

NEW HOMES OMBUDSMAN CASE STUDY



The Issue

The customer complained about the quality of the kitchen cabinet doors and the way in which the kitchen handles had been fitted.

Relevant section(s) of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 1
Selling a new home

Part 3
After-sales service,
complaints, and the New
Homes Ombudsman



The circumstances

- The customer purchased an already completed property (stock plot) after another customer had withdrawn. This meant that no modifications were possible.
- The customer sought to change the kitchen cabinet handles post-purchase, replacing them with their new handles.
- Concerns arose when visible indentation marks were left on two cabinet doors after the customer had started to replace the handles.
- In response, the customer raised complaints to the developer about the door quality and overly tight handle installation.
- The developer arranged for a kitchen company representative to investigate, and they determined that there was no product fault, and the indentation caused by the original handles was similar to that caused by the fitting of the new ones.

The New Homes Ombudsman decision

The Ombudsman acknowledged the visible indentations on the doors due to the new handles but found no evidence supporting the customer's claim of a quality issue or excessive indentation. Since the new handles had a smaller fitting area than the original, a slight indentation remained visible.

The Ombudsman concluded the developer's actions were reasonable, and the complaint was not upheld.

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Outcome

The customer complaint was not upheld.

Learnings from this complaint



- Developers should clearly communicate with homebuyers regarding the specifications of the property, especially when sold on a “sold as seen” basis.
- Full transparency about what can and cannot be changed after the sale is important to manage expectations.
- Documenting inspections and evidence during any complaint investigation is crucial for a fair resolution.
- Offering solutions or remedial actions, even as a small gesture of goodwill, can demonstrate a commitment to customer satisfaction and can potentially prevent the escalation of complaints.

Recommendations

1. Consider creating guidelines on how to handle modifications, including recommendations for qualified professionals if needed

2. Document all changes or issues with the property using photographs and written evidence.

3. Prevent escalation by offering remedial support. A gesture of goodwill can demonstrate your commitment to customer satisfaction

