



## **APPROVED WORKSHOP SCHEME INFORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION SERVICE (AWSIDRS)**

### **COMPLAINTS GUIDANCE FOR CONSUMERS**

The Approved Workshop Scheme is a joint enterprise between the NCC (National Caravan Council), The Caravan Club and The Camping and Caravanning Club. It is the benchmark for tourer and motorhome habitation servicing.

As the name implies it is an approval scheme for workshops. To become a member, workshops must have a minimum level of competence among their service technicians and must also meet other requirements in terms of premises/facilities and equipment. Members are assessed on-site before membership is granted and are subject to regular and rigorous assessment thereafter. However, assessment cannot of course cover every aspect of a workshop in operation and while the Scheme aims to ensure members offer first class service, there may be occasions when customers feel that the service they received is unsatisfactory.

#### **The AWSIDRS**

The AWSIDRS aims to restore communications to enable both parties to resolve their differences. It does not attempt to formally mediate, arbitrate or make a judgement on the issues presented. Use of the service does not affect your statutory rights but before you take this step it is important for you to understand what this service can and cannot offer you.

You must have told the AWS member about your complaint within 28 calendar days of your becoming aware of it and given them the opportunity to consider it first. The time limits for consideration of a complaint before the involvement of the AWSIDRS can be extended where either you or the company has requested this (and, if required, this request has been agreed by the AWSIDRS and/or the ICE) - such requests will not be unreasonably denied.

You can submit your complaint to the AWSIDRS before 28 calendar days have expired only if the member has already issued a written final decision letter.

AWS has created the AWSIDRS and guidance to benefit consumers and our members, by establishing clear guidelines about who can make a complaint, what about, at what stage and what might be done to help resolve it. In summary, a complaint made against an AWS member may pass through one, two or three stages:

1. continuing dialogue with the member, to secure a mutually acceptable conclusion;
2. contacting the AWSIDRS to help both parties reach a satisfactorily outcome where stage 1 has been unsuccessful,
3. referral to the external Independent Case Examiner (ICE), where it is deemed appropriate and where stages 1 and 2 did not resolve matters.

**Our contact details are:**

**AWSIDRS,**  
Catherine House,  
Victoria Road,  
Aldershot,  
Hampshire,  
GU11 1SS;

Email: [manager@approvedworkshops.co.uk](mailto:manager@approvedworkshops.co.uk)  
or visit our website at [www.approvedworkshops.co.uk](http://www.approvedworkshops.co.uk)

### **Who can make a complaint?**

In general, anybody who has paid for a service that has been carried out by a workshop (either fixed base or mobile) and who is a member of the AWS (see below). This includes anybody to whom the consumer has given written authorisation to complain on their behalf. We do not accept anonymous complaints.

**Note:** Our experience shows us that complaints are best dealt with in writing – by email, where possible. This provides documentary evidence of what was said/agreed and avoids confusion later on. The service does not accept complaints via telephone.

### **What will it cost me?**

Making a complaint about an AWS member or having an unresolved complaint reviewed under the AWSIDRS is free. However, for all complaints which are eligible to be escalated to the external ICE, a case fee of £50 + VAT applies, which must be received by AWS before the ICE is able to consider your complaint. This fee will be returned to you in full if the decision of the ICE is wholly or partly in your favour.

**Note:** The ICE cannot consider a complaint until it has gone through the AWSIDRS, first. A separate guidance document is available for consumers that explains when a referral to the ICE service is possible.

### **Who can I complain about?**

In general, the complaint can only be against a current member of AWS - please see the AWS website "Find an Approved Workshop" page at [www.approvedworkshops.co.uk](http://www.approvedworkshops.co.uk).

### **What can I complain about?**

Your complaint can be about a habitation service or an associated repair (e.g. replacement of breakaway cable or gas hose) that you have had carried out by an AWS member.

### **What can't I complain about?**

There are many instances where we can assist you, but we **cannot** help you if the dispute concerns:

1. A matter where there is no evidence provided to substantiate the claim.
2. A business that is not a member of AWS.
3. A complaint in relation to a bodywork repair.
4. A vehicle no longer owned by the complainant.
5. A complaint where more than three months has elapsed since the date the work was carried out.
6. A complaint in relation to time delays (e.g. length of time taken to book in a service and/or related repair).
7. A complaint in relation to a Motorhome base vehicle.
8. An issue or repair being dealt with under the terms of a Manufacturer's Warranty and their responsibilities under the Consumer Rights Legislation.
9. A complaint in relation to an Insurance claims.

10. The sale, suitability, installation and service of aftersales products/accessories such as motor movers, satellite systems etc. which may be covered under the Consumer Rights legislation.
11. An issue already being dealt with by an independent redress or dispute resolution scheme (e.g. Financial Conduct Authority, CAB or Trading Standards or an Ombudsman service).
12. An issue already being dealt with under criminal law, or in progress under civil law including the Consumer Rights legislation (e.g. small claims court).
13. An issue where you have formally instructed, been represented, or are represented, by a solicitor or other legal representative.

### **When can I complain to the AWSIDRS?**

Many complaints arise due to misunderstandings or a breakdown in communications that can often be resolved by direct discussion or correspondence.

**You must first give the AWS member the opportunity to deal with your complaint and to fulfil their responsibilities under the Consumer Rights Legislation before bringing it to us.**

If you have not already done so, then:

1. write to the company setting out the problem, what you expect as an outcome and/or ask for an opportunity to discuss it, advising them of a reasonable period of time, say, three weeks, when you would expect to receive a response
2. if you do arrange to meet, make sure it is with a senior member of staff who has responsibility for customer service or complaint handling
3. keep a note of what you want to say and take copies of any documentation with you
4. keep a note of what was said and by whom and send a copy to the company, as confirmation.

If you have reached the position where either:

- A. direct contact with the company has not produced a satisfactory solution within 28 calendar days (i.e. your complaint remains unresolved or you are not satisfied with their **written final decision** and you have written and told them so), or
- B. if the company has not responded within 28 calendar days

you may take the matter further with the AWSIDRS.

This should be done within 28 calendar days from when you received a final decision letter/email from the AWS member. Please note that if you raise other issues with the company during the course of their consideration of your complaint, or if your complaint is complex, this may extend the time it takes to investigate and seek resolution.

### **How do I refer a complaint to AWSIDRS?**

If your complaint is eligible and you choose to proceed, the AWSIDRS complaint form **'I wish to make a complaint'** must be completed and all the relevant details provided, together with any copies of evidence and correspondence relating to the dispute.

In all instances you are advised to:

- write or type clearly and complete all sections of the form
- sign the form (for paper submissions only), as we need your permission to liaise with the

AWS member.

**You must send us (ideally by email) all the evidence you wish to reply on at the same time that you submit your complaint.** You may only be able to produce further evidence later in exceptional circumstances, e.g. at the discretion of the ICE (e.g. where information comes to light that you could not have known when you made your complaint).

### **What happens when the AWSIDRS receives my complaint?**

We will:

- acknowledge receipt
- check it for completeness (that the member has sent you a final decision letter) and eligibility to ensure that it falls within the remit of the service (if it doesn't, we will reject it and write to you to explain why)
- decide whether the AWSIDRS can restore communications and resolve the complaint (informal dispute resolution) or whether it is more appropriate for it to be escalated directly to the ICE
- send to the AWS member the complaint details and copy correspondence, where appropriate, with a formal request for their comment (within 28 calendar days)
- make any further enquiries as necessary.

Upon receipt of the member's response, we may contact you and/or the AWS member to see if a mutually acceptable and satisfactory resolution can be reached.

### **Other useful advice**

Depending on the nature of your complaint you may wish to seek independent advice from your local Citizens Advice Bureau ([www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer)) or your local Trading Standards Office.

*This guidance replaces any/all earlier versions. It will be revised and up-dated periodically.*