



Consumer & Public Interest Network — Summer All Members' Meeting Room G1, BSI, Thursday 6 August 2009

The BSI CPI Network* of individuals and organizations, representing the consumer and public interests in standardization, holds two 'all-member' meetings a year on specific themes aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of other work in the consumer & public interest area, considering the relevance to standardization and providing training on relevant topics.

The August meeting (rated as highly successful by many participants) was split into two distinct sessions. In the morning, delegates were briefed on Consumer Focus and where it has got in its work programme. There was then a forum on 'Quality marks' where 'advocates' from different organizations described various marks, followed by questions and debate.

The afternoon session was an opportunity for CPI reps to hear from colleagues about new standardization work in progress, to receive training in disability awareness and, in cross-sector groups, to consider topics of mutual interest.

The key messages which came out of the Quality marks debate and subsequent discussion, including in the afternoon group were:

- There is a plethora of quality and other marks, only some of which were discussed at the session. For example, there is a range of marks related to energy saving, fair trade, etc. Also some leading brands become regarded as quality marks in their own right.
- Is there scope for BSI to be proactive in developing Publicly Available Specifications (stakeholder sponsored standards) or national standards to support marks other than the Kitemark? [Note that, unfortunately, OFT were unable to attend, but further discussion on this between relevant stakeholders, to include OFT, would be positively welcomed.]
- It does not look likely everything could be reduced to one mark.
- There is something needed to assist consumers to know which are the marks they can trust - who certifies the certifying authority?
- There may be a lack of 'joined-up thinking' in terms of different Government departments sponsoring different marks without awareness of others.
- There is an issue of policing marks - whatever marks or systems are in place become meaningless without enforcement and action against misuse or fraudulent use of marks.
- There are cost/funding issues – good quality testing, policing etc. is expensive, which means that, either the organizations of the scheme must pay a lot to be assessed, which can be prohibitive for single traders, or external funding is needed.
- Advocates of the various schemes were keen to continue debate beyond the meeting.

* further information about the CPI Network is provided on <http://www.bsi-global.com/en/Standards-and-Publications/How-we-can-help-you/Consumers/>

Commentary: Points that were not expressed in the meeting itself, but were noted elsewhere during the morning were:

1. The large number of quality marks is not a problem in itself, provided there is a set of common criteria underpinning their assessment methodology, so as to provide demonstrably comparable results.
2. Since work on service standards is still essentially at the beginning, there is now a golden opportunity to initiate the adoption of a customer-centric** approach to service provision and to introduce a set of core service-related standards that focus on service outcomes rather than service processes. The European CHESSE project on service standards concluded that these two things should form the basis of future work in this area and BSI, who led the feasibility study for CHESSE, endorses that view. An outcome-based generic specification for service provision should ideally be developed by a body that can bring together the various interests through a consensus-based process and attract contribution from acknowledged service provision leaders to ensure optimum relevance and credibility.

***NB: For the purposes of this discussion, 'customer centricity' refers to the orientation of a service provider towards meeting the needs and expectations of customers, rather than towards ensuring the achievement of primarily business-oriented objectives, irrespective of their benefit to the customer.*

The customer-centric assumption is that all issues be determined in a manner that is not contrary to the customer's interests.

ANNEX 1: REPORT OF MORNING SESSION

Facilitated by Marcus Long, Head of External Affairs, BSI

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

by David Bell, Head of External Policy, BSI

Key points:

- BSI has had a longstanding commitment to consumers, since the Women's Advisory Committee formed in 1951.
- ISO/COPOLCO (Consumer Policy Committee of the International Standards Organization) will meet in London 2011.
- Alan Asher has returned to Australia - now seeking new CPI Chairman.

2. CONSUMER FOCUS PRESENTATION

by Philip Cullum, Deputy Chief Executive, Consumer Focus
(See presentation slides)

QUESTIONS:

Stephen Brookes, BSI Disabled Experts Reference Group (DERG) Digital switchover – hyper-visibility of corporate influence – what can Consumer Focus do to address issues like this?

Response: Referred back to presentation on rules of engagement.

Susan Marks, Citizens advice Prisoner telephone calls – has CF looked at any other captive audiences? CF powers – are there powers that consumers should be more aware of?

Response: Powers are primarily exercised through relationships and communication. Awareness that CF takes matters seriously can and does have beneficial effect. CF not decision maker but can make recommendation to Government. Remit of CF is still not wholly clear.

Rory Heap, DERG CF is under a public duty to promote disability equality – how are disabled people engaged?

Response:

1. Communication programme directed at consumers should bring improvement in the area of addressing issues of vulnerability.
2. Specific relationship building with consumer representative bodies: Relationship with CSI.

Role of CF: Ombudsman or facilitation?

Response: Not yet determined.

3. QUALITY MARKS FORUM

Mini-presentations by scheme advocates followed by debate and audience questions

National government schemes

Trustmark, the “scheme for finding reliable tradesmen” – Roman Russocki, Chief Executive, TrustMark

- Not a fair trader scheme as described in the agenda.
- Introduced to replace the previous scheme - Quality Mark; TrustMark created 2005.
- TrustMark is an umbrella organization owned by BIS.
- Provides opportunity for consumers to locate RMI sector (repair maintenance improvement) tradesmen.
- Funding is a serious issue. Funded by a levy on scheme owners. Additional funding needed for promotion.
- Industry funding creates independence but difficult to fund marketing activity.
- Cross-sectoral, so not included in OFT codes.
- Has 34 schemes all working to the same criteria. Full information on TrustMark downloadable from TrustMark website.
- Firms assessed at least every 3 years, scheme operators audited annually.
- 25 local authorities joining with associated Trustmark schemes.
- Operation is primarily web-based. Search for firms by postcode.
- Believed to be working against 330,000 hits last month.
- 1.7 million jobs done by Trustmark firms last year with only 4 complaints per week, most quickly resolved.
- Regulation needed in sector at the present time. Most other schemes are profit-making with little consumer protection. This should be prevented.

National Home Improvement Scheme – Shaun Robinson, Operational Support Team Manager, National HIA Quality Mark

- Private company holding a government contract to develop home improvement sector.
- Funded by Government and DoH.
- Intention to assist home owners who do not have the resource to improve their homes. Most recipients of service cannot afford to pay.
- NHIS is responsible for the quality of those schemes.
- Individual solutions to individual problems.
- Quality assessment programme ensuring that people receive a proper service: The mark looks at the quality of the service that is on offer.
- Judged against core criteria.
- Self assessment against criteria and subsequently validated.
- Provides a tool for evidencing the quality of the service being provided.
- Scheme intended to go beyond the consumer’s view.
- Pilot underway; due to launch scheme at annual conference later this year.

OFT approved codes – presented on behalf of OFT by Anne Ferguson, Manager, BSI CPIU, with slides available as a handout

- Consumer codes approval scheme currently 8 in operation. Others in development.
- System came into force in 2001 – 2 stages: 1 Code assessed; 2. Performance assessed (mystery shopper, complaints analysis, customer satisfaction survey, etc.).
- Requirement to offer more than the law.
- Believed to be beneficial, fewer complaints, awareness rising.
- Complaints directed to code sponsors thus less resource needed by OFT.

Local government schemes

'Buy with Confidence' (Local Authority Approved Trader Scheme) – Helen Woods, Business Support Officer, Hampshire County Council

- Trading standards approved scheme, multi-sector – biggest in country, developed in response to consumer demand.
- Response to consumer requests for advice about quality traders. (Hampshire 10 years ago.)
- Advises consumers who they can, with confidence, deal with; particularly aimed at vulnerable but available to all.
- Business able to say TS approved – consumers value this.
- Local authority priority for supporting local economy.
- Spread to other areas since now covers whole of the south east moving into south west.
- Is a registered certification mark, is voluntary. Range of criteria, but involves direct checking and every member is visited and audited for compliance.
- All aspects of trading relationships examined, including criminal records for staff working around personal dwellings.
- Traders find this a useful and beneficial experience. Training and education benefits for traders.
- Provides complaints monitoring and mediation where required.
- Promotion – various: information is accessible in various ways (including web).
- Accessibility is key.

Other national and international schemes

National Skills Academy – Quality Mark – Rebecca Rhodes, Skills Policy Director for Sectors and Specialisation, Learning Skills Council

- Two marks particularly referred to.
- National Skills Academy created by government to give employers opportunity to invest in their sector, e.g. Fashion Retail Academy.
- Specialization – is the right training available at the right time for specific sectors?

- Training cooperative standard. Enables employer bodies to develop training in their specific sectors.
- Issue of what constitutes the target market. Who is the customer that is influencing the decision (i.e. the trainee or the employer?).
- Persuade employers and individuals to invest in skills.
- Persuade employers to invest real money.
- Need to protect investments by ensuring value for money. Difficult to do matters of perception - establishment of agreed criteria and assessment against.

Which? Best Buy – Natalie Goodrick, Senior External Relations Officer, Which?

- Primarily product testing but can be applied to services.
- Not profit-making – intention to highlight good products on the market and provide consumers with information.
- Testing is thorough, using independent test houses and *Which?* has own team of test developers.
- Companies do not determine the products to be tested: it is a *Which?* decision.
- Product obtained via retailers by anonymous shoppers.
- Decisions as to what constitutes Best Buy likely to be based on criteria which are focused on product type. Therefore not all identical.
- Only highest scores are awarded the Best Buy mark.
- Services: Selective application. Significance of type of service engaged with, e.g. might consider car repairer but unlikely to consider retailer. Problems of being sure that assessment valid for duration of the licence.
- Licence period 6 months.
- Best Buy appears to perform well against other schemes, based on anecdotal feedback from members and direct research undertaken previous year.
- There is also back reference to licence holders who have been mainly positive about the benefits to them.

BSI Kitemark – Rob Hine, Business Development Manager, BSI Healthcare & Testing Services

- High recognition brings value to customers: Kitemark has been voted as Superbrand for last three years; third highest in its category.
- BSI more concerned with perception of what the mark means – national poll and research undertaken: recognised as representing quality and safety.
- Web search for use of the term 'Kitemark' found very high number of hits for actual mark but also some where the term had been used by others to indicate quality or a high standard.
- Status and credibility relate to: Long term presence – over 100 years (since 1903); strict implementation schemes; Level of awareness.
- Huge presence with products just beginning to impact on services.

CE Mark – Arnold Pindar, ANEC Steering Group presented due to illness of Stephen Russell, Secretary-General, ANEC (the European voice of consumers in standardization)

CE marking is related to the existence of a Directive and was introduced for the benefit of customs authorities. It:

- Is *not* a mark of European origin
- Is *not* a mark of compliance with standards
- Has *not* been approved
- Has *not* been third party assessed
- Is *not* a safety mark
- Is *not* aimed at consumers

EC intention that CE marking should only be promoted amongst market operators.

Keymark – Arnold Pindar

- ANEC believes that Europe requires a single mark.
- Keymark operated by CEN (recently dropped by CENELEC).
- Introduction based on political decision, not driven by market.
- Recent research indicates that consumers do not look for marks – there is an assumption that products on the European market will be inherently safe.
- ANEC believes that quality and safety can be assured only by a combination of legislation, standards, marks and oversight.

BSI Product Certification Advisory Council (PCAC) – Malcolm Barrow, member PCAC and CPIN

- Personal views.
- Data based on appliances certification and accreditation.
- Expansion from largely product focus to engagement with services and management systems – the process is evolving accordingly.
- Certification is a fast-growing field.
- Accreditation is the uniform process of oversight for certification bodies and schemes; UKAS provides this in the UK.
- Accreditation also fast-growing, in line with certification activity.
- Changes – Certification processes being examined to accommodate services and other needs with changes driven by global movement in this area.

GHI Approved logo – Ruth Pearcy, Commercial Director, Women's Interest Group, Good Housekeeping Institute

- The Good Housekeeping Institute was established in 1924 and has been offering advice to consumers ever since.
- The GHI tests household appliances, household products and food and drink.

- All testing is independent and is carried out internally by a team of researchers and by test houses.
- The results of testing are published in the magazine and also in an online database.
- GHI also offers research and development services to manufacturers and runs a very successful accreditation scheme.
- Recent research found Good Housekeeping to be the most trusted women's lifestyle magazine. GH has 85% brand recognition in UK and been awarded Superbrand status.

DEBATE

Susan Marks, Citizens Advice: Training schemes: Scams in the training field

Response: Government focus is on accredited schemes. Problem is that, in many fields, the industry sets its own standards, so difficult for the Skills Council to address this issue.

Peter Eisenegger, BSI CPI Network Range of brands can be confusing; few rather than many. Outside own mark, which would you vote for as the most effective?

Responses:

- Probably too late for utopian solution of a single brand.
- Commerciality of schemes an issue – non-profit making schemes should be key.
- Recognised mark for sector is what is required, rather than a single mark for everything.
- UKAS accrediting all schemes in UK would be a step in the right direction.
- Endorsement schemes are the best.
- Single mark best objective, possibly with grading levels
- Many sectors very small and need a focused brand.

Q1. Digital rights for consumers. Digital barriers, what can be done to assist?

Q2. Ageing population – are the product testers taking usability into account?

Responses:

- Telephone access options available as well as various paper based-options.
- Need to get consumer input into the debate about accessibility.
- *Which?* reported that usability was a feature of its testing.
- GHI also taking account of demographic change with user panels being appropriately constituted.

Comments

- Expectation that outcomes from competing brands would be at least similar.
- Joined up government: is the money made available being appropriately invested?

Q. Problem of the value and quality of available training, e.g. City & Guilds, which tends to be at too low a standard.

Response

- Delivery tends to rest with commercial organizations. Government attempting to address the problem: approaching industry bodies to see if they wish to own the schemes and to promote alternative options.

Comment

- Unpoliced schemes are of no value.

Q. Kitemark type schemes are always expensive. Could some price flexibility be introduced without significant loss of rigour?

Response:

- Kitemark schemes are essentially voluntary. Tend to be taken up by the top end of any market.

Q. Which mark could I use to ensure that a product purchased in their (Quality mark applicable) sector is fully accessible?

Responses:

- Education and Skills claimed to be 100 %. (This was disputed by members of DERG in audience who were requested to provide specific examples to be investigated later.)
- National Home Improvement Scheme: approx 50 % of budget is committed to ensuring accessibility.
- Kitemark: Certified entities are required to work to the appropriate standards; accessibility is thus dependent on those.
- ANEC: Confirmed that ensuring accessibility is written into standards is key.
- Reference to training of standards committee members being important, to ensure that they are aware of disability needs and know how to respond. Stand4all training programme funded by EC, led by Dutch Standards body (NEN) with BSI involvement should help. (see link: http://www.usem-net.eu/index.php?view=article&catid=40%3Anews2008&id=99%3Astand4all-project-kickoff-meeting-&Itemid=70&option=com_content)

Q. Trustmark – How do you ensure that employees arriving at a house to work will not be racist, sexist etc?

Response:

- Trustmark schemes do include customer treatment as part of their core criteria.
- Complaint procedures are also established and constituted to assist in this area.

Q. What level of complaint will result in withdrawal of the Trustmark or Buy with Confidence from a trader? How does consumer feedback get taken into account?

Response:

- For Buy with Confidence, it is related to size of business and the severity of the complaint. Could be one complaint for a very small business.

ROUNDUP OF MORNING PLENARY SESSION

Marcus Long, Head of External Affairs, BSI

- **Lack of joined up Government** – various marks sponsored without relation to each other; funding to start, not necessarily to continue.
- **Policing of schemes** – importance to consumers.
- **Doing the wrong things badly** – need for dialogue to ensure that schemes are doing the right things well.

ANNEX 2: REPORT OF AFTERNOON SESSION

Facilitated by Anne Ferguson, Manager, Consumer & Public Interest Standardization, BSI. Presentations were followed by tea and then cross-sector group meetings, reported in Annex 3.

1. INTRODUCTION

Key points

- Howard Kerr, new Chief Executive of BSI, met Network members over tea.
- New members of the CPI Network introduced themselves:
 - CPI Coordinators:
 - Jane O'Brien for Children's Interests
 - Julie Hunter for Services
 - CPI Reps:
 - Alan Bent (Materials & Healthcare group – Nanotechnology)
 - Judith Samson (Services group – Tourism)
 - Kevin Lowry (Risk group – Fireworks, Matches and lighters)
 - Neil Avery (Services group – Customer service, Smart meters, Billing)
 - CPI Disabled Experts Reference Group:
 - David Sindall
 - Waqas Chauhdry
- Copy of caricature given as part of present for the outgoing Chair on show.

2. NEW WORK ITEMS UPDATE

Pete Eisenegger, CPI Coordinator ICT, provided a brief update on the progression of standards ideas collated by the CPI Network. The following more detailed examples of work in progress were also presented:

- New work on Sustainability: Robyn Thorogood – Trees, Waste management and Green roofs
- New work on Sustainability-Construction: Janet Murphy – Flood risk
- New work on Security-Privacy-ICT: – Julian Jones
- New work on Accessibility-ICT: Rory Heap – ICT-6 and BSI's work on accessibility issues within ICT sector

3. ACCESSIBILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Michelle Valentine, CPI Coordinator Accessibility and members of the DERG group conducted an exercise to increase awareness of appropriate terminology to use with respect to disability.

Set in the context of the need to work with a 'social model' of disability (people are disabled by an inadequate environment, product or service) rather than a medical model (people are themselves disabled and need to be 'looked after' in some way), various terms were suggested and the audience had to consider how they felt about them and thus judge their acceptability. Examples included: 'wheelchair bound' (factually incorrect and limiting) and the appropriate substitution: 'wheelchair user'.

ANNEX 3: REPORT OF CROSS-SECTOR GROUP MEETINGS

Group 1 (ICT and Design for All)

Members of the CPI ICT, Design for All and DERG groups and some BSI staff met to discuss ICT and accessibility. Two topics were identified for action:

Researching/producing material to demonstrate the market attractiveness of Design for All

The objective is to have information available for ICT standards committees and others which shows industry representatives why there is commercial benefit in addressing Design for All (DfA) requirements, as well as encouraging public sector bodies to support accessibility standards more strongly.

Data on the UK population's capabilities will be collected and collated mainly by PE and RH but with contributions from all. The data will be looked at in terms of the attractiveness and business cases as viewed by commerce for investment in DfA. A good example of this was discussed briefly: the Disability Rights Commission report of 2004 on *The Web Access and Inclusion for Disabled People* (document available). This includes (numbered page 27 of the paper) measurements of task completion times for the average person to use websites well designed for accessibility compared to poorly design accessibility sites. The key statistic being that the well designed sites are over 40 % easier to use for the average person, aside from the benefits of opening up access to an even wider market.

See also a useful source of capability data at the following website (although some important information is conveyed in graphic images not tables):

<http://www.inclusivedesign toolkit.com/betterdesign/>

Actions arising:

- All to pass any useful papers and data to PE and RH.
- PE with RH to produce suitable draft analysis on market attractiveness and circulate for comment to members of the ICT Accessibility 'syndicate' of the 6th August 2009.

Identifying the small issues which make a big difference in ICT accessibility

It was noted that often small items could make a big difference to accessibility. It was agreed that it would be very useful to produce some guidance on what these issues were and how they might be addressed to pass to ICT standards committees, with a view to gaining acceptance of small changes to standards, which, though appearing minor and inexpensive, would significantly improve accessibility.

Actions arising:

- All pass thoughts on small things that make a big difference to Rory and Pete
- PE with RH to produce suitable draft guidance for use by BSI ICT committee members and to circulate for comment to members of the ICT Accessibility 'syndicate' of the 6th August 2009.

Group 2 (Risks-Services)

The Risk and Services groups of CPI reps met for introductions and then split into two groups for more specific discussion.

Feedback on information given to new starters There was discussion of what was most useful and whether there was anything that reps needed/ wanted but didn't get. Comments and ideas will be fed into the Consumer & Public Interest Unit for action.

Cross group communication Discussed how valuable it is to use expertise in other groups. It was agreed that group emails would NOT be a good idea, as would just add to the volume of emails already received. Proposed a list of contact emails and phone numbers of all CPICs and reps with brief blurb on what they are working on and specialisms – to be circulated within the Network, subject to consent, so that reps could just email or call the relevant person directly.

Services new ideas Individual reps are to scope out some of the prioritised ideas with a view to taking things forward in the New Year. JH - beauty services, GW - Financial Services/ Pension and PMcG - Price Comparison websites. AP to keep JH in loop about European context for Financial Services and Beauty Services.

The National Consumer Federation is organizing a conference later in the year on 'The Credit Crunch - the consumer perspective'. GW and JH are interested in attending. AP also talked about the revised European 'New Approach' and the need for legislation to pin standards on. The detail is in the standards.

Group 3 (Materials & Healthcare-Construction-Manufacturing)

The discussion centred mainly round the extent to which the morning session on marks had met the declared objectives and any further points of concern or potentially for action not already mentioned in the morning.

REGISTRATION OF MARKS The group expressed the view that we had probably been exposed to the 'best of the marks' and even with these there were problems as mentioned. The purchase /consumer needs to be able to recognize the 'good' marks, i.e. those which help positively in a purchasing decision. Perhaps there needs to be a system of registration of marks which are bone fide. These could be ones which UKAS had accredited to an appropriate standard. Such a system then poses the question - How would the consumer know which were credible? Perhaps the UKAS mark, as part of the accredited mark, would be a possible way? We then discussed whether you could get rid of non-registered or non-credible marks – the view was that this would be nigh on impossible.

STANDARDS PASs TO SUPPORT MARKS Is there scope for BSI to be proactive in developing Publicly Available Specifications (stakeholder sponsored standards) or national standards to support marks other than the Kitemark? The group felt this was worth BSI pursuing further.

PARALLELS WITH THE FOOD INDUSTRY Alan Bent led some discussion about how the food industry and the food chain certification etc. works and the strong enforcement. The group felt there should be parallels where life and health are issues, e.g. the healthcare sector. Malcolm mentioned the cleanliness PAS. Hopefully this could be the start of something more. BUT, strict enforcement is very important.

ENFORCEMENT The group touched on enforcement - whatever marks or systems are in place become meaningless without enforcement and action against misuse or fraudulent use of marks.

COMMERCIAL BRANDING There was some discussion on the place of commercial branding; where some leading brands become regarded as quality marks in their own right. Some thought that this was potentially damaging to the role of independent standards/quality mark owners as the commercial sector can distort perceptions through advertising.