

Complaints Signposting Guide

Recommendations for
complaints signposting on
energy suppliers websites
and documentation

(Wording updated March 2018)



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Introduction

It is important that suppliers adequately signpost consumers to their complaints processes and maintain up to date information about the support services that are available to consumers.

Citizens Advice undertake regular audits of suppliers' complaints signposting¹ and provide individual reports with recommendations to suppliers. This guide is designed to help suppliers with the basic complaints signposting requirements and best practice, based off the criteria developed by the complaints signposting audit working group². It is intended as a supplementary to the relevant regulations (listed below) to give additional guidance on what Citizens Advice would expect as good signposting practice.

- The Complaints Handling Regulations 2008³ mandates that suppliers must have a complaints policy and details the minimum requirements for that policy. It also sets out what suppliers must communicate to ensure consumers can effectively make complaints and have them resolved.
- There are standard licence conditions⁴ about signposting to the Consumer Service (SLC 31.1) and consumer checklist (SLC 31.4 to 31.8) which should appear on consumers' bills and statements about obtaining independent advice and redress.

¹ [Citizens Advice 2016 Complaints Signposting Audit](#)

² Section 2.2 [Citizens Advice 2016 Complaints Signposting Audit](#)

³ [The Gas and Electricity \(Consumer Complaints Handling Standards\) Regulations 2008](#)

⁴ Section 31 in the [Electric](#) and [Gas](#) Supply licences

Website

Having clear and accessible information on websites about how to make a complaint is an important part of ensuring that consumers are treated fairly by energy suppliers.

The Complaint Handling Regulations state that, in order to be compliant, a supplier must ensure that their complaints handling procedure appears on a clear and prominent location on their website. They also require that a supplier publish their complaint performance details, and signpost consumers to where they can find the supplier's complaint procedure each year.⁵

We recommend that energy supplier's websites should include the following:

- **Have a dedicated complaints page on the website.** This should be a page hosted on the website, and not a link to a separate document.
- **The complaints page should be easy to find.** There should be a direct, easily identifiable link to the complaints page from the homepage (e.g. a link called "complaints")

Ideally the website should have a search function, if the consumer types in "complaint" the complaints page should be the top search result.

- **Clear steps outlining the complaints process.** There should be a simple step by step guide for consumers to understand the suppliers' complaints process, including contact details (for all forms of communication including phone, email and by post), timeframes and escalation pathways.
- **Citizens Advice consumer service details.** We recommend the following text:

If you need independent advice

It's important to know your rights when it comes to energy. You can get free, independent advice from Citizens Advice if you need any help. For example, they can help answer questions about your bills or meter, and check if you can get discounts, grants or a cheaper tariff. Visit citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or contact the consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06 to find out more.

⁵ Sections 11 and 12 of the [Complaints Handling Regulations](#)

- **Ombudsman Services: Energy details.** They should be described as free, independent, investigates complaints if no resolution after 8 weeks or a deadlock/final position letter has been issued. And that if the consumer accepts the Ombudsman decision their decision is binding for the supplier. Their website <https://www.ombudsman-services.org/sectors/energy> and phone number (0330 440 1624) should also be included.
- **Citizens Advice consumer service should be mentioned before the Ombudsman Services: Energy.** Both organisations should be given the same prominence on the website.

Bills, Statements and Supply Contracts.

Bills and statements are the primary means of interaction between suppliers and consumers. Supply contracts are an important first engagement with the consumer that provides key information about their agreement with the supplier.

Suppliers must inform customers that the Citizens Advice consumer service can help in providing information and advice to be compliant with Ofgem regulations. We recommend that energy supplier's bills, statements and supply contracts should have the following:

- **A dedicated complaints section.** There should be a dedicated section with a clear title that it is where the consumer can find information about how to make a complaint, including a link to the complaint handling procedures.
- **Information and contact details on how to make a complaint to the supplier, both in writing and via phone.**
- **Citizens Advice consumer service details.** This should be within the complaints section.
We recommend using the following text for bills, to cover the requirement for complaints signposting:

If you need independent advice

It's important to know your rights when it comes to energy. You can get free, independent advice from Citizens Advice if you need any help. For example, they can help answer questions about your bills or meter, and check if you can get discounts, grants or a cheaper tariff. Visit citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or contact the consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06 to find out more

- **Ombudsman Services: Energy details.** This should be in the complaints section.
They should be described as free, independent, investigates complaints if no resolution after 8 weeks or a deadlock/final position letter has been issued. And that if the consumer accepts the Ombudsman decision their decision is binding for the supplier. Their website <https://www.ombudsman-services.org/sectors/energy> and phone number (0330 440 1624) should also be included.
- **Citizens Advice consumer service should be mentioned before the Ombudsman Services: Energy.** Both organisations should be given the same prominence on the document.

Other documentation

If a consumer has an issue with their supplier it is important they have the appropriate contact details easily available.

We recommend that information about the Citizens Advice consumer service and a reference to the "[Know your rights](#)" document are included on all documentation sent to consumers (notifications of unilateral contract variation, literature around meter installations etc.). We recommend using the following text:

Independent Advice

It's important to know your rights when it comes to energy. You can get free, independent advice from Citizens Advice if you need any help. For example, they can help answer questions about your bills or meter, and check if you can get discounts, grants or a cheaper tariff. Visit citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or contact the consumer helpline on 03454 04 05 06 to find out more.

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

We help people overcome their problems and campaign on big issues when their voices need to be heard.

We value diversity, champion equality, and challenge discrimination and harassment.

We're here for everyone.



citizensadvice.org.uk

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