

## Help wanted

### Help us to help you

#### ■ Non-bio washing powder

Do you use non-biological washing powder? Would you be prepared to try switching to bio powder to see whether you notice changes in cleaning performance or skin conditions? LIZZY RUFFLES

#### ■ Telecoms contracts

Are you signed up to a rolling long-term contract for your broadband, mobile or home phone service, such as BT's Unlimited Evening and Weekend plan that renews automatically once your initial tie-in ends? Were the terms of your deal made clear when you signed up? CERI STANAWAY

#### ■ Mortgage fees

Are mortgage fees too high or reasonable? Tell us your views on all fees, from arrangement and valuation fees to arrears fees and early repayment charges. MELANIE GREEN

#### ■ Store card debt

Have you ever taken out a store card to get discounts on high-street purchases but racked up debt on it? If so, get in touch and tell us what your experience has been. NICOLAS FRANKCOM

Email [helpwanted@which.co.uk](mailto:helpwanted@which.co.uk) with your contact details and membership number, including the title and researcher's name in the subject box. Or write to Help Wanted, Which?, Gascoyne Way, Hertford SG14 1LH. Go to [www.which.co.uk/helpwanted](http://www.which.co.uk/helpwanted) to view our full list.

## WHICH? LOCAL HELPS WITH COMPUTER REPAIR

In the first of this month's stories about computer problems, a member finds the solution on the Which? Local website

Jane Daly says she was delighted to find that Which? Local offered the ideal solution to a frustrating computer problem she was experiencing in February this year.

She teaches English to speakers of other languages and needs her computer in order to prepare lessons and materials from her home in north London. So, when her five-year-old Dell PC starting showing blue screens and making clunking noises, she wanted it fixed fast.

### Dell did not help

No help from Dell, though. Jane says: 'After spending a day and a half either on the phone to Dell, or waiting for a call back, I was still having problems even after the company thought it had fixed the problem.'

Jane was worried about simply picking a computer repair shop out of the phone book.

'You don't know whether someone is reliable or not until they've done a job or have been recommended by someone you trust. None of my neighbours have computers and my colleagues live far away from me, so they weren't much help.'

At a loss for what to do, Jane remembered that she had access to Which? Local and wondered whether there might a reliable computer repair business in her area on the website. But she was still concerned that, as she doesn't drive, she couldn't carry the 'very heavy hard drive' far.

'I've subscribed to Which.co.uk for years, and always liked the idea of members



Jane needs a computer to prepare lessons for overseas students

recommending local services, but I really didn't expect to find anywhere nearby,' Jane says.

'But, to my amazement and joy, I discovered Link U, which was just up the road – and the reviews were good.'

### Repair within a day

Jane managed to carry the computer to Link U – a computer maintenance and repair shop in north London – which was very busy.

She recalls: 'It was Saturday at 5.30pm but, by 4pm on Sunday, the hard drive had been replaced and software had been reloaded – and it cost just £90.'

'Unfortunately, I was unable to reinstall my modem and connect

to the internet, so I took it back. They sorted out the problem and reinstalled all the software again, free of charge. They are really helpful guys – absolutely brilliant.'

Jane was so impressed by her Which? Local experience that she has posted her own recommendation for Link U, as well as recommendations for her favourite local minicab service, hairdressers and central heating engineer.

### TAKE ACTION!

Help others like Jane by recommending your reliable traders. Which? Local – at [www.which-local.co.uk](http://www.which-local.co.uk) – is a free site for Which? members just like you, to share your knowledge.

## Brief case Cynthia's story

Cynthia fought Comet after her Hewlett Packard laptop developed a major fault early in its life

If you're ever offered a partial discount on a repair for faulty goods, Cynthia Weight's story of persistence may persuade you to fight for the free repair you could be entitled to.

Cynthia bought a £786 Hewlett Packard (HP) Pavilion laptop from Comet in August 2006, using her Tesco Personal Finance credit card.

The laptop worked fine until March 2009, when Cynthia went to switch it on and nothing happened. As the laptop was out of guarantee, Cynthia took it to a local computer repair shop, which suggested HP had experienced trouble with a certain graphics chip and had extended its guarantees by another year, to two years.

But Cynthia was still outside this extension and, when she called Comet, it said that she could either pay HP to fix it or the store would fix it, with a 35% discount on the cost of any parts fitted.

Cynthia didn't see why she should pay anything if the laptop was known to be faulty, so she challenged Comet.

It then offered 20% off the price of any repairs but said that she'd have to pay £48 for an initial inspection.

Still unhappy, she called Which? Legal Service. We told Cynthia that if she could show that there was a fault that shouldn't have occurred at that stage in its life, she could claim it wasn't of satisfactory quality and that Comet was in breach of contract.

We also advised that, as she had paid with her credit card, she could argue that Tesco was just as liable for the breach of contract under section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974.

Cynthia wrote to Comet and Tesco Personal Finance explaining the advice that we had given her. Tesco accepted that it may be jointly liable, but it asked for proof of breach of contract. Meanwhile, Comet wrote to Cynthia saying that the manufacturer Hewlett Packard would repair the laptop free of charge.

**RESULT** Cynthia accepted Hewlett Packard's offer.



Cynthia was eventually offered a repair on her laptop

### YOUR RIGHTS OVER FAULTY GOODS



#### ■ Sale of Goods Act

The Sale of Goods Act 1979 says that any retailer selling goods will be in breach of contract if those goods aren't fit for purpose or of satisfactory quality – possibly if a product develops a problem that wouldn't be expected ordinarily at that stage in its life, but rights to remedies vary.

#### ■ Who should pay

If the fault appears soon after purchase – say, within a month – you can demand a refund. If it occurs later, you could argue that the retailer must either repair or replace your goods. It's great that HP did repair the laptop, but manufacturers' views and guarantees actually have no bearing on your rights under the Sale of Goods Act.

#### ■ Credit card rights

If you pay for goods costing between £100 and £30,000 using a credit card, section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 says that the card provider is just as liable for any breach of contract or misrepresentation by the seller. You may need to prove the misrepresentation or contract breach.

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