

Green heating consumer protection to come under scrutiny

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has launched a call for information looking at consumer experiences and business practices in the green heating and insulation sectors. It will explore whether action is needed to help ensure consumers are treated fairly and businesses are supported to meet their obligations under consumer protection law.

Heating millions of homes across the country accounts for about 17% of the UK's carbon emissions. With this in mind, more people are taking steps to switch to greener forms of heating, and to insulate their homes, to help reduce their carbon footprint. With better insulation, many are also seeking to reduce household energy bills.

The CMA is concerned about the potential for poor practices, such as making misleading claims about potential cost savings, product performance and suitability – particularly when selling newer, next generation technologies. Consumer groups have already raised concerns, including that consumers have a limited understanding of some newer green heating products and the process for buying them can be complicated and confusing.

It is crucial that the many businesses stepping up to offer homeowners green solutions are clear on their obligations under consumer protection law, as they support the UK's aim to hit net zero by 2050.

The CMA wants to hear about consumer and business experiences of buying or selling home insulation (including wall, loft and spray foam), as well as existing and newer next-generation green home heating technology:

- Home solar – systems that are typically installed on roofs to generate electricity or heat water
- Heat pumps – draws heat from the outside air or from pipes buried in the ground and increase it to a higher temperature for use in the home
- Biomass boilers – boilers that use renewable sources (for example, wood pellets), as fuel to heat homes
- Hydrogen-ready boilers – boilers that use natural gas when initially installed but are specifically designed to be simply converted later to use 100% hydrogen instead

Sarah Cardell, the CMA's Interim Chief Executive, said:

Reducing energy use is at the top of everyone's agenda – be that because of rising bills, climate change or both.

To help more people move to green heating and better insulate their homes, it's essential that businesses understand and follow their legal obligations when selling and installing. That way, consumers can be confident they are being treated fairly.

That's why we want to hear from consumers, businesses and other key groups about their experience now, so we can root out any problems early on and avoid them in future.

Gillian Cooper, Head of Energy Policy for Citizens Advice, added:

Making our homes greener is key for us to reduce dependency on expensive gas and bring down our energy bills in the long-run. But people need to feel confident about installing new technology, like heat pumps and solar panels.

Strong consumer protections must be in place in case the installation goes wrong. It's essential to find out about any challenges people are facing, so that problems can be fixed.

Consumers, businesses and other interested groups are invited to [share their views through a questionnaire](#) by 1 November 2022.

All updates on the CMA's work in this area can be found on the [Green Heating and Insulation](#) case page.

Separately, the CMA has an ongoing investigation into [misleading environmental claims](#) and is [currently prioritising the fashion sector](#).

1. The figure relating to home heating representing about 17% of all UK carbon emissions is from [BEIS \(2021\) Heat and Buildings Strategy \(CP388\)](#).
2. The CMA carries out calls for information under its general review function in section 5 of the Enterprise Act 2002. This call for information is open from 8:30am on Tuesday 27 September for responses until 1 November 2022. The CMA expects to report on its findings in Spring 2023.
3. The CMA will look at the feedback from consumers, businesses, and other interested parties to inform its outputs and assess next steps. This could include for example, issuing guidance for businesses in the green heating and insulation sector to help ensure compliance with consumer protection law.
4. The call for information focuses on the promotion, sale and installation of 4 home heating technologies which are particularly relevant to Net Zero and expected to become more common in households over time. It is also looking at home insulation, which is an important way of making homes more energy efficient and may be necessary in some homes before installing a heat pump. This does not include other heating or energy efficiency products such as heat networks, or double and triple window

glazing.

5. Media queries should be directed to: press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.