treatment and clear information about their rights. CPB assists with complaints about goods, services, disputed charges, refunds and contractual disagreements.

Our approach is based on evidence, impartial examination and practical solutions.

Consumer assistance is completely free

No registration fees. No case fees. No success fees.
Voluntary contributions are welcome but never required.

Have a consumer complaint?

Submit your complaint through our website with relevant supporting documents. Explain what happened, who is involved and the outcome you seek.

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www.consumerprotectionbureau.co.uk

info@consumerprotectionbureau.co.uk

+44 (0)20 3585 4002

83 Victoria Street, Westminster, London SW1H 0HW, United Kingdom

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Information you can use. Questions that deserve answers.

Published by the Consumer Protection Bureau, an independent UK consumer organisation.