

Here to help

Which? lawyers and experts help solve your problems

Which? news

Make the most of Which?

■ Discount deals

We've launched an online guide to the best places for deals on clearance technology – goods sold cheaply because they've been returned, used for demos or are end of line. For example, as we went to press, a refurbished Sony KDL32P3020 LCD TV was on sale at £365.47 at Tesco Direct – its usual price is £600. Visit www.which.co.uk/discountproducts for details.

■ Giving members a voice

Which.co.uk now allows members to add ratings and comments to product reviews. Your views will sit alongside the results of our expert tests, to help people get an overall picture of products. To read other members' comments or add your own, go to www.which.co.uk/reviews and click on any product review.

■ Healthy eating tips

Which? has called on governments, food companies and retailers to make it easier for people to buy healthy food. Our 'Hungry for Change' report – a five-year review of work to tackle obesity and diet-related disease – has found that while there has been progress, such as improving school meals, more needs to be done on promotions, products, labelling and public information initiatives. Meanwhile, a Which? survey has found that three in five people would buy more fruit and veg if they were cheaper. See www.which.co.uk/healthyeating for more.



SWITCH TO SAVE



Which? member Anthony Cooper is set to save more than £800 on his energy bills thanks to Which? Switch

Anthony Cooper's house is often full to the rafters – with his wife Susan, three teenagers and regular visitors – so energy bills can mount up.

The family moved into the four-bed detached house in July 2008. The teenagers have been keen to get the most out of the hot tub that came with the property. And at Christmas, family members camped out in the conservatory, so its electric heaters were on almost 24/7.

Anthony stayed with the previous owners' energy company, Scottish Power, as he'd heard it was 'reasonably priced'. The dual-fuel tariff required payment by cheque every quarter (one of the more expensive ways to settle energy bills).

Anthony soon noticed how high his gas and electricity bills were – £1,295 (excluding VAT) for a five-month period. This was also much higher than the £384

the previous owners had been charged for three months pro rata over the previous winter.

He says: 'Even if it was for the coldest winter in many years, £578 for gas and £702 for electricity between September and February was an absolute shocker.'

When Anthony phoned the Which? members' helpline (01992 822800) one day, he was reminded of our free service that helps people find a new, lower-priced energy supplier.

He says: 'It took me about 40 seconds to go to the Which? Switch website and, within three minutes, I was looking at a staggering saving of more than £800 a year with Eon.'

Anthony signed up for a discounted deal for customers who agree to a monthly direct debit, dual-fuel payments and managing the account online.

Also, it charges less per kWh used – and the 8% discount deal for managing your account online lasts until June 2010.

He says: 'We're certainly going to look at ways of reducing our energy consumption, but I would also advise anyone moving to a new home to use the Which? Switch website immediately to avoid getting stung like us.'

People who used Which?

Switch (formerly Switch with Which?) between August and December 2008 saved an average of £257 if they took up dual-fuel tariffs. Visit www.whitchswitch.co.uk to find out how you can save.



TAKE ACTION

Could your house be greener? Visit www.which.co.uk/greenhome for tips on recycling, saving water and electricity, and installing solar panels.

Brief case Steven's story

Steven Barbier's laptop developed a problem, but with the help of Which? Legal Service he successfully claimed compensation from the retailer that sold it to him

Steven Barbier paid £500 for a Medion laptop from Sainsbury's in Stoke-on-Trent in August 2007. But just 17 months later, he ran into a problem. The laptop wouldn't charge – it would run off of the mains for a while but then wouldn't work.

Steven contacted Medion, which suggested that the problem related to chargers being constantly pulled in and out – as the motherboard sits close to the charger dock, it loosens and stops the laptop from working.

Medion told Steven that the repair would cost £160 plus postage. An independent repair firm in Bradford gave Steven a quote of £110. Annoyed that he would have to pay to have the problem fixed, Steven contacted Which? Legal Service (W?LS).

W?LS advised Steven that he should be claiming against the retailer he bought the laptop from – Sainsbury's – rather than the manufacturer.

Steven emailed Sainsbury's asking it to repair or replace the laptop. Sainsbury's responded 36 hours later, saying that it gave a 28-day guarantee on all Medion laptops. It said that, as the guarantee had expired, it couldn't offer a refund or replacement. Sainsbury's suggested that Steven should contact Medion.

Steven responded, saying that W?LS had advised him that he could ask for the laptop to be repaired or replaced if he could show that the fault was one that should not have occurred at this stage in the product's life.

Steven warned Sainsbury's that if it wouldn't resolve the problem, he would claim from it the £110 that he'd been quoted to get the laptop fixed.

RESULT The next day Sainsbury's agreed to send Steven £110 for the repair and a £30 voucher for petrol, to cover the cost of his journey to the repairer. Steven was pleased with Sainsbury's quick response.



Steven knew that under the Sale of Goods Act he could ask for the laptop to be repaired or replaced

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'VE BEEN SOLD FAULTY GOODS



■ Go back to the retailer

A retailer is responsible for the items they sell, and the Sale of Goods Act says that goods must be of 'satisfactory quality' and so should last for a 'reasonable time'.

■ Did you pay by credit card?

It's a good idea to pay

all or part of the purchase price with a credit card. If the goods cost more than £100 and less than £30,000, section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 would give you the same claim against your credit card provider as you have against the retailer.

■ Can the goods be repaired?

If goods are faulty, you can ask the retailer to repair or replace them. A retailer will often prefer to repair an item – a replacement may only be offered if repair costs are high in comparison. Alternatively, if you've got a quote

for repairs, it may offer to cover the cost.

■ Claim for other reasonable losses

You're entitled to recover reasonable financial losses arising from a breach of contract – in Steven's case, for example, the petrol costs for taking the laptop to be repaired.

MEMBER BENEFIT

Find out how our expert lawyers can help you with a wide range of consumer and employment issues



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who are ready to provide you with best-value, practical advice tailored to your case.

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