

Ordinary Members

Commonly asked questions and answers



What is my role as an ordinary member? Am I a shareholder?

As an ordinary member you have a role as a guardian of the continued existence of our charity (the Consumers' Association) over the long term. Your interest as an ordinary member has some similarities with those of a shareholder in a commercial company, but there are fundamental differences. As a shareholder, you would have a direct economic interest in the company through your investment and a right to vote on matters as you decide suits you best. Ordinary members protect the long-term existence of the Consumers' Association, ensuring that our Council (the group responsible for managing the charity) works on behalf of all consumers, fulfilling its charitable objects.

Our charitable objects can be summarised as follows:

- to undertake, promote and disseminate impartial analysis or research into the standards of, and ways to improve, the quality, safety and availability of goods and services available to the public as consumers;
- to promote and educate consumers about:
 - laws, regulations, public policies and business practices so as to empower consumers in their everyday lives;
 - public health and in the principles of physical and mental health, and life skills including personal finance, digital and technology, horticulture and the home;
- to uphold and promote compliance with consumer laws, regulations and public policies;
- to protect and promote the safety of consumers; and
- to promote the interests of consumers who are restricted from accessing or using goods, services or data because of their youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

What does that mean in practice?

You have additional rights as an ordinary member which you don't have as a subscriber to our products and services. These are set out in the Consumers' Association Articles of Association, which you can find on our website www.which.co.uk/governance or on Companies House beta website and is available for free.

They include the fact that:

- you are entitled to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Consumers' Association, normally held in November, to hear from and ask questions to our Council and senior management team about the way we are running the charity
 - you can vote on the proposals put to the Annual General Meeting whether or not you attend. We will send you details of how to do this
 - you will receive copies of the Reports and Accounts.
- Anyone can apply to become a Council Trustee, but a Council Trustee must be an ordinary member on appointment.*

As an ordinary member

- you are included on the register of members held by the Consumers' Association and
 - you have agreed to pay an amount no more than 50 pence if the Consumers' Association were ever wound up
- We will use the details on the register of members to stay in contact with you on governance matters, including those listed above. Other ordinary members may also contact you about the Consumers' Association using your details from the register. Under company law, we are required to provide a copy of the register to people who request it provided that their request complies with the requirements of the UK Companies Act 2006.

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Commonly asked questions and answers (continued)

Will I receive dividends?

No. The Consumers' Association is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. All income of the Consumers' Association (which is generated solely from the group's commercial activities and investments) is applied in pursuing its charitable objects,

Can I transfer my rights? How do I stop being an ordinary member?

The rights of your membership are personal to you and cannot be transferred.

You can resign from being an ordinary member by notice in writing to us. If you cease to be a subscriber to Which? you will also automatically cease to be an ordinary member.

Are there any other ways I can be actively involved in what Which does?

Yes, other ways you can get involved with what Which? does are by:

- contributing to the Which? Conversation forum
- contributing to our product testing and investigations into various key consumer issues
- contributing to the Which? Members' club on Facebook
- applying to join the Which? Connect research panel

Where can I find out more about how the Consumers' Association is run and information about the role of Council (including how to apply to be a Council trustee?)

We have information about how we are run on our website: <https://www.which.co.uk/about-which/company-info>

Who should I contact if I have any questions or comments?

There is a dedicated email address for ordinary members, which can be used to send through comments or questions: ordinarymembers@which.co.uk

For any subscriber-related queries, contact details can be found on our website: www.which.co.uk/about-which/contact-us