

NEWS RELEASE

Don't get taken for a ride

On the first day of National Consumer Week, West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service today backs the message from the Trading Standards Institute and Consumer Direct Yorkshire and The Humber in educating consumers on the purchase or repair of motor vehicles.

Many people will not have ever experienced a problem when buying a car or getting it serviced, but some of us will not have been that fortunate. A car is the second largest purchase that consumers generally make, and emotions can run high if things go wrong. The whole concept of buying a new car can be an exciting process, from choosing which model to buy, to negotiating the best deal. Last year Consumer Direct Yorkshire and The Humber received over 4200 complaints relating to cars from West Yorkshire residents, which accounts for only 16% of complaints about cars across West Yorkshire.

Trading Standards suggest that the first thing to remember when purchasing a car, especially a used car, is to take it on a test drive. This is a sure way of identifying any possible future problems; customers can then negotiate and arrange for any problems to be resolved as part of the deal. A further point to note is if that repairs are agreed as part of the contract, consumers should ensure that these are noted down on the sales invoice.

"Buyer's Remorse" is a common complaint area. "What is buyer's remorse?" This is where a consumer makes a rash decision to buy and once they have had time to reflect on the purchase and their finances, they then change their mind and no longer want the car. Consumers are advised to be careful of entering deals unless absolutely sure the car and the price is right for them. Once the contract is signed it may not be possible to get any deposit refunded.

Lastly, Trading Standards advise consumers before they sign any deal for a car to check out what it says on the paperwork. Do the figures match? Is the APR (the rate of interest that will be charged) the figure that was quoted? If customers are at all unsure, they are advised to ask the garage to explain the figures and not sign unless they are totally happy.

Graham Hebblethwaite West Yorkshire's Chief Trading Standards Officer explained 'In West Yorkshire, consumers have the added protection of being able to choose to buy from a Motor Trade Partnership member. This should avoid the heartache felt by so many when things go wrong during a car purchase. As one of the most expensive purchases we will make, we need to be confident that we will be treated fairly by the garage we are dealing with,

and all members of the Partnership are audited to ensure they comply with both the spirit and the letter of the law. I would encourage anyone thinking of buying a new or used car to contact Consumer Direct, who can offer pre-shopping advice and information on how to ensure they don't get ripped off.'

In the Motor Trade Partnership there are over 100 motor dealers or repair and servicing garages. The scheme has been running very successfully for the past 5 years and has helped to raise standards in an industry traditionally viewed with suspicion. Members of the Partnership have to abide by the strict terms and conditions of the Partnership and they are monitored closely to ensure that they are treating consumers in a fair and honest fashion.

Councillor Keith Wakefield, Deputy Chair of the Trading Standards Committee added "The Motor Trade Partnership is an excellent scheme and a first rate example of how partnership working can help to protect consumers. The members have available to them the help and advice of Trading Standards, and the consumers have an impartial third party who can help should a problem arise. I would like to encourage the consumers of West Yorkshire to look for the distinctive logo and buy with confidence."

Find a member by looking for the Motor Trade Partnership logo on their premises or in advertisements or log onto www.mtp.wyjs.org.uk or alternatively contact Consumer Direct for a full members list or advice on 08454 04 05 06.

Notes to editor

For further information please contact Helen Andrews on 0113 3836 433.