

QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE, 2015 – 2017

Customer Charter, Customer Service Action Plan, Complaints Procedure

DECEMBER 2015



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

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Section 1 – Customer Charter

Our Mission

The Department’s mission is to manage Government finances and play a central role in the achievement of the Government’s economic and social goals having regard to the Programme for Government. In this way we will play a leadership role in the improvement of the standards of living of our citizens

Values, Behaviours and Culture

In order for the successful delivery of our mission, and to ensure we achieve priority outcomes, we aim to sustain and foster a culture and related values that exemplify ethical behaviour and effective governance. These shared values drive behaviour and define a culture that support our efforts to deliver our mission in a professional, efficient, fair and balanced manner.

Integrity, objectivity, impartiality, openness, accountability, and respect are the core values to which the Department subscribes and these are aligned with those standards as reflected in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviours, the Code of Ethics and the Civil Service Renewal Plan. The values are communicated to all managers and staff and they are expected to familiarise themselves with all the relevant codes, rules and legislation governing the Civil Service including the application of the requirements in relation to official secrecy. The requirements are also relevant to former staff of the Department and special advisors.

The type of behaviours that shape our Departmental culture and enhance our capacity to do our work well in our dealings with external and internal stakeholders include:

In our Dealings Externally

- Foster the trust of the public through quality service and good communication.
- Apply the highest standards of integrity.
- Cultivate a strong service culture, take ownership and pride in our work.
- Be open, consultative and listen to and consider the opinions of others.

In our Dealings Internally

- Cooperate, share information, resources and capability to achieve common goals.
- Analyse issues impartially, examining information and evidence objectively
- Foster a positive work environment where staff are empowered to contribute.
- Reinforce a performance-driven work culture.
- Recognise initiative and continuous improvement.

- Take initiative to address issues proactively, accept constructive feedback as aid to continuous improvement.

In our Dealings with colleagues

- Maintain a motivating and supportive relationship with our colleagues.
- Give recognition where merited.
- Apply rules and conditions consistently, equally and fairly
- Implement human resource practices to support our staff.
- Value the roles and contributions of all our colleagues

Constantly Learn, Develop and Improve

- Build skills capability through effective training and the development of a learning culture.
- Develop talented staff through training and learning opportunities.
- Continuously acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Be cognisant of the behaviours and attributes needed to be effective in our roles.
- Learn from experience and improve.

The Department is committed to openness and transparency in all aspects of our work. This ranges from how we develop policy to our engagement with the public, stakeholders and the Oireachtas.

We are committed to delivering policy in as open a way as possible, consistent with the law, and to the regular and timely publication of internal technical studies, policy reviews and other relevant papers. Extensive engagement with domestic and international stakeholders, other Government Departments/Offices, think-tanks and other experts help improve the quality of our policy advice. Open policy making is substantially supported by our public consultation processes. These help ensure that policy choices are carefully evaluated in an informed manner.

Our customers

Our main customers include the Government, Minister, Dáil Éireann, other Government Departments and Offices, and the wider public sector. We also have regular contact, both formal and informal, with EU and International Institutions, journalists, academics, economists, lobby groups and to a lesser extent with the public

The Department also performs a number of important corporate and executive services for internal and external clients. These include the provision of human resource management to our own staff, the provision of a banking service to Government Departments, and the payment of salaries to serving staff as part of a shared service.

Our own staff are both internal customers and service providers to our external customers.

Our commitment to our customers

The Department of Finance is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all our customers, providing and delivering the highest quality service in accordance with the [12 Principles of Quality Customer Service](#). In doing this, we will be sensitive to our customers' particular needs and circumstances and respect their rights under equality and other legislation.

Our performance

Details of our services and the standards we aim to achieve are in our [Customer Service Action Plan](#). We will continue to monitor and evaluate our performance and publish the results in our Annual Review.

Provision of information

We will continue to make available a wide range of material of relevance and interest to our customers in an accessible, clear and timely manner on our website and in our publications. Information can also be made available through the Freedom of Information (FOI) process subject to the rules of that process.

Contacting the Department

Whether you call in person, telephone, write to or email us, we will deal with your enquiry swiftly and endeavour to provide a complete and helpful reply.

Written Correspondence

- Where appropriate, we will acknowledge all written correspondence within 5 working days of receipt.
- A full response will issue as soon as possible after receipt.
- We will write in clear language and if we use technical terms, they will be explained.
- Contact name, telephone number and/or email address will be included on all written correspondence.
- There are separate response times for dealing with FOI requests set out in law and we will adhere to them.

Email

- Where appropriate, we will acknowledge all written correspondence within 5 working days of receipt.
- A full response will issue as soon as possible after receipt.
- We will write in clear language and if we use technical terms, they will be explained.
- An automated email response will issue where staff are out of the office.
- Contact name, telephone number and/or email address will be included on replies.

Telephone Calls

- We will answer telephone calls promptly, giving our name and area of work.
- We will be helpful and courteous and provide you with as much information as possible or, where relevant, direct you to the correct area or individual.
- As far as possible no caller will be transferred more than once during a single telephone call.
- If we cannot deal with your query immediately, we will take your details and call you back as soon as possible.
- If we are not at our desk we will activate our voicemail. We will seek to respond to voicemail messages promptly and aim, as a general rule, to respond within one working day.

Visitors to our Offices

- All visitors will be treated with respect and courtesy and provided with a visitor badge as necessary.
- We will deal with your enquiries efficiently and promptly. If your enquiry is not relevant to this Department, we will make every effort to direct you to the Department or Office that can help you.
- We will ensure that our reception and meeting facilities are clean, accessible and maintained to a high standard.
- Staff expecting callers will notify reception.

Level of service to expect

We recognise that customers have different needs and priorities when dealing with the Department and may require specific commitments from us in respect of service delivery. In particular:

Customers with Specific Needs

- We will make every effort to ensure that customers with specific needs are catered for in all our service delivery.
- Queries relating to disability or access issues should be directed to the [Disability Liaison Officer](#) or the Department's Access Officers as appropriate.

Suppliers

- We will operate clear, impartial and transparent tendering and purchasing procedures in accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines.
- We will ensure that payments to suppliers are made in accordance with Prompt Payment legislation and regulations.

Service through Irish

- We will make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish.
- Correspondence received in Irish will be answered in Irish.
- We are committed to meeting our obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 (as amended), and, in particular, the commitments outlined in the Department's Official Languages Scheme (2014-2017).

Website/Social Media/Publications

- The Department is committed to the ongoing maintenance and development of our website (www.finance.gov.ie) to ensure it is accessible, informative and up-to-date.
- We are also committed to using social media as much as possible to meet the varying needs of our customers. The Department has a presence on:
 - [Twitter \(@IRLDeptFinance\)](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Flickr](#)
- We will ensure that our publications are clear, address user needs and are available on our website.

Feedback: Help us to help you

We welcome and encourage feedback on any aspect of our services. To help you do this, we will provide freepost comment cards in all reception areas or you can contact us by email at webmaster@finance.gov.ie.

Complaints Procedure

If you are unhappy with the service you receive, please let us know. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint with the staff member or section you have been dealing with, you can address your complaint to the Customer Service Officer as set out in our [Complaints Procedure](#) (Section 3). All complaints will be dealt with promptly, fairly and impartially. We will do our best to make things right if we have made a mistake. If you remain dissatisfied, you may refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Freedom of Information

The Department complies fully with Freedom of Information legislation. We will make every effort to provide you with as much information as possible informally without resort to the terms of the Act. However, should you wish to make a formal request under the Act, you should contact the Freedom of information Unit – contact details are given on the [following page](#).

A guide to accessing information under the Freedom of Information Acts is available on our website at www.finance.gov.ie/freedom-information.

Statutory Obligations

The Department is fully committed to fulfilling all relevant statutory obligations in relation to Data Protection, Equality, Freedom of Information, Prompt Payment of Accounts, and Safety, Health & Welfare at Work.

How to Contact Us

Office opening hours: Monday to Thursday 9.00am to 5.45pm and Friday 9.00am to 5.30pm

Department's Main Office	Department of Finance Government Buildings Upper Merrion Street Dublin 2 D02 R583
Other Offices	14 – 16 Upper Merrion Street Dublin 2 D02 R583
	7 - 9 Merrion Row Dublin 2 D02 R583
	Central Business Park – Block 2 Clonminch Road Tullamore Co. Offaly R35 W7A4
Telephone +353 1 676 7571	LoCall telephone 1890 66 10 10
FAX +353 1 678 9936	Web www.finance.gov.ie
Department email webmaster@finance.gov.ie	Staff email firstname.lastname@finance.gov.ie
Customer Service Officer – Valerie Robinson	customer.service@finance.gov.ie
Disability Liaison Officer – Derek Barry	disabilityliaisonofficer@finance.gov.ie
Freedom of Information Unit – John Uhlemann	Email foi@finance.gov.ie Telephone +353 1 604 5226
Please Note: The Office of the Paymaster General (PMG) Pensions has moved to the Payroll Shared Service Centre (PSSC) under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.	PMG Pensions Email PSSCPensions@pssc.gov.ie Telephone +353 76 1002702

Section 2 - Customer Service Action Plan

Introduction

The Department of Finance has had a Customer Action Plan since 1997 and a Customer Charter since 2004. It is necessary however, to revisit these periodically, e.g. when a new Statement of Strategy is produced, to ensure that customer service is aligned with the Department's objectives, and staff are reminded of the standards and customer service targets expected.

Our targets, as set out in this Customer Service Action Plan, follow the SMART (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound*) model. **They do not however, create any legal rights for customers.**

Mission and Customers

Details of the Department's [Mission](#) and [Customers](#) are outlined in our [Customer Charter](#) (Section 1).

Organisation

A summary of the organisation and work of the Department is set out below.

Economic and Fiscal Directorate

The Economic and Fiscal Directorate is made up of a number of Divisions/Offices/Units. The day-to-day management of these Divisions/Units fall under the Secretary General. The Divisions and their core responsibilities are set out in the following paragraphs.

- ***Economic Policy Division***

This Division is responsible for macroeconomic analysis, forecasting and budgetary policy. It is also responsible for developing strategies for the Irish economy, inputting to the development of sectoral and other policies that affect the economy, primary interface with the OECD as well as researching and advising on the impact of taxation policies. This Division also deals with overall budgetary policy and forecasts including coordinating the budgetary process within the EU Semester, fiscal forecasting, monitoring budget performance, analysing the impact of policy on Government finances and liaison with the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council.

- ***Tax Policy Division***

This Division is responsible for all aspects of tax policy, domestic and international. It works closely with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners, OECD and the EU on tax matters. It analyses policy proposals and drafts and prepares legislation, including the Finance Bill.

- ***International & EU Division***

This Division deals with the development and implementation of strategies at EU/Euro area level and internationally in relation to economic, fiscal and financial policy formulation and the cross-Departmental coordination of EU policy. It manages the EU budgetary process and EU economic governance. It also builds relationships through Ireland's diplomatic network and ensures that the Minister and Department is fully apprised of EU and international developments.

- **Corporate Affairs**

Corporate Affairs is responsible for maintaining the Department’s governance framework, coordinating the development of and monitoring execution of strategy and divisional business plans, providing project management services and corporate communications.

- **Human Resources Unit**

Human Resources is responsible for the development and delivery of the Departments HR strategy and the provision of a wide range of HR services to management and staff. The Departments HR strategy is focused on five key elements; Organisational Structure, Workforce and Succession Planning, Organisational Learning and Development, Performance Management and Employee Engagement initiatives.

- **Facilities Management Unit**

This Unit is responsible for the on-going day to day operations to support the Department through management of accommodation and facilities for the provision of safe accommodation and welfare facilities and maintenance of the Safety Management System. It is also responsible for ensuring that all activities are carried out within the framework of the Safety management System and Safety Statement.

Finance and Banking Directorate

The Finance and Banking Directorate is made up of a number of Divisions/Units. The day-to-day management of these Divisions/Units falls under the Second Secretary General. The Divisions and their core responsibilities are set out in the following paragraphs.

- **Banking Division**

This Division deals with strategies for the banking and payment sectors in Ireland, policies relating to the provision of credit in the economy, credit and payments regulation, consumer protection, addressing distressed mortgages and difficulties with personal and small/medium business debt. It is responsible for policies on Central Bank powers and functions and NTMA managed funding and investment strategies (e.g. NewEra or the ISIF).

- **Financial Services Division**

This Division is responsible for the development of national and EU policy and legislation in relation to the financial services sector, with the exception of the domestic banking sector. It also manages the transposition of EU directives, and is responsible for anti-money laundering policy.

- **Shareholder Management Unit**

The Shareholding Management Unit (SMU) is responsible for the management of the State’s investments the banking sector – including in Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland and Permanent TSB. The SMU is also responsible for the management of the Minister’s shareholding in the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) and represents the Minister’s interests in relation to the oversight of NAMA. SMU is responsible for

representing the Minister's interests in relation to the liquidation of IBRC. SMU also advises the Minister in relation to the Credit Union sector.

- ***Risk, Stability, Finance, Legal & Compliance Division***

This Division is responsible for the Department's Risk Management Framework in line with the governance structure. The division will, where appropriate, align and co-ordinate with National Risk Assessment structure, the Financial Stability function at the Central Bank of Ireland and the risk function at the National Treasury Management Agency, identifying, managing and monitoring the operating risk and compliance frameworks and ensuring that they are embedded in the Department. The Compliance Unit provides assurance to the Executive Board, and ultimately to the Secretary General, that the Department is operating within the legal and regulatory framework laid down within Irish and EU law as applies to the Department and bodies under its aegis. This division is also responsible for providing legal advisory services for the Department through the Head of Legal and also the central processing of Freedom of Information Requests and Parliamentary Questions. This division is responsible for contributing to the IFS strategy and its follow through in the Department and supporting the Minister for International Banking (including IFS). This Division is also responsible for transaction processing which is aggregated in the production of the Annual Finance Accounts and monthly Exchequer Statement and Annual Appropriation Accounts; the operation and management of the Exchequer Account and Paymaster General function, internal Financial Management and Reporting including for clients.

- ***International Financial Institutions Division***

This Division is responsible for managing Ireland's relationship with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and for the Department's role in Climate Change and Climate Finance. The IFIs include: the IMF, World Bank Group, European Investment Bank (EIB) and other multilateral development banks such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEDB).

Principles of Quality Customer Service

The Department is committed to providing the highest levels of service to all our customers in accordance with the 12 Guiding Principles for Quality Customer Service:

1. **Quality Service Standards**
2. **Equality/Diversity**
3. **Physical Access**
4. **Information**
5. **Timeliness and Courtesy**
6. **Complaints**
7. **Appeals**
8. **Consultation and Evaluation**
9. **Choice**
10. **Official Languages Equality**
11. **Better Co-ordination**
12. **Internal Customer**

The manner in which the Department will honour these principles is set out in our [Customer Charter](#) (Section 1).

Measuring and Evaluating Performance

Our customer service performance is monitored and measured against the 12 Principles for Quality Customer Service, our commitments as set out in our [Customer Charter](#) (Section 1) and the number of complaints we receive. Details of our performance will be published in our Annual Review (see Appendix for details). Set out below are each of the 12 Principles for Quality Customer Service with our measurements.

1 Quality Service Standards

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

Measurement

- Our [Customer Charter](#), [Customer Service Action Plan](#) and [Complaints Procedure](#) will be available at all reception points and on our website.

2 Equality/Diversity

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.

Measurements

- We will ensure that a focus on equality/diversity is maintained throughout the Department.
- We will ensure that all customers are treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation.

3 Physical Access

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.

Measurements

- We will provide clean, comfortable, accessible accommodation and comply with occupational and safety standards for all customers.
- Any difficulties in relation to access should be directed to the Access Officer (Buildings).
- Health and Safety legislation will be complied with.

4 Information

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.

Measurements

- We will ensure all information provided by the Department is clear, timely, accurate and accessible to our customers in a form that is most suitable for them.
- We will publish as much of this information on our website as possible.
- We will ensure that our website conforms to web accessibility guidelines.
- We will make every effort to ensure that information is made available in as many different formats as practical.

5 Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

Measurements

- We will ensure that all customers are treated with courtesy and that all enquiries are dealt with promptly and efficiently.
- We will ensure that all staff provide their name and section when answering telephone calls.
- We will ensure that voicemail messages are updated regularly and that all voicemail messages are responded to within 1 working day of receipt.
- We will ensure that full contact details are provided on all written or e-mail communication from the Department.

6 Complaints

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

Measurements

- We have a clear [complaints procedure](#) in place (Section 3) and this will be available at all reception points and on our website.
- We will ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- We will ensure that complaints are investigated and a reply issued within 20 working days.

7 Appeals

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.

Measurements

- Details of how to appeal decisions are set out in our complaints procedure.
- The number of appeals during any year will be recorded and published in our Annual Review.

8 Consultation and Evaluation

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.

Measurements

- Customers are welcome to submit views and comments through the webmaster (webmaster@finance.gov.ie).
- Details of our progress in relation to the operation of the Department and customer service will be published in our Annual Review.

9 Choice

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.

Measurements

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

10 Official Languages Equality

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.

Measurements

- We will publish our Irish Language Scheme.
- We will encourage staff to participate in Irish Language courses.
- We will publish selected documents (as set out in our Irish Language Scheme) in both Irish and English as outlined under our Irish Language Scheme.
- We will have an Irish section on our website as set out in our Irish Language Scheme.
- We will endeavour to have staff available to deal with any queries in Irish.

11 Better Co-ordination

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

Measurement

- We will encourage the coordination and integration of service delivery.

12 Internal Customer

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

Measurements

- We will provide the same level of service internally to our colleagues as we do to our external customers.

- As part of the induction process within the Department, information on internal and external customer service will be relayed to staff.
- We will ensure internal colleagues are supported through learning initiatives in line with the Department's Learning and Development learning framework (70-20-10 Model), with regard to service delivery.
- We will keep our organisation chart up-to-date to ensure that responsibilities are clear.

Consultation

The Customer Service Officer will monitor feedback (including complaints) from our customers and report on these in the Department's Annual Review and on the Department's website. The Department will also participate in the Quality Customer Service Network and will implement improvements are necessary.

Details of how to contact us are given in our [Customer Charter](#) (Section 1) and [Complaints Procedure](#) (Section 3).

Section 3 - Complaints Procedure

What is a complaint?

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a service or services by the Department, as laid out under the commitments in our [Customer Charter](#) (Section 1) and [Customer Service Action Plan](#) (Section 2).

How to make a complaint

If you have a cause for complaint, it should be directed initially to the relevant section of the Department. Staff there will try to deal with the issue without delay or, if the complaint does not relate to a service provided by us, direct you to the appropriate body. If you do not know the name of the person in the section to contact, or if you are unsure which body you should make your complaint to the Customer Service Officer.

If the staff of the section cannot resolve your complaint, or you are unhappy with their response, you can make a formal complaint to the Customer Service Officer, who will investigate the complaint on your behalf.

You can make a complaint in person, by telephone, in writing or by e-mail ([how to contact us](#)).

Information needed

The investigation of your complaint will be helped by providing the following details:

- Your name, address and e-mail address.
- Exactly what you were dissatisfied with.
- The name of the official or section you dealt with.
- A daytime telephone number.

Our commitments when dealing with Formal Complaints

- We will acknowledge all complaints within 5 working days.
- We will investigate all complaints and issue a reply to your complaint within 20 working days or, where this is not possible, an interim reply will issue explaining the position and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- All complaints will be treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- We will keep records of complaints separate from other records.
- We will ensure that no complaint you have made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in the future.
- We will endeavour to learn from mistakes to ensure that errors are not repeated.

Appeal Process

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Customer Service Officer, the matter may be appealed to Mr Derek Tierney. The deadlines for responding to appeals will be the same as those for formal complaints (outlined above).

Details	Derek Tierney Department of Finance Government Buildings Upper Merrion Street D02 R583 Dublin 2
e-mail	derek.tierney@finance.gov.ie

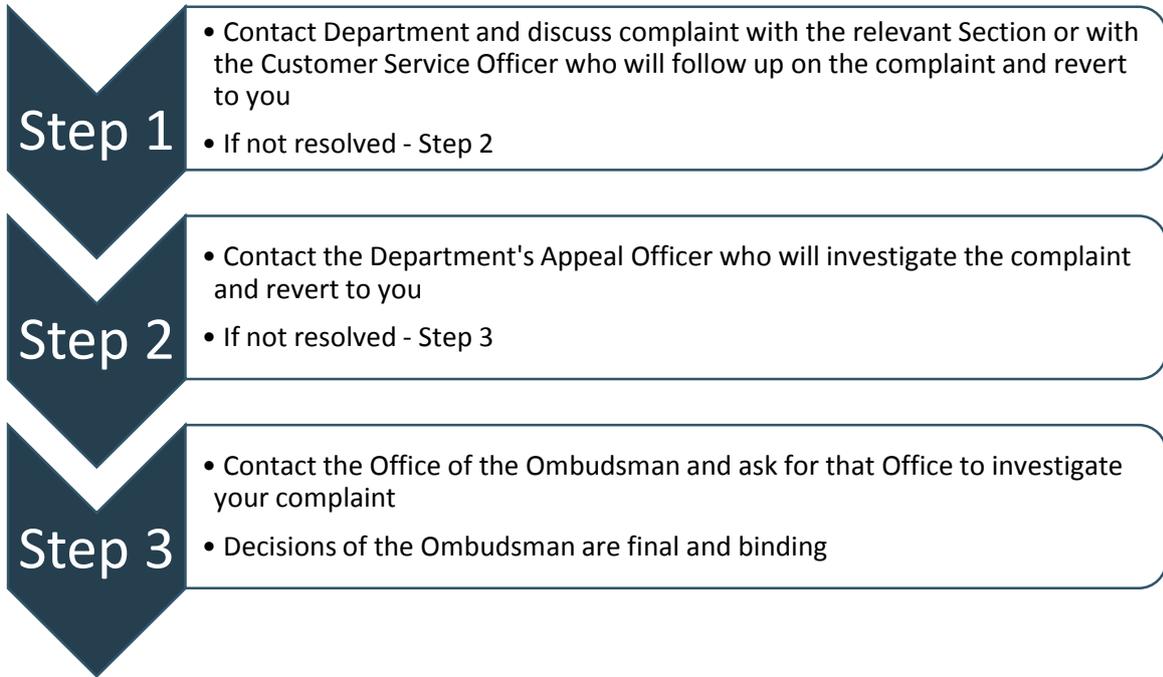
If the matter is still not resolved

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal, you have a right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is completely independent of the Government and the service is free.

Details	Office of the Ombudsman 18 Lower Leeson Street Dublin 2
Telephone/Fax Number	(01) 639 5600 1890 223 030 (Lo-call) (01) 639 5674 (Fax)
Website	www.ombudsman.gov.ie
e-mail	ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

Nothing in this complaints procedure affects your statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection, or other relevant legislation.

Complaints Process



Appendix – Monitoring and Reporting

The Department will monitor progress on its action plan and report on its commitments under this Quality Customer Service initiative in its Annual Review and on its website. Divisions are responsible for alerting the Customer Service Officer to all customer related issues, both good and bad, that are received directly in the Division.

Customer Service Report Card

Commitment	Metric/Method of monitoring	Responsible for monitoring
Feedback from public/media via Press Office (Webmaster email)	Number, type, how received	Press Office/ Valerie Robinson
Feedback received via customer representations (email/letter)	Number, type, how received	All Divisions
Feedback about Irish Language issues	Number, type, how received	Pat Leahy
Reminder of QCS Charter and Action Plan	Annual email	Valerie Robinson
Feedback about FOI	Number, type, how received	John Uhlemann
Complaints received by the Department's QCS Appeal Officer	Number, type, outcome	Derek Tierney
Complaints received by the Office of the Ombudsman	Number, type, outcome	Valerie Robinson (via Ombudsman)
Reminder to activate voicemail and out of office email message	Annual email	HR
Inclusion of QCS as part of the induction programme	Included	HR
Facilitate QCS staff training for selected staff	As required	HR