

Consumer Code of Practice British Association of Removers Ltd (BAR) Desktop Audit June 2024

Background Information

The British Association of Removers Limited (BAR) Code of Practice is one of the most established CCAS Codes. It has consistently been a source of enhanced consumer protection within the removals sector. As of June 2024, there are 375 Members in the Code.

BAR is bound under the Code to provide surety for advance payments (cash, BACS payments and/or debit card payments only) for private residential removal and storage contracts concluded in the United Kingdom. This is an excellent form of consumer protection in the case of a BAR Member suffering financial failure whilst responsible for un-discharged removal contracts.

Audit Process

The audit focused on the following areas:

- Member application and exit process including checks completed on new applicants and process for Members leaving the scheme
- Member auditing - content and process
- Terms and conditions and other pre-contractual Information.
- Sanctions for non-complaint Member businesses including the disciplinary process
- Customer service provisions including process for consumers to leave feedback
- Consumer complaints process (including ADR)
- Customer satisfaction

Audit Summary

Across all CCAS criteria the BAR Code continues to work effectively. Constant review of Membership criteria and strengthening where necessary have ensured the Code continues to be effective in protecting consumer detriment.

New Members

In the year to date since the last audit, there have been 16 applications to join BAR, 8 new Members were admitted, 9 applications are still open and 16 Members left. BAR have very strict basic criteria in relation to the status of potential Members, including for example, number of years trading, annual turnover. Many applicants are rejected at the early stages of their application as they do not fulfil these basic criteria.

Two completed applications were examined containing the application form, inspectors written reports and initial inspection reports. No non-conformities were found for either applicant, some areas for improvement were identified with one applicant. Evidence was supplied to confirm any non-conformities identified by the inspector were followed up and re-checked by BAR.

BAR Membership criteria was last updated in early 2023.

Existing Member Inspections/Audit

The Member inspection process is managed by BAR but carried out by an external team of qualified auditors employed by Quality Service Standards Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of BAR covering the whole of the United Kingdom. Every Member location must have an annual inspection as a mandatory requirement of continued Membership. Every Member must comply 100%, without exception, with both the Criteria of Membership and the Code of Practice.

In the period 20/05/23 – 20/05/24 BAR carried out 510 inspections, of these 11 were carried out remotely. Remote audits are only conducted in exceptional circumstances and it is ensured that the following year's audit is conducted onsite. This figure includes annual and change of address inspections for current Members, new applicant inspections, and Code follow-up inspections for new Members. Of these audits just 68 had any non-compliances.

Members to be audited are sent a Pre-Audit Submission form to be completed and returned prior to the audit date. 100% of Members are inspected annually and this remains a key strength of the BAR Code. The inspections assess compliance against each element of the Membership criteria and BAR Code of Practice.

The five most recently completed audits were provided for review. As none of the five most recently completed audits had any non-conformities, BAR also provided the audit sheet for the most recent Member audit that had any non-conformities.

Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses

If any non-compliance with the Code occurs e.g. non-payment of an award required at

Consumer Complaints Process

Alternative Dispute Resolution is provided by the Furniture & Home Improvement Ombudsman (FHIO). In 2023 127 complaints were logged with FIHO. Of these 72 were found in favour of the Member; 7 in favour of the consumer, 2 where the decision was split; 39 outside Terms of Reference, 4 settled between the Member and the consumer prior to conciliation and 3 others where the consumer withdrew the case or the case was a duplicate.

Best Practice:

BAR continue to meet monthly (online) with FIHO to discuss ongoing cases and to discuss outcomes. This means that BAR can monitor the types of issues that are raised with FHIO and quickly