

National Body Repair Association (NBRA)

Consumer Codes Audit

July 2024

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 the Consumer Codes Approval Board (CCAB) in July 2017.

The NBRA acts as an organisation that deals mainly with consumer to business transactions in the non-commercial vehicle sector. It's 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.

For the audit reporting period of 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024, NBRA has 713 members. Of these 62 are supplier members and six training centers who are solely business to business contracts and of the remainder, of these 247 are 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 last year there have been 23 applications to join the association, 27 have joined as supplier members or training centers where the Code is not applicable. There were 15 successful applications to join the Code. A group that were already members added 58 branches to their group.

NBRA require that any prospective member is operating legally and legitimately with appropriate tooling and equipment. They must have the appropriate insurance in place and the correct equipment to carry out the work that they claim to be doing. NBRA believe that the investment required to set up and run a body-shop is a strong indication of the quality of the applicant. Some businesses join NBRA and then, in due course, with their support and guidance, become suitable businesses for Code members. Some repairers only offer SMART repairs, which require less tooling than a bodyshop doing full accident damage that may include chassis straightening.

The Business Development Manager (BDM) contacts each applicant directly and gathers information to build a profile for the repairer on the CRM system and prepares the application form. This is then sent electronically to the repairer to sign and return.

The process remains that the prospective member is issued with a copy of the Code and all the information relating to the criteria of the Code and during the recruitment process, NBRA check whether the member is likely to meet the Code criteria. If not inform them on what would be required.

Following receipt of the signed application and confirmation of payment arrangements, the repairer is sent a welcome email, including a CTSI audit with instructions. On receipt of the audit, it is checked, any required actions are acted on immediately and the audit is completed. A physical membership sign and electronic copies of the logo are issued. If an audit cannot be completed at sign up, up to six weeks later, the member is contacted by phone and the audit completed.

Many repairers join the NBRA to get further support towards attaining the industry standard, BS10125, which is a process to guarantee safe repairs and is audited against; correct calibrated equipment, repair methods, trained staff to an industry standard (IMI Accreditations) and using the appropriate materials for a safe repair. These criteria represent further protections for the consumer in addition to NBRA/CTSI code approval.

For the purposes of this audit two new member's application documents were provided and were found to be in accordance with NBRA's procedures. One of the new members has since lapsed membership, their website is not showing either the NBRA or CTSI logo. The website for the other new member (joined November 2023) does not show the NBRA logo and shows the CTSI logo but in association with their RAC Approved garage status.

All new members are now contacted within two weeks of joining to ensure that they have received and are using the logos. Some members are precluded from displaying the NBRA and CTSI Logos under commercial agreements with their principal work providers (insurance companies). NBRA continue to strongly encourage the display of relevant, correctly positioned signage.

Existing Member Inspections/Audit

NBRA operates a system of checks prior to acceptance into membership and periodically thereafter. The majority of audits are completed remotely, with the first audit being sent with the welcome email. For the period of 01/03/23 to 29/02/24 106 audits were completed, made up of 15 new audits and 91 reaudits. This represents an audit percentage of 43% which represents a significant drop in auditing figures.

Between June and November 2023 the role of Director for NBRA was vacant. This meant that that the team took on additional roles and responsibilities and this affected the completion of the audits during that period and in the months following.

In June 2024 an additional area manager was recruited and all roles now have a field based element, hopefully leading to more audits on-site.

A group that was already a member added 58 branches to their group in the year since the last audit. Ordinarily NBRA audit all group members for compliance with the Code. However often with group memberships, the relationship is usually with Head Office and does rely on the Head Office sharing NBRA initiatives with their branches/sites.

Five completed audit records were checked and found to be completed in accordance with NBRA processes.

Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses

No businesses have 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.

Between March 2023 and February 2024 69 members left the NBRA, of which 18 were members of the Code.

For the audit, the details of three members who have left within the last year were requested and their websites were checked to see if the NBRA or CTSI logos were erroneously

displayed. On the website of one member the NBRA and CTSI logos were visible in the photo of the premises and a photo of the letter of acceptance (from 31.12.19) into NBRA is displayed.

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.

A key point of the audit covers marketing and that the repairer will commit to reviewing their marketing so it meets the spirit of the code. The member is advised to use the NBRA & CTSI logos to display their commitment to customer service.

The NBRA now operates a single fee for membership. This is graded at the former “premium membership” level and they are given a sign showing the NBRA/CCAS logo free of charge. 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 CCAS 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 2023 - February 2024 no cases were referred for conciliation.

Customer Satisfaction and Feedback

Since 2020 NBRA have collated information from Google (and other online review applications) from their 248 Code approved members, a total of 17,965 reviews. The data was mainly sourced through Google and uses the first page of results only. The average rating found is 4.5 (out of 5). NBRA plan to continue to use this method to gather reviews on their members as it generates substantial review data. The individual results are published in the NBRA Annual Report. Any business with a score of 3.5 or less or with any review that contains allegations of worrying conduct will receive a call from the director of NBRA.

Conclusions

NBRA continue to drive compliance amongst their members, enhancing consumer protection in this sector. Due to a change of Director, auditing figures have dropped, however there is a clear intention to increase the number of audits and re-introduce some on-site auditing.