

Remember, Court is a last resort.

➤ Before you go to Court, think carefully.

Ask yourself:

- Will I be able to find the trader?
It is your job to find him/her.
- Have I got evidence?
It is your job to prove your case.
- Has the trader got money to pay what the Court may award?
It's not worth suing a person or limited company if they have gone bust.

If you have lost money on a faulty kitchen, don't waste more money on a case you cannot win.

HOW TO SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS

Fitted Kitchens

Once you have decided what your rights are, you will need to take a series of steps to solve your problem. It may seem a long procedure, but it does work.

- Be certain that the fault was not caused by misuse, an accident or normal wear and tear.
- Collect together all the documents, including your contract and any guarantee you were given when the kitchen was fitted.

You will now need to contact the trader straight away and report the problem.

- Either visit, phone or write to the trader. If you visit, take your documents with you. If you write, briefly set out the problem and ask the trader to get in touch with you. See the sample letter enclosed. Send your letter by Recorded Delivery. Include a copy of your documents. Don't send originals. Start keeping a record of what happens for future evidence.
- Ask to speak to, or write to, the manager or owner. Explain your problem, keep calm but be firm. Make it clear whether you want a refund, replacement, a repair or compensation. Remember you may still be entitled to a refund, replacement or a repair, plus compensation. You may still be entitled to a replacement or refund when a

repair turns out to be unsatisfactory. Don't demand something you're not entitled to.

Your problem may well be solved at this stage. WELL DONE! Put the pack away for future use.

- If there is a doubt about your claim, you may ask or the trader may arrange for somebody to call out and examine the kitchen. This should be done within a reasonable period of time, and without causing you significant inconvenience. It may be somebody from the trader's own service department or the manufacturer. When they come, make a note of the person's name, where they are from and anything they may say about the problem.
- If the cause of the fault is still disputed, ask if the firm is a member of a trade association. If so, you can contact the association as they may help sort out your complaint.
- If the problem still remains you must write to the trader. See the sample letter enclosed. Ask for the head office address and send them a copy of your letter as well. Send your letter by Recorded Delivery (You must go to the Post Office for this). Keep a copy of each letter.
- If the trader replies and asks for more information, be as helpful as you can. This may help the trader solve your problem. If the trader asks for receipts or other documents send copies, not the originals. Keep a copy of any reply you send.

- If you get no reply to your letter, send the trader a reminder. See the sample letter enclosed and send a copy of your last letter. Remember to keep a copy of both letters. Send your reminder letter by Recorded Delivery.

- If the trader offers to do something, but not what you have asked for, you can either accept the offer or negotiate for a better offer. Be reasonable in what you are prepared to accept. Sometimes it can be better to compromise. Only you can decide this. (Keep a copy of every letter you write).

Most problems should be solved by this stage. If yours isn't and you still feel you have a valid claim -PRESS AHEAD.

- If the trader doesn't reply to your letters, refuses to do anything, or makes a final offer you are not prepared to accept, you will have to think about going to Court. Only a Court can order a trader to sort out your problem. Most claims can be settled in the County Court in England and Wales, the Small Claims Court in Northern Ireland, or the Sheriff Court in Scotland. This doesn't need to involve a solicitor. You can pick up further leaflets that explain fully the procedure from the Court.
- If you decide to take the trader to Court you will have to prove what the original fault was and that it was not due to fair wear and tear or misuse since purchase. See the other green leaflet IDENTIFYING THE FAULT.