



APPROVED CODE SCHEME (ACS) SPONSOR TOOLKIT

Key Messaging

Purpose

These key messages provide a common language for promoting the Approved Code Scheme (ACS). They ensure **clarity and consistency** in how we communicate its purpose, benefits, and impact — whether speaking to policymakers, sponsors, or the public. The **core message and strapline** should remain consistent, with the audience-specific versions adapted as needed.

UMBRELLA NARRATIVE

The Problem

Every year, UK consumers lose **over £70bn** to poor service, rogue traders, and unresolved disputes. Markets function best when consumers are confident, but consumers **don't always know who to trust**, and honest businesses are being undermined by those that cut corners.

The Solution

Through ACS, businesses are **held to higher standards** under approved codes. Those codes are independently audited by qualified trading standards professionals, and consumers have access to **free dispute resolution** if things go wrong.

The Proof

- **Longest-established** consumer code scheme in the UK (established 2001).
- **40,000+** approved businesses across high-risk sectors.
- **Independent governance** by the Consumer Codes Approval Board, with robust ongoing auditing.

The Impact

- **For government and policymakers:** A proven, non-regulatory tool that raises standards, reduces enforcement costs, and supports economic growth.
- **For new sectors and sponsors:** A mark of credibility that builds consumer trust.
- **For Trading Standards:** enables a greater focus on tackling rogue traders.
- **For consumers:** Extra peace of mind. When you see the ACS logo, you know the business is accountable and trusted.

Core Message

“Consumers lose over £70bn annually to poor standards and rogue traders.”

“ACS provides an alternative to costly regulation.”

“Raising standards, protecting consumers, supporting economic growth.”

Core Straplines

- Raising standards, protecting consumers.
- The mark of a business you can trust.

AUDIENCE-SPECIFIC MESSAGING

Government and Policymakers

VALUE PROPOSITION

The Approved Code Scheme is the UK's only sector-wide code framework audited by Chartered Trading Standards Practitioners. It offers government a proven, low-cost way to raise standards, protect consumers, and support economic growth — without new regulation.

- **Problem:** Consumer detriment exceeds £70bn a year, undermining trust in markets and overburdening regulators and courts.
- **Solution:** ACS offers a proven, voluntary framework that raises standards and provides redress without the need for extra regulation or new legislation.
- **Proof:** 40,000+ UK businesses covered; audited by Chartered Trading Standards Practitioners; independent governance since 2001.
- **Benefit:** Cuts enforcement costs, supports confident consumers, and aligns with government growth priorities.

KEY MESSAGE

The Approved Code Scheme helps government deliver safer, more trusted markets — without the cost of new regulation.

Raising standards, protecting consumers, supporting economic growth.

Trading Standards Professionals (Secondary Audience)

VALUE PROPOSITION

The Approved Code Scheme helps Trading Standards professionals deliver consumer protection more efficiently by embedding high standards and ADR in high-risk sectors.

- **Problem:** Trading Standards professionals face escalating enforcement pressures with limited resources.
- **Solution:** Approved Code Scheme businesses are pre-audited and provide ADR, preventing disputes from reaching enforcement teams.
- **Proof:** Reductions in caseloads in high-risk areas like used cars and green energy.
- **Benefit:** Allows Trading Standards professionals to focus on tackling rogue traders.

KEY MESSAGE

The Approved Code Scheme lightens the load for Trading Standards by embedding good practice and preventing problems from escalating, before they reach the frontline.

Media and Consumer Influencers (Tertiary Audience)

VALUE PROPOSITION

Amid a sea of ratings platforms and commercial endorsement schemes, ACS stands out as the only one independently audited by Chartered Trading Standards Practitioners and guaranteeing real consumer redress.

- **Problem:** Consumers are overwhelmed by claims of protection that often lack substance.
- **Solution:** The Approved Code Scheme is rigorously governed, with standards going beyond the law.
- **Proof:** 20+ years' track record, 40,000+ businesses, and direct Trading Standards oversight.
- **Benefit:** A credible story to share with audiences about how consumers can genuinely protect themselves.

KEY MESSAGE

Not all consumer assurance schemes are equal — ACS is the only one that guarantees redress.

Consumers

VALUE PROPOSITION

The Approved Code Scheme makes it easy to choose businesses you can trust, with guaranteed redress if things go wrong.

- **Problem:** Consumers often can't tell which businesses are reliable, and many face poor service with no recourse.
- **Solution:** ACS businesses commit to higher standards and provide free, impartial dispute resolution.
- **Proof:** 40,000+ approved businesses across life's biggest purchases: cars, homes, energy, wills.
- **Benefit:** Extra peace of mind: a clear mark that says "this business is accountable."

KEY MESSAGE

Look for the ACS logo — the mark of a business you can trust.



For additional support with this guide, please contact
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