

# **A Guide to Customer Complaints – NCCA Standards & Fair Trading Officer, Lewis Scroby**

## **Summary**

- Have a written complaints procedure that you and others can follow to ensure matters are properly dealt with every time.
- Minimise the risk of complaints by following standard procedures on every job. Adhere to PAS 86.
- Talk to your customers. Ensure they are aware of what you're doing and what can be expected and take the opportunity to raise any concerns you may have yourself.
- Listen to your customers. Take in what they tell you. What are they most focused on in terms of results? Have they said anything that worries you?
- Don't be afraid to turn down a job if you have a concern about a customer or the items that need cleaning.
- Schedule your day to avoid running out of time. Add extra time for jobs you know may be more difficult.
- Arrive when you agreed to or inform the customer if you may be late.
- Survey. Every time. Identify the carpet, look for damage and deterioration, check for fitting issues, test colours, record everything in writing.
- Qualify. Ensure you're customers are made aware of your survey results and anything that may affect the way the items will be cleaned or the potential results.
- Make the customer fully aware of any risks the cleaning process may present. Consider a liability waiver if there is the potential for any damage to arise. Verbal agreements are inadvisable.
- Clearly bring your terms and conditions to the attention of the customer before starting any work. Make sure they are informed of anything you need them to be aware of and get them to sign an acknowledgement if required.
- Implement a continuing education system. Stay up to date with developments in the industry.
- Regularly review Health and Safety regulations and your own H&S procedures.
- Keep your equipment and vehicle clean and in good working order.
- Don't smoke on site.
- Follow any and all recommended processes when cleaning. Especially if you list procedures in your advertising.
- Don't over-sell yourself. Under-promise and over-deliver.
- Avoid guarantees. It is very rare you can be sure of every detail.
- If you aren't getting many repeat bookings, look into reasons why customers would not want you back. It may be they were happy with the cleaning but something else has put them off.
- Undercharging. If you can't spare the time to deal with a problem or refunding the price of your cleaning will not cover the cost of rectifying a simple mistake, you need to review your pricing structure.
- When responding to complaints, always deal with facts rather than opinions or assumptions.
- Remain calm, even if your customer is not. Try to diffuse, rather than escalate, a dispute.
- Never argue. Listen to the customer. Allow them to speak without interrupting (even if you don't agree) and wait for your opportunity to respond.
- Ask for information in writing to assist your understanding. This is also useful if a customer is confrontational in discussion or face-to-face.

- Don't ignore complaints or complainers. They will never go away and it will only make matters worse.
- The NCCA Code of Practice includes guidelines and timescales for dealing with complaints.
- You can be assuring without committing to meeting the demands of a complaining customer. Focus on your process for dealing with the matter rather than what the outcome will be.
- Keep the customer informed, especially if there will be delays in responding.
- A free legal helpline is provided for members if a customer threatens action via a higher authority.

The NCCA is always available to assist when a complaint arises. You can contact us for advice or simply discuss a scenario to help your understanding and options for dealing with the matter. Our arbitration service can be offered to customers, but always try to resolve a situation yourself. By following the above advice you should be in a good position to properly respond and address any complaint and hopefully avoid many arising in the first place.