businesscompanion
trading standards law explained

Displaying prices in hotels etc

In the guide

Price information
Displaying a price list
Overcharging
Further information
Trading Standards
In this update
Key legislation

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 offer accommodation as part of a business, you must comply with Part 4, Chapter 1 of the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA) and the Provision of Services Regulations 2009.

You must ensure that your price information is not misleading. Price information must be made available to customers - for example, by displaying a price list prominently and including the information in any brochure or website. The information must state prices inclusive of mandatory service charges and VAT (where applicable). If you charge more than your advertised price, you could be guilty of giving a misleading price indication.

Price information

The price information that is given for accommodation and other services must not be misleading and must be displayed so that it is available before a consumer decides to make a booking.

Price information can be given in many forms - for example, verbally, on the internet, on an advert, in a brochure, on an invoice or in a statement of terms. The way that the price information is displayed must not be unclear or provided in such a way that the consumer is unlikely to see it (for instance, by using text that is very small or indistinguishable from a background colour). If you provide information for individuals

of a group who may be vulnerable due to age, physical or mental health, credulity, or the circumstances they are in, you should ensure that the information will be clear for that group.

Any 'misleading action' (such as showing a lower price than that charged) or 'misleading omission' (such as not including a tax or compulsory service charge) could be an offence.

You may commit an offence if a consumer is given incorrect price information for your accommodation and/or services that they rely on as being correct when deciding to make a booking.

The requirement to display a price does not prevent you from giving negotiated discounts to individuals.

Displaying a price list

A price list displayed in the reception area or at the entrance to your accommodation is a common method for displaying room rates. The price list could also be displayed in brochures and leaflets, and on websites.

It is suggested that the price list you display should include:

- the price of a bedroom for one person (for example, £80 per night) if all the rooms are the same price, or the lowest and highest price (for example, £70 - 90 per night) if there is a range of prices
- the price of a bedroom for two people
- the price of accommodation in any other type of room
- whether or not accommodation prices are inclusive of breakfast or other meals
- the arrangements for payment, such as whether the customer pays upfront or on checkout

You should indicate whether the prices listed are the lowest price available (stating 'from', for example), representative of a range of prices (for example, stating 'typical price') or are the highest and lowest prices for a type of accommodation (stating 'from' and 'to', for example). Be careful to ensure that the 'from' price will be available reasonably often, and for a reasonable period of time. If not, show the restrictions.

You should also indicate whether the prices displayed are for a particular period (for example, 'minimum three night stay') and whether there are any surcharges for single-person occupancy of double rooms etc. If a price is subject to any special conditions (for example, where the room has to be booked a certain amount of time in advance, or where you offer a discount in return for making a booking non-cancellable), this must also be made clear.

Consumers should be informed of the prices for rooms and services that are not listed before they decide to stay, together with any negotiated discounts, special rates or surcharges that may apply.

All prices must include any mandatory service charges, and it should be stated in the price list that they are included. If the consumer cannot purchase the advertised product without the payment of a charge, then that charge is mandatory. You should make it clear whether meals are included in the price - for example, 'single bedroom £80 per night, including breakfast'. Any resort fees or tourist taxes must also be included.

The price you display must include VAT. If you do a significant amount of trade with VAT-registered business customers, you may wish to provide details of VAT-exclusive prices too, but these should never be more prominent than the VAT-inclusive prices. On a website, you can provide a facility (a button, for example) to allow users to switch between VAT-inclusive and VAT-exclusive prices, so long as the inclusive prices are the ones that appear by default.

The price list must be in a prominent position and be easy to read.

If you use a business to market your accommodation, it is important to ensure that you provide all of the information required by the DMCCA. You can be held responsible if the advertisement does not comply.

Overcharging

If you advertise your prices to the public (for example, on a sign outside your premises, in a brochure or on a website), you should be careful to include all non-optional extra charges in your advertised prices, and stick to them when you present your bills to customers. If you charge more than your advertised price, you could be guilty of giving a 'misleading price indication'. This is a criminal offence. It could also be a breach of contract.

If there is a chance that your prices could vary during the lifetime of the advertisement, you should make this clear - for example, different prices for high and low seasons.

It is illegal to charge customers a surcharge for using a consumer credit or debit card to pay the bill. The requirements regarding surcharges are controlled by the Consumer Rights (Payment Surcharges) Regulations 2012 (see 'Payment surcharges' for more information).

Further information

More information on pricing can be found in 'Providing price information'.

For more information on the DMCCA generally, including an explanation of misleading actions and omissions, please see 'Protection from unfair trading (criminal law)'. For the time being, consumers' rights of redress are still covered by the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs); information on these rights can be found in 'Protection from unfair trading (consumers' rights of redress)'.

In addition, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has produced a short guide for online accommodation booking sites. Please note, this guidance was published before the DMCCA came into force.

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

General detail added.

Last reviewed / updated: March 2026

Key legislation

- Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
- Provision of Services Regulations 2009
- Consumer Rights (Payment Surcharges) Regulations 2012

- 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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