



Improving the way that
companies deal with complaints

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Whether you're seeking compensation for poor service or a refund for faulty goods, you have a right to ask the organization in question to put things right. But too often consumers are left frustrated by badly handled complaints and unhappy with the way their complaint was dealt with.

BS ISO 10002, the international standard for complaints handling, is designed to improve the situation for consumers by giving clear guidance to organizations about the best way to handle, resolve and ultimately prevent complaints.



BS ISO 10002 – the basics

BS ISO 10002 was developed by ISO, the international standards body. It gives advice for organizations on how to:

- Set up and manage efficient complaints-handling systems
- Create an environment that is open to feedback including complaints
- Deal with complaints effectively from beginning to end
- Improve the customer experience by understanding complaints and meeting expectations

BS ISO 10002 can be used by all types of organizations worldwide, including banks, energy suppliers, high street and online shops, government agencies and public bodies.

BS ISO 10002 – the details

The standard is voluntary, but organizations that choose to comply should:

Make it easy to complain

- Have a complaints procedure that is clearly publicised, free and easy to use
- Give everyone an equal opportunity to submit a complaint by ensuring customer information is easy to understand and available in alternative formats such as large print, Braille or audio
- Adopt a consumer-focused approach and be open to feedback

Recruit and train necessary staff

- Appoint a management representative to be responsible for the complaints-handling process
- Provide adequate staff and resources to deal with complaints
- Ensure that relevant staff are made aware of the complaints procedure and trained to deal with complaints appropriately and promptly

Keep customers informed

- Contact people who have submitted a complaint (complainants) immediately to acknowledge receipt of the complaint
- Keep complainants informed about the progress of their complaint and provide updates on request
- Track complaints from initial receipt until the complainant is satisfied or a final decision is made

Keep clear records

Make a record of complaints as soon as they are received, including:

- A description of the complaint
- The products or services complained about
- The remedy requested by the complainant
- The due date for a response
- Any action taken

Deal with complaints quickly and fairly

- Treat complainants courteously
- Deal with complaints promptly and according to their urgency
- Address each complaint fairly and in an unbiased manner

Aim to resolve complaints satisfactorily

- Make reasonable efforts to investigate the circumstances and information surrounding a complaint
- Once an investigation has been carried out, inform the complainant about the proposed decision or action
- If the complainant accepts the proposal, this should be carried out and the complaint can then be closed
- If the complainant rejects the proposal, inform them of any available dispute resolution schemes (see 'Alternative Dispute Resolution Schemes')
- Keep complaints open until the customer is satisfied or all reasonable forms of resolution have been tried

Monitor the complaints handling process

- Analyse complaint records to identify serious or recurring problems
- Regularly assess satisfaction with the complaints handling process, for example, by surveying customers who have complained
- Monitor the complaints handling process to ensure the right personnel, resources and procedures are in place

Alternative Dispute Resolution Schemes

If you're not satisfied with the way an organization has dealt with your complaint, you can use an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) scheme, such as an Ombudsman, arbitration or mediation service. These services are independent and impartial and can help you resolve your problem.

For organizations in some industries – including energy, telecoms and banking – it is compulsory to belong to an industry-approved scheme. Some trade or professional associations have their own arbitration schemes, so if you have a dispute with a member of such an association, you can use arbitration to help sort it out. There are also general schemes to help with other disputes.

For links to more information about ADR services see 'Useful Information', overleaf.

Frequently asked questions

Q. What is BSI?

A. BSI is the UK National Standards Body which has been developing standards for more than 100 years to make products and services safer for consumers. Standards set out good practice and guidelines for organizations to follow. BSI is the UK member of ISO, the International Organization for Standardization.

Q. Do all organizations have to follow this standard?

A. No, the standard is voluntary, so you can feel confident that those that choose to comply with this or any other British Standard take things like safety and in this case, customer service, seriously. Organizations that choose to sign up are likely to communicate this on their websites and in company literature such as annual reports.

Q. How do I know if I have grounds for complaint?

A. In the UK, organizations have to comply with several laws governing the goods and services they provide to consumers. Some of the main ones are:

The Sale of Goods Act 1979

The Sale and Supply of Goods Act 1994

The Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumers Regulations 2002

Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008

See the 'Useful information' section for links to consumer rights information and advice

Q. Where can I get a copy of BS ISO 10002?

A. Your local public library may be able to help you access a reference copy, or you can buy a copy from BSI at shop.bsigroup.com

Useful information

British Standards (BSI)

020 8996 9001

www.bsigroup.com

Citizens Advice

www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer

IDRS

(dispute resolution service provider)

www.idrs.ltd.uk

International Standards Organization (ISO)

www.iso.org

Which?

www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights

Ombudsman Services

www.ombudsman-services.org

The logo for BSI (British Standards Institution) features the lowercase letters 'bsi' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. A small red dot is positioned to the right of the 'i'.

BSI Group
389 Chiswick High Road
London W4 4AL
United Kingdom

T: +44 20 8996 9001
E: consumer@bsigroup.com
bsigroup.com