

OUR SERVICE CHARTER

“What you can expect of us”

Our aim is to resolve disputes fairly, reasonably, quickly and informally. In this respect, we will never be able to please everyone all the time as there will always be a party that is naturally disappointed in the outcome. However, we will always aim to deliver a high quality customer service that reflects our core principles of being **OPEN, FAIR, EFFECTIVE, INDEPENDENT AND ACCOUNTABLE**.

This service charter sets out:

- Our service standards;
- What can you expect from us; and
- What you can do if we fail to meet our high standards

OPEN

- **We will communicate clearly with you.** You can expect us to communicate in a way that can be clearly understood, using jargon free language and providing clear and relevant information
- **We will provide a clear complaints process.** You can expect us to provide you with clear and easy to follow information as to our complaints process. We will also make sure that you are clear on what your obligations are, at each step our complaint process and what can expect in terms of feedback, timings involved in the process and ultimate outcome.
- **We will Listen.** You can expect us to listen to you all times and to take the relevant time needed to understand your complaint and ask relevant questions.
- **We will be approachable at all times.** You can expect us to be polite, respectful, empathetic and approachable at all times.
- **We will offer support to cater for your individual needs.** You can expect us to communicate with you in a way that best suits your needs (including via email, post, text phone, telephone) to make all information about our scheme available electronically, in hard format, verbally, in large print, in different languages and in braille. You can therefore expect us to make all necessary reasonable adjustments.

FAIR

- **We will provide clear instructions.** You can expect us to provide you with instructions and guidance on the information and evidence we require to support your claim.
- **We will explain our reasons for rejecting a complaint.** You can expect us to notify you promptly if we are unable to investigate your complaint and to explain the reasons for this.
- **We will consider both sides position.** You can expect us to be objective, non-judgmental and fair through the complaint process and to act in accordance with natural justice. In this regard, you can expect us to take account of all information and evidence you supply to us during the investigation process.
- **We will provide clear explanations.** You can expect us to explain clearly and concisely why we are asking for certain information or evidence and ultimately how and why we have reached our final decision.
- **We will provide a fair decision.** You can expect the adjudicator to make reasoned decisions in accordance with what is fair in all the circumstances, having regard to principles of law, to good practice and to any inequitable conduct or maladministration.

EFFECTIVE

- **We will be efficient.** You can expect our scheme to be adequately staffed and funded, so that your complaint can be effectively and expeditiously investigated and resolved.
- **We will require our members to act fairly.** You can expect us to have informed members of the scheme that they must have accessible and fair internal complaints procedures.
- **We will help both parties reach a resolution as early as possible.** You can expect us to endeavour to find a sensible early resolution of your complaint where possible.
- **We will ensure that our decisions are binding on members.** You can expect our decision to be binding on the trader and that in the event the decision is not honoured we will take the appropriate action available to us.
- **We will identify the main causes of complaints and feed best practice information back to the traders that participate in our scheme.**

INDEPENDENT

- **We will be impartial.** You can expect us to be completely impartial and not take either you're or the traders side.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As an ADR scheme, we must be accountable for all we do. In terms of the ‘service’ we provide we are accountable to an Independent Assessor, who independently reviews all service complaints about us.

A service complaint is about the practical handling of a case. The IA will ask questions such as: Was the correct process followed? Was the administration efficient? And did the adjudicator keep track of correspondence or case papers?

A service complaint doesn’t cover the use of judgement by an adjudicator on what evidence is needed, what weight is placed on the evidence, or whether a complaint should be upheld. The IA will therefore not comment on the outcome of a case or the facts of your original problem with the business – just how it was handled.

You can complain to the IA about the practical handling of your case if you’re the person who made the complaint to the adjudicator, if you’re the business who was complained about or if you think you’ve been affected by how the adjudicator has handled a case.

The IA is appointed by the Board of UtilitiesADR, but is not part of the day to day running of the adjudicator. The Independent Assessor will not be accountable to the chief executive/chief adjudicator or the Board of UtilitiesADR and will also be free from influence, guidance and control in respect of reviews, opinions and recommendations.