

Customer Action Plan

2014 – 2016

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Copies of this Plan may be downloaded from www.per.gov.ie in PDF format.

The Department may be contacted from any part of the country for the price of a
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Foreword by the Secretary General

The provision of quality customer service is an essential element of the modern Public Service.

While the Department has a relatively small client base in comparison to other Departments, we are very conscious of the need to continue to provide the highest level of service to our customers. We are committed to ensuring that the principles of quality customer service are embedded in everything we do, in our policies and our strategies, and that this commitment extends to everyone in our organisation.

This new Customer Action Plan underlines our determination to ensure that the process of strengthening our service provision is built upon. It outlines how the commitments and standards set out in our new Customer Charter will be delivered and evaluated by us over the period 2014-2016.

We are determined to provide an excellent and continuously improving level of customer service. We will monitor closely the extent to which we reach the standards which we have set ourselves and will undertake structured and regular consultation with our customers to ensure that we are meeting their needs.

Robert Watt

Secretary General

The Department and its Customers

The delivery of effective, quality customer service is a priority area for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and forms an integral part of our overall Strategy Statement and the strategies of individual Divisions within the Department.

The purpose of this Customer Action Plan, and the Customer Charter that accompanies it, is to set out in clear and unambiguous terms how we intend to ensure that we can continue to provide all our customers with the highest possible level of service over the period 2014 - 2016. It outlines our commitment to the provision and delivery of customer service and how our performance in this respect will be measured and evaluated, ensuring that the Department is effective in addressing its mission to serve the country, its people and the Government by delivering well managed and well-targeted public spending, delivered through modernised, effective and accountable public services.

The Role of the Department

The mandate of the Department is to serve the country, its people and the Government by delivering well-managed and well-targeted public spending, delivered through modernised, effective and accountable public services. The Department provides eight main kinds of support to the Minister:

- **Expenditure Policy Evaluation and Management:** providing advice on sustainable current and capital expenditure levels, consistent with the Government's medium-term fiscal strategy; production of annual Estimates; promoting a stronger focus on value-for-money and performance information with resource allocation processes; evaluating the implications of Climate Change policies and the new funding models for the Local Government sector, State Property, Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and the operations of the National Lottery; developing and implementing policies to reduce public service numbers in line with the Government Programme; and the reduction and rationalisation of State Agencies.
- **Remuneration, Industrial Relations and Pensions Policy:** providing advice on a sustainable Public Service Pension Policy and the development and implementation of policies and initiatives including the Public Service Agreement to minimise the overall Public Service pay bill, maintain industrial relations stability in the Public Service and provide general advice on national incomes policy issues and conditions of employment with a view to enhancing competitiveness.
- **Public Service Reform and Delivery:** leading and co-ordinating the delivery of Public Service Reform in line with the Programme for Government and the Public Service Reform Plan, enabled by the Public Service Agreement. This drives a whole set of cross cutting reforms agreed by Government including: Shared Services, External Service Delivery, Business Process Improvement, Civil Service Reform and Quality Customer Service.

- **Government Reform:** creating legislation and policy relating to: Houses of the Oireachtas Inquiries, Ombudsman, Regulation of Lobbyists; Protected Disclosures (i.e. “Whistleblowing”); Freedom of Information; Ethics; Civil Service Accountability; and the Statute Law Revision Project.
- **Supporting the development of eGovernment:** developing and delivering the Government ICT and eGovernment Programmes through appropriate research, pilots, strategies, policies, technology architectures and procurement approaches.
- **Procurement and Enterprise Policy and Structural Funds:** integrating procurement policy, strategy and operations in a new National Procurement Office to achieve better value for money and reduce demand; providing advice on the sale of State Assets and issues relating to the EU and Northern Ireland such as EU Structural Funds and North/South Programme Policy.
- **Civil Service Human Resources:** developing and implementing HR policies in the Civil Service including workforce planning and policies on recruitment; promotion; mobility; secondment; redeployment; performance management; probation; equality diversity; the Senior Public Service; the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service; the establishment of the Civil Service HR Shared Service; sick leave and underperformance.
- **Providing administrative support to the Minister:** drafting speeches and reports, preparing replies for Parliamentary Questions and responding to Freedom of Information requests and other representations, often working directly with other Agencies and Departments.
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Customers of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

External Customers

The Department has a wide range of external customers and is committed to providing a quality service to meet their individual needs.

- General Public: This includes members of the public who may or may not have previously contacted the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform but are interested in knowing that if they ever need to they will be treated in a fair and equitable manner.
- Public representatives and members of the Oireachtas.
- Other Government Departments/Offices and officials of EU Institutions.
- A wide range of stakeholders from outside the public service including employers, trade unions and other representative bodies, community and voluntary groups.

Internal Customers

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform staff are customers of each other and it is important that the internal customer is acknowledged (See Principle 12 in the following section).

Quality Customer Service

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

12 Principles of Quality Customer Service

1. **Quality Service Standards**

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

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.

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.

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.

5. **Timeliness and Courtesy**

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

Provide contact details in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

6. Complaints

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

7. Appeals

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.

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.

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.

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.

11. Better Co-ordination

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

12. Internal Customer

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

The way in which the Department will honour these principles is set out in our Customer Charter (Appendix A). To ensure that our Customer Charter commitments are met, the Department has developed a number of standards and performance indicators against which we will measure our performance. These are set out in the 'Measuring and Evaluating Performance' section below.

Measuring and Evaluating Performance

The Department employs a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charter, to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers.

In monitoring our performance we will:

- Benchmark our performance against previous results.
- Seek feedback and suggestions from our customers on ways in which we can enhance our service provision and delivery.
- Consult our customers through a variety of methods, including direct interviews, discussion fora and focus groups.
- Use internal management information systems to inform our customer service policies.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable Health and Safety standards and regulations.

Service Standards and Performance Indicators

Our Customer Charter outlines in broad terms the level of service all customers of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are entitled to expect. To ensure that we can meet the commitments in our Charter, it is important that customers are made aware of the procedures and processes we use. These are defined as our Service Standards and are set out below. To further underpin our commitment to deliver the highest quality of service, the Department will use these Standards as Performance Indicators in measuring and evaluating our performance.

Quality Service

- Ensure that all customers are kept fully informed of the standards of service they can expect to receive from us, through the display of our Customer Charter in all our offices.
- Ensure that copies of the Customer Charter and Customer Action Plan are made available in all our offices and to all customers who wish to have a copy.

Equality/Diversity

- Ensure that a focus on equality/diversity issues is maintained throughout the Department.
- Ensure that all customers are treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation.
- Ensure that the needs of staff and visitors with disabilities are identified and fully catered for. For queries in relation to disability issues, customers can e-mail the [Disability Liaison Officer](#) in the Department, or Tel: (01) 669 6334.

Physical Access

- Ensure that full access to all areas of all our buildings is maintained for people with disabilities and any other customers with specific needs.
- Ensure that all areas of our buildings are clean, comfortable and comply with occupational and safety standards.
- To ensure that any issues or difficulties in relation to physical access can be addressed without delay, customers can telephone the [Access Officer](#) in the Department at: (01) 669 6334.

Information

- Ensure that all information provided by the Department is clear, timely, accurate and fully accessible for any customers with specific needs.
- Ensure that material on Department's website follows all web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and official languages equality.
- Ensure that our information distribution channels are kept as up-to-date as possible and that these channels maintain pace with the most recent technological developments and innovations in media and communications.
- Make every effort to ensure that information is made available in as many different formats as practicable.

Timeliness and Courtesy

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

Complaints

- Ensure that all complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- Ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.
- Ensure that all complaints are investigated fully and that a reply to your complaint is issued within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- To ensure that the details of your complaint remain entirely private, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform undertakes to keep records of complaints separate from other records.
- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform website has full details of our [Customer Complaints Procedure](#) . Details are also attached at Appendix B.

Appeals

- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform maintains a formalised system of appeal for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services. Customers who are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Customer Service Officer have to option of appeal to a senior officer.
- If the matter is still not resolved, the customer has the right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman. Nothing in this appeals procedure affects your statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection or any other relevant legislation.

Consultation and Evaluation

- The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is committed to ensuring that the views of all of our customers are considered in framing Departmental policy initiatives. You can forward any comments or suggestions you may have by emailing webmasterper@per.gov.ie.
- The Department is committed to ensuring meaningful consultation with customer representative groups and other interested parties and reflecting their opinions regarding the development, provision and delivery of our services.
- Ensure that the levels of service provision and delivery by the Department are properly evaluated on a regular basis.

Choice

- Ensure the availability of multiple contact options for the Department, including direct dial and Lo-call telephone numbers, e-mail and website address.
- Ensure that the Department makes full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to customers.

Official Languages Equality

- Ensure that staff are always available to cater for callers who may wish to be dealt with through Irish.
- Ensure that the Statement of Strategy and other information publications and key policy documents produced by or on behalf of the Department continue to be made available in Irish.
- Encourage a focus on Irish language training courses in staff development programmes.
- Ensure that customers who wish to deal with the Department by e-mail through Irish are catered for at eolas@per.gov.ie

Better Co-ordination

- Ensure ongoing co-operation with other Departments and Government Agencies to improve co-ordination on service provision and delivery.
- Maintain a lead role for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on those inter-departmental committees and groups on which the Department is represented and ensure strong effective collaboration on policy issues.

Internal Customer

- Ensure that a module on internal customer service is included as a key part of all Customer Service training and induction courses.
- Ensure that the training and development needs of each staff member are provided for through the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).
- Ensure the development of more effective internal channels of communication to allow staff to gain a fuller understanding of all aspects of the role of the Department.

Training

We recognise that in order for staff to provide a quality service they must be familiar with the policies and practices outlined in the Customer Action Plan and with the commitments given in our Customer Charter. We are fully committed to investing in appropriate customer service training for all staff and to regular refresher training where necessary, particularly for those members of staff in regular contact with members of the general public.

Statutory Obligations

In addition to undertakings given in our Customer Action Plan and Customer Charter, we believe it is important that all Departmental staff are aware of their statutory obligations. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 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.

Consultation

In order to monitor our performance against our customer service commitments, the Department conducts regular interviews with our main customer groups.

These interviews assess the requirements of our customers and measure the extent to which the Department meets these needs. They also measure customers' level of satisfaction with the services they have received. The results of the interviews give us a clear picture of our current performance in relation to service provision and delivery, showing how effective we have been in meeting the commitments in our Customer Action Plan and Charter. They also highlight any areas where improvements or enhancements might be possible.

The interview process is an extremely useful tool for us and a vital mechanism for consulting with our customers. We believe that through the consultation process, our customers can make a significant contribution to ongoing service development, leading to continuous enhancement of the services we provide. We welcome and value the views of our customers and, by responding to their comments, it allows us to focus appropriate resources on particular aspects of our services, ultimately serving all our customers better.

How to Contact Us

The business hours of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are Monday to Thursday 9:15am to 5:45pm and Friday 9:15am to 5:15pm.

Department Address	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.
Telephone/Fax Number	(01) 6767571 (Main Switchboard) 1890 66 10 10 (Lo-call) (01) 6789936 (Fax)
Department e-mail address	webmasterper@per.gov.ie
Disability Liaison Officer	(01) 669 6334 disabilityliaisonofficer@per.gov.ie
Access Officer	(01) 669 6334
Quality Customer Service Officer, Ms. Helen Codd	(01) 604 5388 (Telephone) (01) 604 5865 (Fax) helen.codd@per.gov.ie

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Customer Charter 2014 – 2016

Our Mission

The mission of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is to serve the country, its people and the Government by delivering well managed and well-targeted public spending, delivered through modernised, effective and accountable public services.

Our Commitment to our Customers

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is committed to providing a professional, efficient and courteous service to all our customers, providing and delivering the highest quality of service in accordance with the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service. We will treat all our customers equally and make every effort to ensure that the services we provide reflect your needs and expectations.

This Customer Charter is the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's public statement on the levels of service customers can expect when dealing with this Department. It does not seek to cover all the functions and services provided by the Department, but outline our commitment to you, the customer, and describes:-

- The levels of service you are entitled to expect when you contact the Department.
- How your input can contribute to the improvement of our services.
- How to obtain further information or make a complaint.
- How to contact the Department.

Levels of service to expect when contacting or visiting the Department

Whether you write, telephone, e-mail us or call to the Department in person, we will deal with your enquiry efficiently and promptly and treat you with courtesy and respect.

If your enquiry relates to a matter that comes within the remit of another public body, we will direct your enquiry to that body and inform you accordingly.

Written contact

- All correspondence will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.
- A full response to all correspondence will issue within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- Replies will be in clear, simple language, free from jargon and technical terms as far as possible.
- Contact name, telephone number and e-mail address will be included in all written correspondence.

Telephone contact

- Calls to the main Department switchboard will be answered promptly.
- All callers will be directed to the correct area or individual.
- All staff will identify themselves when answering, giving both their name and section.
- Any callers who must be transferred will be advised of the reason for the transfer and the area or individual they are being transferred to. No caller should be transferred more than once during one phone call.
- Voicemail messages will be updated regularly. Staff will respond to voicemail messages within 1 working day of receipt.

e-mail contact

- All e-mails requiring a response will be acknowledged within 1 working day of receipt.
- A full response will issue within 15 working days of receipt or, where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- An automated e-mail response will issue where staff are out of the office.
- Contact name, telephone number and e-mail address will be included in all e-mail correspondence.

Visiting the Department

- All visitors to the Department will be treated in a courteous manner and directed to their destination efficiently and promptly.
- We will ensure that our reception and meeting facilities are fully accessible for all our customers, comply with Health and Safety standards and are maintained to the highest standard.

Levels of service to expect when dealing with the Department

We recognise that different groups of customers will have different priorities when dealing with the Department and may require specific commitments regarding service levels.

Customers with Disabilities

- We will ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are identified and fully catered for. We will make every effort to ensure that access to all areas of our buildings and to all of our services is maintained for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.
- Any queries customers may have in relation to disability issues or physical access can be dealt with by the Disability Liaison Officer or the Access Officer in the Department (see contact details below).

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 applicable Prompt Payment legislation and regulations.

Service through Irish

- We will make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish.
- We are committed to meeting our obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 and, in particular, the commitments outlined in the Department's Official Languages Scheme.

Websites/Publications

- The Department has a responsibility to provide information on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and its activities. We are committed to the ongoing maintenance and development of our website to ensure that it is accessible, informative and up to date.
- We will ensure that our publications are clear, address user needs and are available on our website.

How your input can contribute to the improvement of our services

We welcome and value your comments and suggestions on all aspects of our services. This allows us to tailor our services to fully meet your needs and serve you better. You can make a contribution to this process.

- Inform us of your views, comments or suggestions using the webmasterper@per.gov.ie facility on our website. Tell us about the level of service you feel you have received, particularly if you feel that it failed to reach the standard you expected.
- You can help us to help you by participating in any customer survey material we send you and sharing your views and comments.

Customer Complaints Procedure

If you are unhappy with the service you have received and if the issue cannot be resolved to your satisfaction with the staff member or section you have been dealing with, you can make a formal complaint to the Quality Customer Service officer (see contact details below).

The Quality Customer Service officer will deal with your complaint properly, fairly and impartially in accordance with our [Customer Complaints Procedure](#). If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Customer Service Officer you have the right of appeal to a senior officer.

If the matter remains unresolved, you have the right of further appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Freedom of Information

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform complies fully with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 1997 (as amended). 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 e-mail the [Freedom of Information Unit](#), Tel: (01) 604 5388.

A guide to accessing information under the Acts, [FOI Guide](#), is available on our website.

Statutory Obligations

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform 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

The business hours of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform are Monday to Thursday 9:15am to 5:45pm and Friday 9:15am to 5:15pm.

Department Address	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.
Telephone/Fax Number	(01) 6767571 (Main Switchboard) 1890 66 10 10 (Lo-call) Rates charged for the use of Lo-Call numbers may vary among different service providers. (01) 6789936 (Fax)
Department e-mail address	webmasterper@per.gov.ie
Disability Liaison Officer	(01) 669 6334 disabilityliaisonofficer@per.gov.ie
Access Officer	01 669 6334
Freedom of Information Unit	(01) 604 5388 foi@per.gov.ie
Quality Customer Service Officer, Ms. Helen Codd	(01) 604 5388 (Telephone) (01) 604 5865 (Fax) helen.codd@per.gov.ie

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Customer 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.

The following procedure applies to all areas in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with the exception of the National Shared Services Office which has its own separate procedures.

How to make a complaint?

- If you have a cause for complaint, it should be directed initially to the relevant section of the Department. Our staff there will try to deal with the problem 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, our Customer Service Officer, Ms. Helen Codd, will be happy to advise you.
- If the staff of the section cannot resolve your complaint, or you are unhappy with their response, you can ask for the matter to be reviewed by a senior member of staff from that section.
- If you are still unhappy with the response, you should 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 phone or fax, in writing or by e-mail.

Department Address	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.
Telephone/Fax Number	(01) 6767571 (Main Switchboard) 1890 66 10 10 (Lo-call) Rates charged for the use of Lo-Call numbers may vary among different service providers. (01) 6789936 (Fax)
Department e-mail address	webmasterper@per.gov.ie

Quality Customer Service Officer, Ms. Helen Codd	(01) 604 5388 (Telephone) (01) 604 5865 (Fax) helen.codd@per.gov.ie
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What information should you provide?

You will help to speed up the investigation of your complaint 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.

Departments Commitments when dealing with Formal Complaints

- We will acknowledge all complaints within 3 working days.
- We will investigate all complaints and issue a reply to your complaint within 15 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.

Can you appeal?

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

Chief Operating Officer (written correspondence only)	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Government Buildings, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.
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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. Nothing in this complaints procedure affects your statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection, or other relevant legislation.

Address	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)
e-mail	ombudsman@ombudsman.ie