

Department of Trade & Industry

Consumer and Competition Policy Directorate

Government action plan on Doorstep Selling

The Government welcomed the Office of Fair Trading's report on the market study of doorstep selling, which was published on 12 May. We acknowledge the importance of the study's findings and the conclusion and recommendations contained in the report. We share OFT's concerns that:

- Doorstep sales of goods and services can be a source of serious consumer detriment.
- Vulnerable consumers can be particularly at risk.
- Existing legislation may not be providing adequate protection from aggressive selling or bogus traders.

The Government believe that consumers should not be at a disadvantage when buying goods and services in their own homes. But we also believe that rogue traders operating in this area not only represent unfair competition for legitimate business but also undermines consumer trust in legitimate doorstep traders.

Today the Government is publishing its action plan for following up the OFT report. This responds to OFT's recommendations for consultation on a series of legislative options to improve protection for consumer buying goods or services in their homes.

The Government welcomes OFT's decision to follow-up their report with an awareness campaign. This main focus of the campaign is to inform consumers about the psychological influencing tactics doorstep sellers use to persuade consumers to buy, with advice on how to combat them. It also explains consumers' existing legal rights and encourages the benefits of shopping around. The planned outcome is for consumers to be better informed and empowered to make the best choices for themselves.

The Government will consult widely and thoroughly on the legislative options identified by OFT in their report. This is essential to inform consideration of how to proceed with new regulation in the area of doorstep sales, not least because some of the legislative options identified would represent radical change to the existing legislative regime. Specifically, the Government will consult on:

- Extending to solicited visits the cooling-off period and cancellation rights which currently apply to unsolicited visits by traders.
- Removing or amending regulation 7(2(iv)) of the Doorstep Selling Regulations 198, which enables a trader to recover costs of fitting or installing goods if a contract is cancelled, so that this protection for traders applies only in cases where

a customer asks for work to commence as soon as possible and is aware of the effect on cancellation rights.

- Prohibition on goods being delivered or work being carried under a contract before the seven day cooling-off period has elapsed in the case of unsolicited visits.
- Prohibition on money being paid or taken before the seven day cooling-off period has elapsed.
- A ban on cold calling to offer property services, with possible necessary exceptions.
- Requiring cancellation notices to be more prominently and clearly displayed in the contract, providing a clear indication of the circumstances in which cancellation rights may be lost.
- Firms trading via doorstep selling to provide consumers with greater transparency on prices for their products and demonstrating greater willingness to provide written quotes.

The public consultation will run from July to November. The aim will be to publish the results of the consultation early in the New Year.

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