

Bosch Car Service - Consumer Code of Practice August 2023

Background information

The Bosch Car Service code has been in place since about 2003 and was previously approved by the OFT (Office of Fair Trading). It migrated into the CTSI (Chartered Trading Standards Institute, CCAS (Consumer Code Approval Scheme). The code is one of the most long-established Consumer Codes and continues to provide enhanced protection for consumers in the vehicle servicing and repairs market.

As Bosch is not a trade association, breaches of the code are dealt with as a breach of contract between the garage and Bosch leading to quick action by Bosch to rectify the code breach or remove a non-complaint garage from the scheme.

The Code is ADR compliant using the National Conciliation Service.

The audit was carried out as a remote, desktop audit.

Audit Process

A qualified Chartered Trading Standards Practitioner from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) completed the audit.

The audit focused on the following areas:

- Advice to members, including general compliance and staff training
- Marketing and advertising by member businesses - Terms and conditions and contracts including cancellation rights, deposits delivery times, guarantees and warranties
- Customer service provisions
- Consumer complaints process, including ADR
- Customer satisfaction and how this information is used to develop and improve the code
- Sanctions against members for non-compliance with the code

Audit Summary

The Code is the responsibility of the Workshop Channel Marketing Manager, who reports to Sales Workshop Services (SWS) in Germany. SWS operates across ten regions in Europe, including Turkey and UAE and aims to act consistently.

There is a detailed annual report for the Bosch group as a whole, the report for 2022 runs to 245 pages.

Member Application Process/New members

All prospective members are visited after application by a WBD (Workshop Business Developer).

The written application is detailed and garages have to fulfil the minimum level of facilities to be considered e.g., number of trained Technicians, and number of ramps.

Financial checks are carried out by Credit Safe.

The new member welcome pack refers to current relevant legislation. There is a training system called Bosch Service Excellence, which has been developed to cover all aspects of the Bosch requirements. It is in the process of being updated and will finally comprise of between 9-12 modules of blended learning aimed at senior staff e.g., front of house, technicians, garage owners, workshop managers.

There is a LMS (Learner Management System) with up to 30 Technicians courses available, which also links in with the Government Apprentice scheme.

There is access for members to a 'Technical hot line' for any particular issues for which the member needs additional help.

Existing Member Inspections/Audit

The audit processes have been temporarily suspended but are starting to be rebooked as the country opens up.

There are, at the time of writing, 357 members. During 2022, 27 members were lost and 70 gained. Bosch have a target of 400 member garages in both UK and Republic of Ireland in the scheme in the next 12 months.

All garages are visited quarterly by their WBD, who carries out a number of quality checks in addition to supporting the business. This is carried out remotely in a limited way at the moment.

All members are subject to a SQA (Service Quality Assessment) by a third-party company, RMI. 60% of members are inspected each year, which means over a two year cycle all garages are inspected with some inspected twice a year. The SQA is divided into ten sections, which are scored and an average score given. The results of all inspections are followed up in a timely manner by the WBD who closes any areas on non-compliance with the code.

There is also an SQT (Service Quality Test) carried out by DEKRA, which is carried out by having a car submitted for service against manufacturers service schedule with known faults and items due to be replaced. This is a difficult and complicated test to set up and is currently being reviewed with the Retail Motor Industry Federation as to how to make it an easier and efficient process. There is a target to carry out 60% SGTs each year.

WBDs also carry out a RPA (repair potential analysis) where the WBD will look at a vehicle after a repair or service to ensure that other work that should be identified is brought to the attention of the consumer.

Websites are also checked as part of the audit process.

A RAG (Red, Amber, Green) system is operated for non-compliance with early intervention to rectify any deficiencies.

Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses

The procedures for termination and withdrawal were examined. Websites and garages were checked by Bosch to ensure all signage and Bosch corporate items were removed.

The system for dealing with non-compliant members is quick and efficient. A development plan to deal with non-compliant issues is drawn up, which may include compulsory training. If no improvement is noted, an initial warning letter is sent. In the event that a resolution is not reached (this could be non-payment of fees), an official termination letter is sent with a request for the garage to complete a declaration to 'cease and desist' using the Bosch Brand. On receipt of the declaration, the garage is removed from all databases and all stake holders are informed. All information on the garage is kept on file.

27 BCS garages left the Bosch network during the preceding 12 months.

At date of this report, there are no members in the disciplinary process.

Marketing and Advertising by Member Businesses

There are detailed guides from Bosch on marketing and advertising as there is a strong focus on maintaining a corporate brand image. The WBD is available for help and advice on marketing.

Garages are supplied with a 'Media Inspiration Catalogue' that produces templates for creative content in a corporate style of websites, documentation and social media. This is under review with a view to improvements.

Consumers can use the 'My Bosch Car Service,' which will enable consumers to directly book service and repairs via a Bosch DWP (Digital Work Provision Platform) web platform.

Point of sale material is checked as part of the Audit process.

Terms and Conditions and other Pre-Contractual Information

Bosch provide a number of templates to ensure legal compliance and maintaining of the Bosch brand. There were no issues identified.

Customer Service Provisions

See comments in other sections: The code is freely available on the Bosch website and the complaints process is clearly written. Business to Business relationships are currently not covered by the scheme and there are plans to include these types of transactions.

Customers are able to set up service plans, book repairs and services on line, garages are also part of the 'Who Can Fix my Car' platform.

Consumer Complaints Process

The code requires that aggrieved consumers first seek to resolve their complaint with the garage, who undertake to resolve the complaint within 21 days. If not resolved then the consumer can refer to NCS (National Conciliation Service).

All complaints are handled by NCS and their contact details are listed in the code. They are also an approved ADR provider for the Automotive industry. Independent Engineers can be instructed if necessary.

NCS will maintain a database of complaints to highlight trends or particular garages.

Customer Satisfaction and Feedback

Customers are able to leave any feedback on their experience on an online portal. Bosch are now using VCO, which is a system that captures reviews made about Bosch Garages across all social media platforms both good and bad.

Conclusion

This continues to be an impressive and well controlled Code. It has a particularly strong focus on audits to ensure compliance to the benefit of consumers. There are plans to include Business to Business and ambitious plans to increase the number of garages in the code. The workings of the code are constantly being reviewed and operates continuous improvement principles. The Bosch code fully complies with the CTSI Consumer Codes Approval Scheme.