

# BHTA Code of Practice Annual Report 2018



The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) Code of Practice continues to be the only one in the healthcare and assistive technology sector approved under the CTSI Consumer Codes Approval Scheme. It remains the principal reason for businesses choosing to join the Association, and to remain within it.

During the year we have been actively involved in discussions about personal wheelchair budgets for people who are entitled to support from NHS Wheelchair Services. There is increasing effort and intent to enable people to combine budgets available from a variety of public sector bodies - health, social care, education, work and pensions - and they may choose to spend this money themselves in the private market. The message to seek out a business which meets an approved Code of Practice has never been more important.

We are delighted that our monitoring and feedback mechanisms continue to show that overall 97% of customers are satisfied with the products and services our members provide. The feedback also helps us identify our Team of the Year and Individual of the Year. This year's Team - TPG Disableaids - were described as "a wonderful company who understand!", "happy chappies", "excellent service by all", "very friendly, efficient, courteous and reliable staff", and "without this service we do not know what we would have done". Our Individual winner - Gillian Green from Island Mobility - earned comments such as "nothing was too much for her", "she has been fantastic", "exceptional", "she dealt very sympathetically with my Mum", she was "very sweet and helpful"; and "by far the best treatment I've ever had in a mobility shop".

During our financial year ending 30 June 2018 we actively assisted 71 consumers and handled 45 formal complaints (a slight drop on the previous year). Our escalation rate (from contact to case) was 19% and we helped avert £12,723 of consumer detriment.

No particular trends emerged during the year, with complaints varying from dissatisfaction regarding product quality through to a dispute about a collection fee. From advice we have given it is clear that some consumers still simply do not read terms and conditions, or have unrealistic expectations about what a company should do for them. Particularly difficult for our sector is when a customer dies soon after purchase.

We had introduced a grading system for our audits of members and shifted this to certification part-way through the year. Companies are now issued Gold, Silver, or Bronze certificates depending on their level of compliance and have the opportunity to upgrade if they evidence improvements. Any serious evidence of non-compliance will result in a fail. A total of 63 face-to-face audits were conducted and 30 mystery shopping tests were conducted. Since introducing the certificates 20 members have achieved Gold and 31 Silver, with just 4 receiving Bronze.

