

New Homes Ombudsman

Case Study: **Different sanitaryware from information provided**



Issue

The customer complained to the New Homes Ombudsman Service (NHOS) with concerns that the sanitaryware was not as described on the specification and that this had been concealed from them during the home demonstration.

Relevant sections of the New Homes Quality Code

Part 2

Legal documents, information, inspection and completion

Part 3

After-sales, complaints and the NHOS



Circumstances

- As the property was previously a show home, it was complete at the time of reservation and purchase.
- During the home demonstration, the customer noted that the sanitaryware was taped down, and it was not possible to see the units properly.
- After moving in, they found a toilet unit smaller than expected, with a mismatched base and seat. The customer reported this and was told by a sales team member that supply issues during the COVID-19 pandemic might have led to a smaller unit being installed.
- The developer provided evidence that showed that the sales materials only specified the brand and colour, not the model. However, upon examination, the developer agreed the seats were the wrong size and offered replacements, but the customer wanted a different model instead, rejecting the offer.
- The developer later confirmed to the Ombudsman that while they had supply issues during the pandemic, sanitaryware was not affected.

Ombudsman's decision

Although there had been aspects of the after-sales service that had not been dealt with promptly, the Ombudsman noted that the marketing material had only specified a brand of sanitaryware and that brand had been supplied.

The developer had also offered to replace the seats to match the bases, and the Ombudsman considered this a reasonable and proportionate response in the circumstances.

Therefore, the complaint was not upheld.



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Outcome

This complaint was **not upheld**



Learnings

- Home demonstrations should allow buyers full visibility of all features, including sanitaryware, to avoid misunderstandings after the customer moves in. In this instance, the sanitaryware was taped down during the home tour which made it difficult to fully inspect the features properly.
- By demonstrating a commitment to resolving complaints fairly and pragmatically, developers can maintain positive relationships with customers and uphold their reputation for delivering quality properties and after-sales care. Despite this complaint not being upheld, the developer offered to replace the seats to match the bases, which was considered a reasonable and proportionate response by the Ombudsman.
- Timely resolution of after-sales issues can enhance customer satisfaction and prevent escalation to the Ombudsman.

Recommendations for developers

Ensure that all features, including sanitaryware, are prominently displayed and easily accessible during home demonstrations.

Offer flexible solutions tailored to the specific circumstances of each complaint, demonstrating a willingness to accommodate customer preferences, where reasonable.

Follow the Code's clear timelines and service level agreements for responding to and resolving after-sales issues, striving to meet or exceed customer expectations.

