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trading standards law explained

Sale and resale of tickets

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In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

If you sell or resell tickets for events, then Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA) affects you. The Act not only affects the person who resells the ticket, but also the promoter or venue that sells direct to the consumer.

Under the DMCCA, it is illegal to give consumers misleading information. It is also illegal to make a misleading omission, which means hiding or omitting material information that the average consumer needs in order to make an informed 'transactional decision'. Consumers must not be misled as to the price, location, terms, adverse factors, etc that may affect their enjoyment of the event. For more detail on the DMCCA, including information about what constitutes a transactional decision, please see 'Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)'.

Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA), where a ticket is offered for resale on the internet through a secondary ticketing facility (rather than being offered direct for first sale by the event organiser), certain

information must be given to the consumer. A secondary ticketing facility is a website, app, etc (such as StubHub or Viagogo) where tickets are offered for resale, rather than where the first sale of the ticket is made by or on behalf of the event organiser.

The CRA makes it illegal for an event organiser to blacklist a consumer or to cancel a ticket on the grounds that a consumer offers a ticket for resale, unless certain conditions are met. Operators of online secondary ticketing facilities must report any illegal use of those facilities to the police.

There are additional requirements for online secondary ticketing marketplaces and there are restrictions on organisers blacklisting consumers or cancelling tickets. There are also particular requirements when you sell at a distance - for example, over the internet or by phone.

Pricing

You must give consumers clear and accurate price information before they buy a ticket. You must also ensure that information is complete, and not misleading, before the consumer makes a decision in relation to a prospective purchase (for example, clicking through an advert on your website).

If you quote a range of prices, or a 'from' price, you should make sure that a reasonable number of tickets are available at the lower price. Bait marketing (attracting consumers with a lower price that has low / limited availability or other restrictions that are not disclosed until later) is illegal.

Where you quote a ticket price, this must include all non-optional extra charges such as taxes and booking fees. If it is impossible to calculate the fee at this stage (for example, where a booking fee applies for a whole booking, rather than per ticket), then the existence of this charge and the method of calculating it must be clearly stated alongside the ticket price.

Additional charges such as booking fees and postage charges must not be selected automatically for the buyer by the use of pre-ticked boxes or in any other way. If you do not have the consumer's express agreement to an additional charge, then you will have to refund it.

By law, you are not allowed to make surcharges for customers using consumer debit / credit cards etc to buy goods and services, including tickets. See 'Payment surcharges' for more information.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has produced tips for businesses on dynamic pricing. Dynamic pricing (also known as 'surge' pricing) is when businesses change their prices rapidly and frequently in response to changing customer demand.

See also CTSI's *Guidance for Traders on Pricing Practices*, which includes a link to CMA guidance on price transaprency.

Descriptions and terms

Before the consumer buys the ticket, you must provide full and clear information about the ticket and event. This must include (for example and where applicable) timings, locations and seat numbers.

If there are any factors that might adversely affect the consumer's enjoyment of the ticket (such as restricted views or limited access), these must also be brought to their attention before purchase.

Similarly, if you or the promoter want to rely on any terms and conditions on the ticket, these must be pointed out to the consumer before purchase. For example, you may wish to set out rules about whether

and how a named ticket can be transferred to someone else, or particular requirements for taking part in the event (such as special clothing, equipment or insurance that is recommended or required).

Reselling: secondary ticketing facilities

There are additional rules that apply where event tickets are resold through a secondary ticketing facility on a website, app, etc intended for the resale of tickets. These rules apply even where the ticket is being sold by a private individual. The requirements are part of the CRA.

Where a ticket is offered for sale through a secondary ticketing facility, the following information must be given to the prospective buyer before a contract is made and the ticket sold:

- where the ticket is for a particular seat or standing area, there must be enough information to allow the buyer to identify that seat or area
- information about any restriction as to who can use the ticket (for example, that the ticket is for a child or student, or that no under-18s are admitted)
- the amount stated on the ticket as its price (its 'face value')

If the seller is, or is acting on behalf of, the operator of the secondary ticketing facility, a connected business or person (including an employee or contractor), or the organiser, then this fact must be made clear too.

Event organisers often want to ensure that tickets are sold to genuine fans rather than to individuals who simply want to buy and resell the tickets. Some organisers take steps to blacklist speculative buyers so as to prevent them buying and reselling tickets in future, and they may also cancel tickets that are offered for resale.

However, even genuine buyers sometimes find that they cannot attend an event and want to resell the tickets, and blacklisting or cancellation often comes as a surprise to these individuals. Therefore, an event organiser cannot cancel a ticket or blacklist a seller (in other words, take steps to prevent or restrict the person acquiring tickets for any event in the United Kingdom in the future) just because that person sells (or offers for sale) a ticket on a secondary platform, unless both of the following conditions are met:

- there was a term of the original contract when the ticket was sold by the organiser that permitted the organiser to cancel or blacklist in these circumstances
- the term was not unfair

It is unlikely that any such term could be effective or fair if it has not been communicated clearly to the person offering the ticket for sale on the secondary ticketing facility (who might not be the person who originally bought it from the organiser). An assessment of fairness may also take into account any other relevant circumstances. For more information on contract terms see 'Unfair contract terms'.

Operators of online secondary ticketing facilities must report illegal use of that facility to the police. As soon as the operator is aware that a person is using the facility in a way that commits any offence, the operator must report the identity of the person committing the offence (if they know the person's identity) and the fact they know that an offence has been or is being committed. The same information must also be disclosed to the event organiser unless the operator of the secondary ticketing facility has reasonable grounds to believe that doing so would prejudice any criminal investigation.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (a predecessor of the Department for Business and Trade) produced detailed guidance for this area: *Consumer Rights Act: Secondary Ticketing - Guidance for Business*.

Buying in bulk for resale

Where tickets are offered for sale online, resellers sometimes use special software or 'bots', which can make multiple purchases very rapidly as soon as the tickets are made available. This can lead to a situation where the primary supply of tickets is exhausted quickly by resellers, with few or none left for buyers who want to attend the event. Tickets are then available only on the secondary market, often at significantly higher prices.

Event organisers and promoters may restrict the number of tickets sold to each buyer, so as to discourage this practice. Where there is such a restriction in relation to a recreational, sporting or cultural event in the UK, it is an offence to use software or 'bots' to try to buy more than the permitted number of tickets with a view to reselling them for a profit.

Distance sales

Where you sell tickets at a distance - for example, over the internet or by phone - the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 also apply. These Regulations require certain information to be given to the consumer before you make a contract, and they require additional charges (such as booking fees) to be disclosed up front.

In most cases, however, event tickets are exempt from the cancellation rights that normally apply under the Regulations, as events are usually booked for a specific date or within a specific time period.

See 'Consumer contracts: distance sales' for more detail on these Regulations, which also contain requirements if you sell on your business premises or away from it.

Helplines

If you provide a telephone helpline for consumers to contact you in relation to a contract that they have entered into with you, this must be charged at no more than the basic rate. This means a geographic telephone number beginning '01' or '02', a non-geographic number beginning '03', or a mobile number. An 0800 or 0808 Freephone number can be attractive to some customers.

Premium-rate numbers beginning '09' and numbers beginning '084', '087' and '070' do not meet the 'basic rate' requirement.

Package travel

If you are offering event tickets in combination with transport and/or accommodation, you may also need to comply with the regulations on package travel. See 'Package travel and holidays' for more information.

Sporting events

The resale of tickets to certain events such as football matches is subject to special control. Contact your local Trading Standards service if you wish to deal with these types of events.

Licensing

If you intend to sell tickets on the street - for example, outside the show for which you are selling tickets - then you need a street-trading licence. Contact your local authority for more information.

Further information

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) enforces the Breaching of Limits on the Ticket Sales Regulations 2018. It has investigated suspected breaches of consumer protection law in the secondary ticketing market. This includes an open letter to events organisers and secondary ticketing businesses. Formal action has been taken where non-compliance has persisted.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Links added to the CMA's guidance on dynamic pricing and to CTSI's *Guidance for Traders on Pricing Practices*.

Last reviewed / updated: February 2026

Key legislation

- Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013
- Consumer Rights Act 2015:
    - Part 3, Chapter 5
- Breaching of Limits on Ticket Sales Regulations 2018
- Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024:
    - Part 4, Chapter 1

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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