

## Price Hikes during the Coronavirus outbreak

Businesses which hike their prices and exploit customers amid the coronavirus outbreak will be clamped down on by the competition watchdog.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said an increasing number of firms were abusing the pandemic by "charging excessive prices or making misleading claims about their products".

In its statement of 5 March, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) urged retailers to behave responsibly and said that it would consider any evidence that companies may have broken competition or consumer protection law.

As the public health emergency worsens and its impact on the economy becomes more serious, the CMA is creating a taskforce which will:

- Scrutinise market developments to identify harmful sales and pricing practices as they emerge.
- Warn firms suspected of exploiting these exceptional circumstances – and people's vulnerability – through unjustifiable prices or misleading claims. The CMA has already contacted traders and platforms regarding excessive pricing of hand sanitiser.
- Take enforcement action if there is evidence that firms may have breached competition or consumer protection law and they fail to respond to warnings.
- Equip the CMA to advise the Government on emergency legislation if there are negative impacts for people which cannot be addressed through existing powers.
- Enable the CMA to advise the Government on how to ensure competition law does not stand in the way of legitimate measures that protect public health and support the supply of essential goods and services. It will also advise on further policy and legislative measures to ensure markets function as well as possible in the coming months.

If you want to report a business acting unfairly you can do so using a form on the webpage below

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/cma-covid-19-response>