



Coimisiún um
Iomaíocht agus
Cosaint Tomhaltóirí

**Competition and
Consumer Protection
Commission**

Customer Action Plan 2017 - 2020

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
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Contents

Introduction to the CCPC.....	3
Our Commitment to the Principles of Quality Customer Service.....	5
Monitoring & Reporting	12

Introduction to the CCPC

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) was established on 31 October 2014. Our mission is “to make markets work better for consumers and businesses”. Our vision is for open and competitive markets where consumers are protected and empowered and businesses actively compete.

The CCPC has a broad mandate, with statutory responsibility for the enforcement of competition and consumer protection law. As well as our enforcement responsibilities, we have a responsibility to promote competition and consumer welfare.

We have four Strategic Goals. These are:

1. We will use our enforcement and regulatory powers to make markets work better and get the best results for consumers
2. We will promote the benefits of competition and consumer protection through our advocacy and public awareness activities
3. We will empower and equip consumers to make informed choices and assert their rights
4. We will continue to develop as a results-driven organisation that aspires to the highest standards in everything we do

Our work is implemented through the following activities:

Enforcing competition law

We are responsible for enforcing Irish and European competition law in Ireland. We conduct investigations, and civil or criminal enforcement proceedings may follow where we find evidence of breaches of competition law.

Enforcing consumer protection law

We enforce a wide range of consumer protection legislation, mainly arising from EU Directives which were designed to protect consumers at all stages of a transaction. To address breaches of consumer protection legislation, the CCPC can select from a range of enforcement tools to tackle unacceptable practices that mislead, are unfair or harm consumers in other ways.

Assessing mergers

We must be notified about proposed mergers, acquisitions and takeovers which reach a certain turnover threshold, and all media mergers. We assess whether they are likely to result in a substantial lessening of competition in the affected markets. We may approve the

transaction, block the transaction or impose conditions which will address our competition concerns.

Enforcing product safety regulations

We ensure that product safety standards are being complied with through the General Product Safety Directive and other related sector-specific regulations. We also share information about dangerous goods and enforcement measures across the EU through the RAPEX system.

Grocery sector regulations

On the 30 April 2016, the Grocery Goods Regulations took effect, placing obligations on grocery businesses in Ireland. The purpose of the Regulations is to facilitate greater certainty and transparency in the dealings between suppliers and grocery businesses. We are responsible for monitoring compliance with the Regulations, investigating complaints and, where appropriate, taking enforcement action.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

Another function of the CCPC is responsibility for assessing applications from bodies who wish to become ADR entities. We will assess whether the entity qualifies as an ADR entity within the scope of the Regulations and complies with the quality requirements. We will maintain and publish a list of approved ADR entities.

Advising Government and influencing policy

We advise the Government, its agencies and public bodies on how proposed legislation or regulations could affect markets in terms of competition and/or consumer welfare.

Encouraging business compliance

We seek to foster a culture of compliance throughout the economy by helping businesses to take active steps to comply with the law.

Informing consumers about their rights

We inform consumers of their rights by providing them with access to information when and where they need it. We also develop public awareness campaigns and participate in various forms of media to communicate our messages.

Personal finance information and education

We have a specific role under legislation to provide personal finance information and education to consumers. The actions under this remit include providing information through our consumer helpline and website, conducting public awareness campaigns as well as working on financial education programmes for schools and workplaces.

Our Commitment to the Principles of Quality Customer Service¹

The CCPC wishes to provide the best possible service to everyone who contacts us. We do this through the commitments to Quality Customer Service outlined below.

Quality Service Standards

Principle: Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

The CCPC is committed to providing a helpful, courteous and effective service to all customers. The standards of service customers can expect when interacting with us are outlined in our Customer Service Charter. The majority of customers contact the CCPC through our website or our helpline and therefore both the Charter and Action Plan are available on our website www.ccpc.ie. Both the Charter and Action Plan will be made available in hard copy, upon request.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Publish a Customer Service Charter and Customer Action Plan 2017 – 2020.	Charter and Action are available on our website and in hard copy upon request.
Encourage a customer service culture among staff through induction and training as appropriate.	Staff familiarity with our commitments as evidenced by feedback.
Ensure all staff are aware and adhere to the commitments made.	Feedback received from staff and external customers, customer service audit results.

Equality/Diversity

Principle: Ensure the rights to equal treatment, established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community). Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

¹ The Principles of Quality Customer Service are set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: See <http://www.per.gov.ie/en/qcs-initiative/>

The CCPC is committed to delivering a service that is available to all. We are dedicated to ensuring that no one is discriminated against in their interactions with us.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Ensure that all customers are treated equally in line with legislation.	Customer feedback.
Provide training to staff on equality and diversity matters, as required.	Feedback on PMDS form.
Implementation of policies aimed at ensuring equal treatment of customers.	Customer and management feedback.

Physical Access

Principle: Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

We pride ourselves in keeping our offices in a clean and safe condition, and we abide by health and safety standards. Our staff includes a Safety Officer, Safety Representative, Fire Wardens and an Access Officer. The Access Officer co-ordinates any assistance that may be needed by those who have a disability. To assist us in ensuring privacy in discussions we encourage visitors to our office to make an appointment before visiting.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Monitor and maintain the safety and cleanliness of our offices.	Offices are maintained to an acceptable standard.
Ensure appropriate meeting facilities are available for customer visits.	Customer feedback.
Address health and safety issues at regular health and safety meetings.	Number of meetings attended and issues addressed efficiently and effectively.
Maintain an appropriate number of trained safety staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate number of adequately trained health and safety and fire officers available. • Refresher training provided in line with best practice.
All staff participate in emergency and evacuation drills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire drills held quarterly. • Level of adherence of staff with emergency evacuation procedures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuation report compiled post fire drills and issues addressed efficiently.
Premises is Disability Access Certified.	Premises certified.

Information

Principle: Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on Public Service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

The CCPC has two main points of information for external customers, our website and our helpline. The website provides clear and up to date information and is designed to meet high accessibility standards. In this regard, it follows guidelines set out by the W3C (the World Wide Web Consortium). The W3C WAI (Web Accessibility Initiative) produces accessibility guidelines that are an internationally recognised benchmark of accessibility. We make every effort to communicate with people in a way that is suitable to their needs, providing information in simple language that is easily understood. Our consumer helpline is another key avenue for providing information. Its function is to inform consumers by answering queries relating to general consumer rights, personal finance products/services and competition matters.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Provide as much useful information as possible through our website and follows W3C WAI guidelines.	Customer feedback.
Use plain English written communications, keeping the use of technical or official terms and jargon to a minimum and where necessary explaining these terms.	Customer Service audits.
Ensure all website contact methods are in working order.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular functionality and accessibility checks. • All forms checked once a month. • All email addresses checked once a quarter.
Make staff information and updates on matters of interest available via the Intranet and internal newsletter where practicable.	Staff feedback regarding availability and ease of access to information.

Timeliness and Courtesy

Principle: Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of on-going transactions.

The CCPC believes in treating everyone with respect and courtesy.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Answer the telephone promptly and identify ourselves when doing so.	Customer feedback.
Ensure that when staff are out of the office, appropriate voicemail and out of office email messages are active.	Audit of absence messages by staff.
Ensure that all staff provide their contact details in any correspondence to allow for easy follow up.	Audit of correspondence.
Ensure written correspondence is acknowledged within five working days.	Audit of correspondence.
Provide a response to correspondence within 15 working days. When this is not feasible due to the need for significant investigation, research or resources we will provide an update within 15 working days which will outline the expected time frame for the response.	Audit of correspondence.
Answer queries received through social media within 24 hours during the working week.	Audit of correspondence.
Maintain and update regularly a current organisation chart on the CCPC website so that customers can easily ascertain the Section and Division with which they should correspond.	N/A

Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

We aim to provide a high quality service to everyone, however if on occasion we fail to meet the standards outlined in the Charter we have a simple and efficient complaints procedure in place, which is also outlined in the Charter.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Ensure all complaints are addressed promptly, fairly and in a consistent manner.	Audit of complaint records.
Keep customers up to date by providing information on their complaint to them on an ongoing basis.	Audit of complaint records.
Review the complaints procedure to ensure it is fit for purpose.	Complaints procedure reviewed in line with customer feedback.

Appeals

Principle: Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome of their initial complaint, the CCPC has a clear and simple appeals process. The customer can appeal the decision by writing to the Quality Customer Service Manager, and subsequently the Office of the Ombudsman.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Ensure staff are aware of the appeals process.	Staff feedback.
Ensure that the Quality Customer Service Manager acknowledges the complaint within five working days and tries to resolve the matter within 10 working days.	Audit of appeals.

Consultation and Evaluation

Principle: Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

Consultation and feedback are important to us as they help us to understand customer expectations, requirements and any deficiencies in the services we provide. We have consulted staff in the preparation of this action plan to ensure it is realistic. Our Charter includes mechanisms for providing feedback on our service delivery on an ad-hoc basis.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Encourage customers to provide feedback.	Customer feedback.

Develop and launch a Customer Service Survey to assess our performance under the Principles.	Customer Service Survey conducted.
Take action based on feedback and results.	Corrective action taken.
Use the results of the survey to form the basis of the next Plan.	Next Plan addresses issues raised in the survey.
Consult staff in the preparation of the next plan.	Staff survey to gather feedback and suggestions.

Official Languages Equality

Principle: Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Customers have the ability to interact with us through Irish if they so wish.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
The CCPC will publish a Scheme under the Official Languages Act 2003 which will detail the services the CCPC will provide through Irish, through English, through both Irish and English.	Up to date Scheme published and commitments implemented in line with timeframes in the Scheme.

Internal Customer

Principle: Ensure that employees are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

We acknowledge that CCPC staff members are also customers, and therefore should receive a similar high standard of service to that of our external customers. We are committed to supporting our staff to enable the provision of an excellent service both internally and externally.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Provide staff access to information sources to assist them in their role and encourage knowledge sharing across the organisation.	Staff feedback.
Encourage open communication and consultation with all staff.	Evidence of acting upon staff feedback, when appropriate.
Implement the CCPC's Organisation Development Strategy.	Completion of projects and tasks detailed in the Organisational Development Programme.

Choice

Principle: Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice and quality of delivery.

The CCPC makes every effort to provide multiple ways for our customers to find information about us and to contact us.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Provide a range of contact channels, i.e. letter, email, online forms, social media and phone.	Customer feedback
Meet members of the public or return calls at a time suitable to them.	Customer feedback

Better Coordination

Principle: Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

The CCPC works in partnership with a range of organisations in Ireland and internationally including business groups, sector regulators, government departments and other competition and consumer bodies across the world.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
Participate in the implementation of the Public Service Reform Programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implementation of Public Sector reform initiatives.• Participation in appropriate meetings/networks.
Enter into formal agreements with other bodies to facilitate co-operation, information-sharing and effective investigation of consumer protection and competition issues.	Number of agreements in place and usage of agreements.
Participate with Public Sector Networks where possible.	Attendance and sharing knowledge at cross body meetings e.g. NCSSA meetings, DJEI working groups.

Monitoring & Reporting

Continuous improvement is important to the CCPC. We are not happy to just operate under a set of standards. We will push for continuous improvement to ensure we provide the best service that we can. We will monitor our performance against the standards outlined to make sure we are achieving them, and take action if we are not.

In the final year of this Plan, we will develop a Customer Service Survey to assess our performance. The exact type and number of customers it will be sent to will be determined upon consultation with appropriate staff members. After collecting and analysing the results of the survey, we will draft a new Action Plan which will focus on the areas for improvement highlighted in the results.

Our Annual Report will have a dedicated Customer Service section, where we will report our progress against the set standards.