



An Coimisiún
um Rialáil Fóntas
**Commission for
Regulation of Utilities**

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Customer Care Team

Customer Charter

Introduction

The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) is Ireland's independent Energy and water regulator. We were established in 1999 and have a wide range of economic, customer protection and safety responsibilities in energy and water.

The Customer Care Team (CCT), within the CRU, is responsible for providing an independent complaints resolution service, monitoring the way in which both energy suppliers and Irish Water operate and also setting minimum guidelines they must follow in relation to set aspects of their business.

The CCT is also the first point of contact for domestic and small business customers either directly or via the customer of the CRU website www.cru.ie. The CRU is committed to the provision of a high quality service to all natural gas, electricity and water customers contacting the CCT. This Customer Charter sets out the service standards that the CCT will operate to when providing that service.

Mission Statement

The core values of the Customer Care Team are to operate in a way which:

- is fair, non-discriminatory and balanced;
- is open and transparent; and
- delivers to the highest levels of professionalism and integrity.

Our Customers & Goals

The CRU set up the CCT to assist domestic and small business customers. This Customer Charter is targeted at this group of customers. In serving those customers we have the following goals:

- to educate natural gas, electricity and water customers in relation to our role;
- to ensure that there is a high standard of protection for final customers in their dealings with licensed energy companies and with Irish Water;
- to promote customer empowerment through accessible customer information;

- to provide an independent complaint resolution service, which is easily accessible, transparent, fair, independent and simple, for energy customers with unresolved complaints against their supplier or network operator and for water customers with unresolved complaints against Irish Water;
- to examine all complaints received in a fair, non-discriminatory, balanced and unbiased manner;
- to answer queries, questions and requests for information in a prompt and timely manner;
- to provide all correspondence and published documents, whether in hard or electronic copy, in line with Universal Design¹ criteria such that it is accessible to the widest number of customers;
- to review the number and type of complaints received from customers and make recommendations, where appropriate, to the CRU in relation to trends identified to ensure continuous improvement in the area of consumer protection; and
- to ensure the Customer section of the CRU website (www.cru.ie) is updated with current relevant information.

Contacting the Customer Care Team

The CCT is committed to providing a helpful, courteous, user friendly and effective service to all customers contacting us. We will respect the principles of equality and the diversity of those using the service. We aim to provide a service to customers that upholds their right to equal treatment.

Please feel free to contact us using one of the contact methods set out below.

Email us at: customercare@cru.ie

Phone us at: 1890 404 404

Write to us at: The Customer Care Team
Commission for Regulation of Utilities
P.O. Box 11934
Dublin 24

¹ Universal design refers to the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size or disability. (Disability Act, 2005)

The Customer Section of the CRU Website

There is also a wide range of useful information available for customers on the CRU website. The customer section of the site provides customers with background knowledge about the energy industry and the public water sector. It also provides information about the customer protection measures that the CRU has put in place and what to do if you experience an issue.

There are details about how to switch your energy supplier along with a list of suppliers of both electricity and natural gas. You can also find important information about safety in your home.

Website – www.cru.ie

Accessibility

The CCT is committed to providing information using clear and simple language. The use of technical/ official terms and jargon will be kept to a minimum. The CCT will make every effort to communicate with customers who may have different requirements in a way that is suitable to the customer's needs.

Service through Irish

The CRU will make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to make contact with us through Irish.

Déanfaidh an Coimisiún gach iarracht freastal ar chustaiméirí ar mian leo a ngnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge.

Customer Care Team Service Levels

Telephone Callers

Any person who contacts the CCT will be treated equally and in a way, which is polite, considerate, helpful and effective. The CCT staff member will always identify themselves, deal with the query immediately if possible and call back within the

timeframe specified, in the original call, should the answer to the query require some research.

Responding to Customers

Whether a customer contacts us by phone, email or post, the CCT's goal is to answer queries, questions and requests for information in a prompt and timely manner. The below points set out how we aim to respond to customers that contact us.

- Initial e-mails and letters will be acknowledged within 3 working days of being received;
- our phone lines on number 1890 404 404 will be attended, each working day, from Monday to Friday between 9:00 am and 1:00 pm and 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm;
- if you contact us by telephone, we will answer promptly, in a helpful and courteous manner;
- we will endeavour to return all calls by close of business on the next working day;
- we aim to respond to customer queries and information requests within 10 working days;
- the length of time for complaint resolution is dependent on the complexity of the complaint and the requirement for a full investigation;
- we will provide our decision, in relation to the complaint, in writing to the customer; and
- the customer section of the CRU web-site will be maintained in an up-to-date manner in order to provide current information to customers.

Please Note

Staff of the CRU are not obliged to take offensive or abusive calls. In the event that a person demonstrates this behaviour our staff have been instructed to terminate the phone call.

CCT Commitments for Complaint Handling

The remit of the CCT includes the resolution of customer complaints, which have completed the complaint process of either their energy supplier, network operator or of Irish Water and remain unresolved.

Depending on the nature of your complaint, it will be handled in one of two ways.

Complaints About CRU

If your complaint relates to a policy matter or a decision of the CRU in relation to a regulatory matter we will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days of receipt and we will endeavour to issue a substantive response within 10 working days.

Complaints Against Suppliers, Network Operators or Irish Water

The CCT provide a free and easy to use complaint resolution service for customers with unresolved complaints. We will deal with all complaints as quickly as possible and provide you with an outcome that is clear and easy to understand.

There are six basic steps in our complaint resolution process and these are shown listed below.

Step 1 - Complete and Submit Your Complaint

All complaints must be submitted to the CCT in writing. Complaints can be submitted using our complaint form and should be sent to the CCT by post or email. You can find the complaint form on the CRU website or else contact the CCT and we would be happy to send you a copy.

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Tips for Completing the CCT Complaint Form

- Think about what outcome you want and how you want to put forward your argument.
- Gather any information you need including bills, letters, account details, notes of previous conversations and any other relevant documents.
- Do not send originals of related documents. Send a copy and retain the original.
- Please provide as much detail as you can – this is your chance to tell us what happened and how you were impacted.

Step 2 - CRU Check

When we receive your completed complaint form, we will contact the relevant company to check that the complaint has completed their complaint handling process. Once they confirm that it has, we will ask them to complete a report on their handling of the complaint.

Once we have confirmation from the company, we will also respond to you to acknowledge that your complaint has been accepted. At this point we will give you a unique reference number. Please quote this in all correspondence with us. It may take up to 5 working days to acknowledge your complaint due to the need to process and receive confirmation.

It is important to highlight that the CCT can only examine complaints that remain unresolved after the customer has completed the relevant company's complaint handling process. This means that if you have not completed the appropriate complaints handling process we will refer you back to the company and advise you how to log a complaint with them.

Step 3 - Provide Your Comments

Once we receive the report from the company, we will forward the complete report to you. We will ask you to review their report and respond to us with any comments. If there is anything that you disagree with or if there is any further information that you wish to provide as part of your complaint, you are free to do so.

It will normally be about 10-15 working days after we acknowledge your complaint that we will send on the company's report. We will give you a further 10 working days to come back to us with any further comments or information that you have.

Step 4 - CCT Investigation

Once the information from both sides is gathered, the complaint file is assigned to one of our agents. They will then review all of the information that has been provided. If they require any further information from you or the company, they will follow up on any particular points in the complaint.

The amount of time the investigation takes will depend on the complexity of the case as well as the volume of cases that the CCT is handling at the time.

Step 5 - Proposed Decision

Once the agent has completed their investigation they will draft a proposed decision on the complaint. This proposed decision sets out the CCT's findings and the proposed resolution. If the agent feels that there is any compensation warranted, the proposed amount will be included in the document. The proposal may also include any instructions that the CCT has for the company in order to resolve the issue.

The proposed decision is sent to the customer and the company. Both are given 10 working days to respond with any comments in relation to the proposed decision. This is the final opportunity to submit any arguments or information.

Step 6 - Final Decision

Any responses to the proposed decision will be taken into consideration. The CCT will then issue a final decision on the complaint. The decision may include details of any compensation to be awarded or any other directions to be given in order to resolve the issue.

If the CCT awards compensation, the company must make the payment to the customer within 14 days or within one billing period if it is in the form of credit to the customer's account.

We aim to issue final decisions within 90 days of receipt of a customer's completed complaint form. However this timeframe can vary depending on the volume of complaints we are handling and where a complaint involves technical issues.

Appeals

The final decisions that are made by the CCT are not subject to appeal.

Any decisions that are made by the CCT for payment of compensation, refunds or charter payments are binding on the company. Any instructions for remedial actions included in a final decision are also binding on them.

If you are not happy with the CCT's findings on any complaint then you are free to take your complaint to another forum. The Courts or the Small Claims Court may take the matter further for you.

Complaints about the CCT

If you are unhappy with the quality of customer service that you have received from the CCT you may forward your complaint to:

Director of Customer Affairs
Commission for Regulation of Utilities
Belgard Square North
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Please set out the specific aspect of our service that you are not satisfied with, in as much detail as possible. All complaints will be dealt with promptly, fairly and impartially. The CRU considers feedback from our service users as an important part of ensuring the quality of our service.

Confidentiality

It is CCT policy to use our best endeavours to hold any confidential information or data provided in confidence to us in compliance with data protection legislation, subject to the Freedom of Information Acts.