

Complaints Signposting Guide

Recommendations for
complaints signposting on
energy suppliers websites
and documentation

(Updated March 2020)



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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 on 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 Citizens Advice consumer service (SLC 31.1) and to the Energy Consumer Guidance (SLC 31.4 to 31.8). The Energy Consumer Guidance provides information for consumers on 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 suppliers' 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 so that, 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 supplier's 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:

Get help with an energy problem

Contact Citizens Advice if you need help with an energy problem - for example with your bills or meters, or if you're struggling to pay for the energy you use. They're the official source of free and independent energy advice and support.

Go to citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or call them on 0808 223 1133. Calls are free.

Ombudsman Services: Energy details. They should be described as a free independent service that investigates complaints if no resolution is reached after

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

8 weeks or a deadlock/final position letter has been issued. It should be made clear that, if the consumer accepts the Ombudsman decision, this 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.⁶ We recommend that energy suppliers' bills, statements and supply contracts should have the following:

- **A dedicated complaints section.** There should be a dedicated section with a clear title where the consumer can find information about how to make a complaint, including a link to the complaint handling procedure.
- **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:

Get help with an energy problem

Contact Citizens Advice if you need help with an energy problem - for example with your bills or meters, or if you're struggling to pay for the energy you use. They're the official source of free and independent energy advice and support.

Go to citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or call them on 0808 223 1133. Calls are

⁶ Section 31 in the [Electric](#) and [Gas](#) Supply licences

free.

- **Ombudsman Services: Energy details.** They should be described as a free, independent service that investigates complaints if no resolution is reached after 8 weeks or a deadlock/final position letter has been issued. It should be made clear that, if the consumer accepts the Ombudsman decision, this 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, communications around meter installations etc.). We recommend using the following text:

Get help with an energy problem

Contact Citizens Advice if you need help with an energy problem - for example with your bills or meters, or if you're struggling to pay for the energy you use. They're the official source of free and independent energy advice and support.

Go to citizensadvice.org.uk/energy or call them on 0808 223 1133. Calls are free.

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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Citizens Advice is an operating name of The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

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