



Borderwise:

Consumer Issues

This information sheet aims to provide a general overview of consumer advice for those who have a problem with the goods or services they bought, or paid for, in the Republic of Ireland.



Consumer Rights

If you are not satisfied with the quality of goods or services you receive there are certain laws that can help you sort it out. In most cases traders will try to resolve the problem. However, if you are not satisfied with their response there are a number of statutory and voluntary consumer bodies that can inform you of your rights as a consumer and help you enforce these rights.



How to complain?

If you are not satisfied with the quality of goods or services you receive you should:

- Know what your rights are
- Return the goods to the supplier who sold it to you (you should not return the goods to the manufacturer)
- Deal with the issue as soon as possible
- Do not attempt to repair the item yourself or give it to anyone else to repair it
- Make sure that you have a proof of purchase



If your complaint has not been resolved to your satisfaction you may want to pursue an alternative course of action. In some areas however, there is no specific complaints mechanism. If you fail to resolve your dispute by lodging an informal complaint you may have to go to court. The small claims court is particularly useful for consumer complaints.

Small Claims Court

The Small Claims Court allows certain types of claims to be decided informally. It is not a separate court but is a special procedure which is available in the District Court in cases where the claim is less than €2,000. The procedure involved is simple and you do not need legal assistance. You go to the Small Claims Registrar at your local District Court and fill out an application form. If the amount of money involved is more than the Small Claims Court limit, then you may have to take your case to District Court (for amounts up to €6,348.69), the Circuit Court (for amounts up to €38,092.14) or the High Court (no limit).

Main Consumer Agencies

Your chances of getting your complaint resolved successfully are much better if you know your rights. The consumer agencies outlined below can inform you of your rights as a consumer and help you enforce these rights.

Going
South

The National Consumer Agency

The National Consumer Agency (NCA) is a statutory body and has a range of powers in relation to consumer information and protection. The main functions of the NCA are:

- To promote and protect the interests and welfare of consumers
- To enforce the relevant consumer law
- To encourage compliance with the relevant law
- To investigate suspected offences under any of the relevant laws
- To refer cases to the Director of Public Prosecutions where appropriate

Further information can be obtained by contacting the NCA:

Helpline: 1890 432 432 Email: query@nca.ie Web: ConsumerConnect.ie

European Consumer Centre

The European Consumer Centre provides free information and advice on your rights and entitlements as consumer within the European Union and may be able to help you if your complaint has a cross border dimension: Further information is available at: www.ecic.ie

Consumers Association of Ireland

The Consumers' Association of Ireland is a voluntary body which aims to inform, represent and protect Irish consumers. It provides an advice and information service for consumers. The Consumers' Association also campaigns for improved consumer legislation. Further information is available at: www.consumerassociation.ie/

Utilities – Gas, Electricity and Water

Water

Water charges are imposed by local authorities around Ireland. Commercial water charges are levied on all businesses in the country and must be paid to the local authority. There are no water charges for domestic users.

Electricity and Gas

The CER is the statutory regulatory authority for the electricity and gas industries. It has a number of functions which include the protection of the final consumers of electricity and gas. For further information contact **Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) Tel: (01) 400 0800**

www.cer.ie

Further Information

Where to Complain is a guide for consumers and service users to the various agencies which help you enforce your rights and the appropriate bodies to which complaints are made within particular sectors. It is available from Citizens Information Centres and www.citizensinformationboard.ie

Contact Details

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