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How to complain about your energy supplier



Who to contact

If you have an enquiry or if you need advice about a problem or switching your energy supplier please contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or visit the website: www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

How do I complain to my energy supplier?

The new complaint handling standards came into force on 1 October 2008 and a greater duty has been placed on energy suppliers to resolve consumer complaints in a timely and satisfactory manner. If you have a complaint, it is important to contact your energy supplier first – your supplier will log this and attempt to resolve your complaint. Energy suppliers have to accept complaints made by:

- Telephone
- In writing (both letters and email)
- Complaints submitted via their website

Details of how to contact your energy company will be on the back of your latest gas or electricity bill (or your annual statement if you use a pre payment meter) or can be found on the Consumer Focus website (www.consumerfocus.org.uk).

In order to assist with your complaint, Consumer Focus has a number of letter templates that you may find useful. These are available on our website.

If at any stage of this process you are unsure of your rights, or if you have already contacted your energy supplier and are not happy with the response, please call Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 who will advise you further.

Consumer Direct can also send your case back to your energy supplier so they can review the complaint in line with the complaint handling standards.

If you have a complaint about your energy supplier, you should contact:

- **your energy supplier;** who should provide guidance on how your complaint will be handled
- **Consumer Direct** (www.consumerdirect.gov.uk); a free, independent advice service for all consumers

How quickly will my complaint be dealt with?

Your complaint will start from the time your supplier first receives it. Your supplier then has eight weeks (or 12 weeks for small suppliers) to resolve your complaint. Any additional information relating to the complaint you send a later date in does not extend the original time of eight or 12 weeks.

If after this timeframe you are still not satisfied with the proposed resolution by your supplier, you can take your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman (please see below).

How do I take a complaint to the Energy Ombudsman?

You can approach the Energy Ombudsman (www.energy-ombudsman.org.uk) if your energy supplier has not resolved your complaint within the eight week deadline (or 12 weeks in the case of smaller suppliers).

If your energy supplier is unable to resolve your complaint within the eight week deadline they will issue you with a deadlock letter, which will allow you to take your complaint to the Ombudsman. Your supplier may also issue a deadlock letter before the deadline if they are unable to take your complaint any further.

You can also approach the Ombudsman if you experience real difficulty in registering a complaint with your supplier.

What is the deadlock letter?

A deadlock letter may be issued if:

- There is no new information to be gained on the complaint from either you or the energy company
- The complaint escalation processes have been followed
- You and the company cannot agree to a resolution within the company's complaint procedures and having more time will not improve this position

You have six months from the issue date of the deadlock letter to take your complaint to the Ombudsman

What happens once my complaint is with the Energy Ombudsman?

Once the Ombudsman has received your complaint it will consider whether your energy supplier must take any action to put things right for you. If the Ombudsman decides in your favour your supplier will be forced to provide any of the following:

- a service or some practical action that will benefit you
- an apology or explanation
- a financial award

Your energy supplier then has up to 28 days to put in place any remedy that the Ombudsman has called for.

Further information on contacting the Ombudsman can be found on the Consumer Focus website.

What happens if I don't agree with the Ombudsman's decision?

The Ombudsman's decision is final. You have up to two months to accept the final decision, but are free to continue your complaint via other channels if you are not happy with the decision that the Ombudsman has reached.

