



Coimisiún um
Iomaíocht agus
Cosaint Tomhaltóirí

Competition and
Consumer Protection
Commission

Customer Action Plan 2021 - 2023

Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
Bloom House, Railway Street, Dublin 1

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1. Introduction to the CCPC

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission's (CCPC) mission is to use our knowledge, skills and statutory powers to promote competition and enhance consumer welfare. Our vision is for open and competitive markets where consumers are protected and businesses actively compete.

The CCPC has a broad mandate, with statutory responsibility for enforcing 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:

1. We will use our powers to deliver effective enforcement and compliance outcomes.
2. We will empower consumers to make informed decisions by providing information about their rights, personal finance and product safety.
3. We will be a leading voice in representing the interests of consumers and promoting competition.
4. We will continue to invest in our people, governance and infrastructure, continuously improving in a changing workplace environment.

We do our work in the following ways:

Enforcement

- **Enforcing competition law** – we enforce Irish and European competition law in Ireland. We conduct investigations and can take civil or criminal enforcement action if we find evidence of breaches of competition law.
- **Enforcing consumer protection law** – we enforce a wide range of consumer protection legislation. We conduct investigations and if we find evidence, have a variety of enforcement tools, both civil and criminal to tackle breaches.
- **Assessing mergers** – we must be notified about proposed mergers, acquisitions and takeovers which reach a certain financial threshold, and all media mergers. We assess whether they are likely to result in a substantial lessening of competition.
- **Enforcing product safety law** – we work to ensure that product safety law within the CCPC's remit is complied with. We also share information about non-compliant or unsafe goods across the EU through the Safety Gate system.

Providing information

- **Influencing public debate and policy development** – we highlight to Government and other policymakers the possible impact of proposed legislation or regulations on competition and/or consumer welfare. We also study markets and recommend ways in which competition or consumer welfare can be improved.
- **Informing consumers about their rights** – we empower consumers by giving them information about their rights through our helpline and website. We also run public awareness campaigns.
- **Encouraging business compliance** – we aim to foster a culture of business compliance by informing businesses of their obligations under the law and through our compliance inspection framework
- **Personal finance information and education** – we have a specific role under legislation to provide personal finance information and education to consumers.

Protection & Regulation

- **Grocery sector regulations** – we are responsible for monitoring compliance with the Grocery Goods Regulations, investigating complaints and, where appropriate, taking enforcement action.
- **Platform to Business Regulations** – we are responsible for monitoring compliance with and enforcement of the Platform to Business Regulations. These rules create a fair business environment for smaller businesses and traders on online platforms.
- **Authorised Credit Intermediaries** – we share responsibility with the Central Bank for regulating the advertising of credit facilities and have specific responsibility for the authorisation of credit intermediaries and for maintaining the Register of Credit Intermediaries.
- **Alternative Dispute Resolution** – we assess applications from parties that wish to become Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) entities under the ADR Regulations. ADRs aim to resolve disputes between consumers and traders out-of-court.

2. Our commitment to the Principles of Quality Customer Service¹

The CCPC wishes to provide the best possible customer service to all who engage with us.

This Plan presents the CCPC's commitments under the twelve Principles of Quality Service for Customers and Clients of the Public Service:

Principle 1: 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 consumer 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, on request.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
We publish a Customer Service Charter and Customer Action Plan 2021 – 2023.	Charter and Action Plan are available on our website and in hard copy on request.
We encourage a customer service culture among staff through induction and training.	Staff familiarity with our commitments as evidenced by staff feedback.
We ensure all consumer helpline staff are aware and adhere to the Charter commitments.	Helpline staff familiarity with our commitments as evidenced by quality reviews.

Equality/diversity

Principle 2: 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
We will assess and identify the human rights and equality issues under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty that are relevant to our functions. We will also identify the policies and practices to address these issues. In our Annual Reports we will report in a manner accessible to the public on our developments and achievements in this regard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant issues and related policies or practices identified • progress reported in Annual Reports
We will seek to ensure that any issues or difficulties in relation to physical access are addressed, without delay.	Individual customer feedback in relation to specific instances. Access Officer contact resolutions.

Physical access

Principle 3: 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 external customers 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
We ensure appropriate meeting facilities are available for customer visits.	Number of issues identified by staff, visitors or in H&S Audits.
We address health and safety issues through regular health and safety audits and communication with colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit results • Number of issues raised and efficiency of how issue is addressed
We 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.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 bi-annually. • Level of adherence of staff with emergency evacuation procedures. • Evacuation report compiled following fire drills and issues addressed efficiently.
We monitor and maintain the safety and cleanliness of our offices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offices are maintained to an acceptable standard

Information

Principle 4: 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 consumer 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
We aim to provide relevant, accessible and accurate information on our website.	Website audit results
We will conduct a full accessibility audit on our website in 2021.	Positive audit results
We will organise plain English training for staff. We will avoid legal words and jargon where we	Customer feedback

can. If we need to use complicated or legal words, we will explain what they mean.	
We ensure all online 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.
Update staff on matters of interest efficiently and effectively via the Intranet and internal newsletter, where practicable.	Staff feedback regarding availability and ease of access to information

Timeliness and courtesy

Principle 5: 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.	Low level of customer service complaints
Ensure that when staff are not working for extended periods of time, appropriate voicemail and out of office email messages are active.	Low level of customer service complaints
Ensure that all staff provide their contact details in any correspondence to allow for easy follow up.	Low level of customer service complaints
Ensure written correspondence is acknowledged within five working days.	Levels of adherence
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.	Levels of adherence

Answer queries received through social media within 24 hours during the working week, where practicable.	Levels of adherence
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Complaints

Principle 6: 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
We ensure all customer service complaints are addressed promptly, fairly and in a consistent manner.	Audit of complaint records
Keep customers up to date by providing them with information on their customer service complaint on an ongoing basis.	Audit of complaint records

Appeals

Principle 7: 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 and this is detailed in our Customer Service Charter. The customer can appeal the decision by writing to the Quality Customer Service Manager, and subsequently the Office of the Ombudsman.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
The Quality Customer Service Manager acknowledges the complaint within five working days and tries to resolve the matter appropriately within 10 working days.	Audit of appeals

Consultation and Evaluation

Principle 8: 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 areas for improving the service we provide. We have consulted staff in the preparation of this action plan to ensure it is realistic. Our Charter includes ways to give feedback on how we deliver our service.

Commitment	Performance Indicator
We will conduct a Customer Service Survey to assess our performance under the Principles.	Publication of survey results and survey results inform the new Action Plan
We will take action based on feedback and results.	Corrective action taken

Choice

Principle 9: 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
We will develop a webchat facility to enhance our customer experience.	Customer feedback

Official Languages Equality

Principle 10: 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 or Irish sign language 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.	On approval of the CCPC's Language Scheme commitments are implemented on time and to an appropriate standard
Encourage staff both formally and informally to develop and improve their Irish language skills.	Number of courses offered

Better Coordination

Principle 11: 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
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 use of agreements
Participate in relevant Public Sector networks.	Attendance and sharing knowledge at meetings

Internal Customer

Principle 12: Ensure that employees are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

We are committed to supporting our staff to enable them to provide 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 on staff feedback, when appropriate
The CCPC works with employees with declared disability on tailored training and on-the-job learning supports to assist them in the workplace.	Staff feedback

3. 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.

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