

## Unit 9 Consumer rights and responsibilities

### About the unit

In this unit, pupils learn about what it means to be a consumer and about the rights and responsibilities of consumers. In particular, they examine the role of the consumer in the marketplace and the wider economy. They consider the different reasons behind the purchasing decisions that consumers make. They examine the impact of our behaviour as consumers on other people – locally, nationally and globally. They explore the ways in which consumer choices can influence the provision of goods and services, and how consumer power can change the lives of people in countries around the world. They relate what they have learnt to the school community by investigating ways in which the school can be a responsible consumer, and suggest how the school might contribute to local initiatives for sustainable development.

The sections in this unit can be used in any order.

### Where the unit fits in

This unit addresses the following aspects of the key stage 4 citizenship programme of study:

#### Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens

Pupils should be taught about:

- 1f the opportunities for individuals and voluntary groups to bring about social change locally, nationally, in Europe and internationally
- 1g the importance of a free press, and the media's role in society, including the internet, in providing information and affecting opinion
- 1h the rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees
- 1j the wider issues and challenges of global interdependence and responsibility, including sustainable development and Local Agenda 21

#### Developing skills of enquiry and communication

Pupils should be taught to:

- 2a research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue, problem or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources, showing an awareness of the use and abuse of statistics
- 2b express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
- 2c contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in formal debates

#### Developing skills of participation and responsible action

Pupils should be taught to:

- 3a use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own

This unit builds on unit 10 'Debating a global issue' in the key stage 3 citizenship scheme of work and links with unit 4 'How and why are laws made?' and unit 12 'Global issues, local action' in the key stage 4 scheme.

### Expectations

#### At the end of this unit

**most pupils:** understand the importance of consumers making appropriate purchasing decisions and of using consumer information effectively. They recognise how their own actions can affect others in the local, national and global community. They understand the importance of knowing about consumer rights and responsibilities in different situations, and that the rights of consumers and suppliers are protected by the law. They are aware that what we want as consumers can conflict with our responsibility as global citizens. They can use examples that they have investigated to illustrate how consumers might take action to highlight issues of trade and consumption.

**some pupils have not made so much progress and:** understand that their own purchasing decisions might have consequences for people in other countries. They are aware that, as consumers, they have a choice and can use that choice to influence the way in which companies manufacture or invest.

**some pupils have progressed further and:** show understanding of the concepts of consumerism and consumer power, recognising the importance of consumer rights and responsibilities. They know that the rights of consumers and suppliers are protected by the law. They can refer to recent events and provide examples of how the consequences of consumers' behaviour have an impact on people elsewhere in the world and have effected political change.

---

## Resources

Resources include:

- material from organisations, *eg the Financial Services Authority, National Consumer Council, Consumers' Association, Oxfam, Tourism Concern, National Consumer Education Partnership, Personal Finance Education Group*

Many groups and organisations produce online resources that are relevant to citizenship. QCA has not printed these website addresses as it recognises that they can and do change, often at short notice. So that we can monitor and maintain a reliable and useful resource, the website addresses of the following organisations can be accessed through the key stage 4 citizenship scheme of work site at [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes)

- Office of Fair Trading
- Trading Standards Central
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Consumers' Association
- Consumer Gateway, Department for Trade and Industry
- National Consumer Council
- Department for International Development
- Ethical Trading Initiative
- The Fairtrade Foundation (includes teaching ideas and a range of resources)
- Labour Behind the Label
- Sweatshop Watch
- Traidcraft
- National Consumer Education Partnership
- Tourism Concern
- Global Eye (an online magazine written by Worldaware for the DfID; includes information about resources)

---

## Links with other subjects

In this section, references are made to the programme of study if there is one at key stage 4, or to the subject specific criteria on which GCSE courses are based. Some of these links have been included in the 'Points to note' section to illustrate these opportunities.

Science: links with the impact of humans on the environment (Sc2, 4b) and the context through which science is taught, including:

environmental; applications of science; and benefits and drawbacks of scientific and technological developments (breadth of study 1a, 1b, 1c in the programme of study for single and double science)

ICT: 3a, 3b, 4a in the programme of study

Geography: decision-making and the use and management of resources; unit 9 'Shopping – past, present and future'; unit 18 'The global fashion industry'; unit 19 'Tourism – good or bad?'; and unit 23 'Local actions, global effects' in the key stage 3 scheme of work; GCSE criteria: themes of development and tourism (3.1ii); the way in which places are interdependent (3.1iii)

Business studies and economics: GCSE criteria: issues relating to marketing, competition and business activities in a changing environment (3.1i, 3.2i, 3.2iv). The topics in this unit are explored in greater depth within these courses

History: GCSE criteria: the study of political, social and economic history (3.2vi); GCSE social and economic history, including industrialisation, trade and industry, and rights and responsibilities

RE: issues relating to wealth, poverty, development and the environment are in locally agreed syllabuses and GCSE religious studies. The role of charities and charitable giving in the principal religions of Britain, and altruism, hedonism and related ethical and religious beliefs about human life and materialism, may also be covered

PSHE: 1d, 1e, 4d, 4g, 4h in the non-statutory guidelines

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

### Making consumer choices – what kind of consumer am I?

- |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that we are all consumers and that our purchasing decisions and choices affect others</li> <li>• about what we consume</li> <li>• about the difference between the needs and the wants of consumers</li> <li>• about the factors that influence our choices, including the limited range of information on what we consume</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a class, pupils brainstorm the extent to which they consume goods, resources and services, <i>eg food, clothes, heating, lighting, CDs, books, magazines, leisure activities</i>. Pupils make a list of these items.</li> <li>• In groups, pupils discuss which things on the list are needs and which are wants. What is the difference? Does everyone in the world have the same opportunities and expectations concerning consumption?</li> <li>• In groups, pupils consider what factors influence their choice of products and services, and why these factors should have an influence. Examples include price, brand, quality, safety, reliability, good product information, benefits to others of buying a product, <i>eg supporting local/national businesses, supporting businesses in less economically developed countries</i>.</li> <li>• Ask the pupils to consider whether, as consumers, they have enough information to make reasoned and informed decisions. What sorts of things might persuade them to make different choices.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know and understand the difference between need and want and that this varies according to individuals' values, attitudes and expectations</li> <li>• identify what and how we consume, and make the connection between consumption and the availability of resources (including personal income)</li> <li>• understand how external factors influence our individual choices and the decision-making process</li> <li>• recognise that consumers make purchasing choices for a range of different reasons, which may be economic, social, political or moral</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section provides opportunities for pupils to draw on and explore their own experiences and views as consumers of products and services.</li> <li>• It is important to acknowledge peer pressure, as well as advertising and marketing activity, as important influences on consumer choice.</li> <li>• The local Trading Standards office can provide further information about quality, trading standards and accuracy of product information.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|--|

### The consequences of consumer behaviour – what do I know about how products are made?

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about where in the world products they buy come from</li> <li>• how their decisions as consumers can affect people in the countries where the products are made</li> <li>• that consumers have rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• about pressure groups that exist to highlight consumer issues</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask pupils to identify the places where specific goods are made and discuss why manufacturers might choose to have factories in a particular location, including other countries.</li> <li>• Focusing on international examples, pupils use a range of resources, <i>eg newspaper clippings, news websites</i>, to investigate the impact that consumers can have, <i>eg the effect on particular countries, governments and workers in less economically developed countries, the effects of tourism and of boycotts of particular products or countries</i>. How easy or difficult was it to find information?</li> <li>• Ask pupils to work in groups to consider the advantages and disadvantages to a country and its people of one particular product. It would be useful to have some comparative data on employment and on the cost of living in different parts of the world so pupils can make reasoned judgements on the issues. The websites of companies involved in the production, trade or retailing of that item can be used to give another perspective. Groups should then make a presentation explaining whether they might change their buying habits in the light of the evidence that they have considered.</li> <li>• In small groups, pupils could look at a range of campaign groups, <i>eg the Consumers' Association, the Fairtrade Foundation</i>, and identify what the groups' main concerns are. What do they ask consumers to do? Why?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• know different reasons why goods are sometimes produced in particular locations or countries</li> <li>• give examples of some of the current consumer issues they have investigated</li> <li>• relate their knowledge and understanding of the topic to their own behaviour</li> <li>• are aware of the roles of different local and national campaign groups concerned with consumer issues</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This issue needs to be treated with care, because students can make simplistic judgements if presented with limited information.</li> <li>• This section can be used to explore different types of active participation and the idea that collective campaigning can be used to raise issues at a national level.</li> <li>• Links with the National Consumer Education Partnership's framework of consumer skills and attitudes (see <a href="http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk">www.standards.dfes.gov.uk</a>).</li> <li>• Link with geography: unit 9 'Shopping – past, present and future'; unit 18 'The global fashion industry'; and unit 19 'Tourism – good or bad?' in the key stage 3 geography scheme of work; GCSE criteria: development (3.1ii); interdependence and global citizenship.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|---|

**Learning objectives**

Pupils should learn:

**Possible teaching activities****Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

**Points to note**

### The consequences of consumer choices – how effective are consumer campaigns?

- about the impact of consumer choices locally and nationally
- about how organised campaigns can affect public opinion and lead to greater consumer participation
- about the political impact of particular consumer campaigns
- Small groups of pupils discuss what they understand by the term 'responsible consumerism'. This will build on their discussion of purchasing choices in the first part of the unit. They share their ideas with the whole group and draw up a list of major issues and questions relating to making consumer choices, *eg what might make me decide not to purchase a particular product or brand? Would I think twice if the company did not provide reasonable working conditions for employees/used child labour inappropriately/had a poor safety record?*
- Pupils investigate a number of local and national organisations that campaign on consumer issues, *eg what has happened to environmental groups over the last 10–20 years? How has Local Agenda 21 affected their membership and the activities they engage in?* In small groups, pupils discuss the ways that various organisations might campaign. Pupils can then debate what sorts of action might be appropriate, *eg physical action such as occupation of a company's office or destruction of property versus political lobbying or boycotts*. They consider why collective campaigning can be more effective than individual action.
- Using various sources of information, pupils identify some recent changes that have resulted from consumer-led campaigning, *eg changes resulting from the UK fuel protests, changes in food shopping habits*. What were the key elements of the action? Who was involved?
- identify a range of issues associated with a particular type of consumer action, such as 'green consumerism'
- can relate their knowledge and understanding of the topic to examples from real life
- are aware of the roles of local and national organisations in campaigns on a range of issues
- understand how groups campaign in various ways to achieve specific results
- This section links with unit 4 'How and why are laws made?'. It provides clear opportunities for pupils to identify how their own behaviour has an impact on the immediate community and on the wider and national community.
- This section provides an opportunity for pupils to discuss the nature and appropriateness of different forms of campaign action, including individual, collective and direct action.
- Link with unit 12 'Global issues, local action'. Pupils could explore how international agreements are implemented at a local level, *eg the Rio Summit resulted in Local Agenda 21, which promotes local groups that address environmental issues*.
- Link with history: political, economic and social history, including Africa and Asia post-independence, trade and industry, protest and reform, and media and communications. This section also builds on unit 11 'Industrial changes' in the key stage 3 scheme of work and the breadth of study sections 10, 12 and 13 in the key stage 3 programme of study.

**Learning objectives**

Pupils should learn:

**Possible teaching activities****Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

**Points to note**

### Is our school an informed and responsible consumer?

- about local priorities and targets that relate to sustainable consumption and how the school can contribute
- about consumer rights and responsibilities
- Drawing on what they have learnt so far, groups of pupils investigate the different goods and services that their school consumes, *eg Does the local authority have targets for increasing sustainable or green consumption? What could the school do to contribute to these targets (such as using suppliers of environmentally friendly or sustainable products and services)? Who makes the purchasing decisions for the school?* Pupils identify the factors and criteria involved in a school purchasing decision.
- Pupils also consider what consumer rights and responsibilities are involved in a purchasing decision, *eg what does the law do to protect consumers? What are the minimum statutory rights?* (The Office of Fair Trading website provides information about consumer rights in different situations.) Pupils can also find out whether school suppliers offer any services or quality guarantees that go beyond the statutory minimum. What happens when something goes wrong? What are the responsibilities of the consumer and the supplier in any situation? Who can provide further help and information?
- Pupils plan and write a checklist (or guide) for the school community on being a more informed and responsible consumer.
- know that consumers and retailers/suppliers have rights and responsibilities that are protected by law
- identify practical ways of sharing information and helping the school and the local community become better informed and responsible consumers
- understand that consumers have rights and responsibilities
- Useful websites include those of:
  - the Office of Fair Trading
  - local Trading Standards departments
  - Citizens Advice Bureaux
  - Which?
  - Department for Trade and Industry
- Link with unit 12 'Global issues, local events'. This section provides an opportunity to look in more detail at Local Agenda 21 and how the school can contribute to local priorities and targets.

### The following sections offer additional ways of looking at being a responsible and informed consumer

#### Responsible consumer – tourism

- about how consumer behaviour can have an impact on the environment and the economy in different places
- about the positive and negative impacts of tourism on those places
- who benefits from tourism
- about the interdependence of countries and places
- Pupils can find out where local people go on holiday and why they choose those destinations. This could be done by surveying members of the school community or asking local travel agents for information. Has anyone visited a place that has a sustainable tourism or eco-tourism policy? What was it like?
- In groups, pupils discuss the positive and negative effects of tourism in different places. It may be appropriate to include a discussion about the contribution made by tourism to the local economy.
- Using statistics, newspaper articles and documents from organisations such as Oxfam, pupils can identify the potential impact of tourism on specific areas, assessing which aspects might be considered good or bad and why.
- In a class discussion, pupils consider whether people would stay away from certain destinations if they knew that the local people were being displaced or exploited.
- Using information from the previous sections, pupils could produce a consumer guide to responsible tourism.
- know about a range of holiday destinations and why people choose to go there
- identify different reasons why people might choose to stay away from or continue to visit certain destinations
- show an understanding of the possible costs and benefits of tourism
- present information that is accessible by their target audience
- It is important to be aware that some pupils might not have had the opportunity to travel abroad on holiday.
- Link with geography: unit 19 'Tourism – good or bad?'; unit 23 'Local actions, global effects' in the key stage 3 scheme of work; and GCSE criteria: tourism (3.1 ii).
- Links with the Tourism Concern website (see [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)).
- This section links with unit 10 'Citizenship and geography: debating a global issue' in the key stage 3 scheme of work.

**Learning objectives**

Pupils should learn:

**Possible teaching activities****Learning outcomes**

Pupils:

**Points to note****Responsible consumer – fair trade**

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• about consumer responsibilities and that information can help consumers make informed choices</li> <li>• that consumers and suppliers have a duty to behave responsibly, on an individual and a community level</li> <li>• that consumers' choices and actions can influence the manufacture and supply of goods and services</li> <li>• about the interdependence of different countries and places</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils carry out an investigation into the production of a particular product made in another country, <i>eg coffee</i>. Ask them to consider how production affects different people and organisations involved: producers (small farmers as well as large companies), employees and customers.</li> <li>• The class could discuss the issue of responsibility. Should consumers feel responsible for the choices they make? Should consumers in the UK be responsible for citizens in other countries? Should this affect their purchasing decisions?</li> <li>• Pupils could investigate the idea of 'fair trade' and the various systems that help local people achieve fair payment for their products, <i>eg government trading arrangements, agreements between supermarkets and their suppliers</i>. How can consumers find out where and how products are made? What systems exist to help them find this information?</li> <li>• Pupils investigate the sorts of products for which there are fair trade schemes. Why should consumers be encouraged to purchase these goods? Pupils consider how to get their message across to others, including other consumers and other producers.</li> <li>• Pupils work in groups to develop and produce an advertising campaign that educates consumers and producers about fair trade issues. This could be done as a leaflet, poster, website, article for the school or local newspaper or display. Each group presents their ideas to the class for discussion. Pupils reflect on their participation in the group.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relate their knowledge of what influences choice to a specific example of consumer decision-making</li> <li>• understand that people have different values and attitudes and that this affects purchasing decisions</li> <li>• show an understanding of how some companies use cheap labour in less developed countries</li> <li>• know about sources of information that allow consumers to identify where and how products are made</li> <li>• know examples of fair trade products from their research</li> <li>• know the advantages and disadvantages of being a supplier or consumer of fair trade products</li> <li>• reflect on their contribution to the group activity and identify what went well and what did not go so well</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This section provides an opportunity for pupils to discuss the moral aspects of consumerism, <i>eg excessive consumption, 'display of wealth'</i>. The issues considered in this section are as applicable when considering industry and trade in the UK as they are when considering trade between the UK and other countries.</li> <li>• Many resources are available from a range of government and non-governmental sources that support investigations of products and fair trade between the UK and other countries.</li> <li>• In discussing ethical aspects it will be important to refer back to the issues brought up in the first section on influences on personal consumer decisions.</li> <li>• The websites of organisations concerned with the ethics of trade and consumerism may be useful; <i>eg</i>:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Ethical Trading Initiative</i></li> <li>– <i>Fairtrade</i></li> <li>– <i>Labour Behind the Label</i></li> <li>– <i>Sweatshop Watch</i></li> <li>– <i>Traidcraft</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Link with ICT: 3a, 3b, 4a in the programme of study.</li> <li>• Link with geography: the interdependence of places (3.1iii); global citizenship (3.1iv).</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|--|