

National Body Repair Association (NBRA)

Desktop Audit

June 2020

Background information

The National Body Repair Association (NBRA) is a trade association representing businesses that repair, maintain and service motor vehicles. The association runs a code of practice which was approved by CTSI in July 2017.

The NBRA acts as an organisation that deals mainly with consumer to business transactions in the non-commercial vehicle sector. Its Code of Practice for Consumers migrated from the VBRA (Vehicle Builders and Repairers Association) in July 2017 and now also includes the members of the National Association of Bodyshops.

The NBRA operates independently under the umbrella of the Retail Motor Industry Federation.

The NBRA currently has 723 members. Of these 48 are supplier members and training centers who are solely business to business contracts and of the remainder, just 325 have signed up to comply with the Consumer Code of Practice.

Audit Process

A qualified trading standards professional from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) completed a desktop audit. The audit focused on the following areas:

1. Member Application Process including checks carried out on prospective businesses.
2. Existing Member Inspections/Audit content and process (including general compliance with the code, staff training and dealing with consumer complaints).
3. Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses.
4. Marketing and Advertising by Member Businesses.
5. Terms and conditions and other pre-contractual information (including cancellation rights, deposits, delivery times, guarantees and warranties).
6. Consumer complaints process (including ADR).

7. Customer satisfaction and feedback, information/complaints from enforcement agencies, and how this information is used to develop and improve the code.

Audit Summary

The audit examined:

- The application process and auditing of new members
- The records of audit of existing members
- Consumer review processes
- Former member's websites

Member Application Process

In the year 01.03.19 – 28.02.20, 109 new members joined the association, 23 have joined as supplier members or training centers where the code is not applicable. There were 22 applications to join the Code.

NBRA may receive an incoming enquiry or they actively target a business to recruit them into membership. The current process requires that each member should be visited to complete the application form, the initial CTSI audit and a general inspection.

During the visit, the member is assessed to confirm that they meet the code - that they are trading legally and legitimately with appropriate tooling and equipment.

As a result of the situation due to the coronavirus pandemic and to minimise risk to individuals, NBRA are considering altering the application process to allow online applications.

For the purposes of the audit two new member audit documents were provided and were found to be in accordance with NBRA's procedures.

Update:

NBRA are undergoing the development of a new CRM that will allow for better reporting on many elements of their operations. From the completion of this and the introduction of new reporting, they hope to streamline the application process.

Existing Member Inspections/Audit

Under Schedule 3 of the Code Monitoring process the NBRA commits to auditing one third of Code members each year. In 2019 – 2020 99 audits were conducted, which falls ten short of the commitment to audit one third of members

Update:

As a result of the situation due to the coronavirus pandemic, all of the NBRA field team are currently furloughed. This will clearly affect the total number of audits that are possible in the 2020 – 2021 period. NBRA are developing a plan for a proportionate number of audits to be carried out during the remainder of the year. In addition more desktop rather than onsite audits may be appropriate to ensure the safety of auditors and member employees.

Five completed audit records were checked from 2019 – 2020. All were found to be completed in accordance with NBRA processes.

Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses

No businesses had been expelled from the NBRA scheme in the last year. It is noted that there has still never been a need for the panel to convene. The process in place for raising formal disciplinary procedures against members was reviewed and complies with the requirements of the consumer code approval scheme.

For the audit, the websites of three members who have left within the last year were checked to see if the NBRA or CTSI website were erroneously displayed. No logos were found.

Marketing and Advertising by Member Businesses

The majority of NBRA members get most of their business via insurance companies, consequently they are not, in general, chosen by the consumer to repair their vehicle. Therefore, the advertising of membership of NBRA and of the Code is not checked at audit, but members are required to have a copy of the Code available to consumers and staff.

Members who are recruited as a premium member and complete an audit are given a sign showing the NBRA/CTSI logo free of charge. A core member who is recruited and completes an audit is given the option to purchase a sign. Whether a sign is purchased or given, all members who have successfully completed an audit are given electronic copies of the logo and advised to use these on paperwork and websites. This is not enforceable or a mandatory requirement of NBRA Membership. NBRA display the CTSI logo against each applicable member.

Terms and Conditions and other Pre-Contractual Information

NBRA provides standard terms and conditions for members to use, but it is not obligatory. The standard terms and conditions are produced in-house and are clear, reasonable and comply with the requirements of the core criteria. No changes have been made to the standard terms and conditions since the last audit.

NBRA provides its members with discounted expert services and have developed video recording technology which is geo-located and time stamped to assist in resolving complaints with consumers.

Consumer Complaints Process

NBRA operates free conciliation and provides access to low cost arbitration services via National Conciliation Service.

In the period March 2019 – February 2020 three cases were referred for conciliation. Of these three cases one was closed as 'miscellaneous', one wasn't formally opened and the last was referred as ADR or court action being most appropriate.

Customer Satisfaction and Feedback

NBRA previously used a customer feedback card system, this has been replaced with direct feedback being made available via the NBRA website. Members are encouraged to let their customers know about the feedback facility but due to the nature of the relationship between the NBRA member and the consumer (i.e. mainly via insurance companies) this is infrequently used.

In 2019 - 2020 the response rate remains low however the overall level of customer satisfaction remains satisfactory. The NBRA Annual report gives a breakdown of results from consumer questionnaires but again does not indicate how many consumers have left reviews. In addition, NBRA provides Referenceline as a facility for consumers to leave feedback.

Recommendation:

It is disappointing that despite a number of years of extremely low numbers of customer reviews (14 since 2017) NBRA have not sought to develop or adopt alternative ways of reviewing customer feedback. A quick google search of all the member garage names provided for the purposes of this audit (10 in total) revealed that there are 289 reviews available online. An assessment of online reviews for any worrying trends or areas of concern could be added to NBRA audits.

Conclusions

NBRA must find ways to ensure that it's members are treating customers fairly. The coronavirus pandemic means that NBRA are having to consider changing how member are audited. This could be an ideal time to develop new ways of assessing member compliance.