



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna  
Courts Service

## THE COURTS SERVICE

### CUSTOMER CHARTER 2020 - 2022

#### **Our Mission**

The mission of the Courts Service is to manage the courts, support the judiciary and provide a high-quality and professional service to all users of the courts.

#### **Our functions are:**

- to manage the courts,
- to provide support services for the judges,
- to provide information on the courts system to the public,
- to provide, manage and maintain court buildings,
- to provide facilities for users of the courts.

#### **Our Commitment to our Customers**

The Courts Service 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.

Quality Service Standards	Equality/Diversity	Physical Access	Information
Timeliness & Courtesy	Appeals	Consultation & Evaluations	Choice
Official Languages Equality	Better Co-ordination	Internal Customer	Complaints

We will treat all our customers equally and make every effort to ensure that the services we provide reflect your needs and expectations.

The Customer Charter is the Courts Service public statement on the levels of service customers can expect when dealing with the Service. It does not seek to cover all the functions and services provided by the Service, but outlines our commitment to you, the customer, and describes:-

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

#### **Unacceptable Actions Policy:**

The Courts Service is committed to creating a safe, respectful and positive working environment for all staff.

The Courts Service:

- believes that all Court Service staff should be treated respectfully by all court users and members of the public.
- does not tolerate verbal or physical harassment in any form by employees, service users, members of the public or others.

- has a responsibility to use its resources in an equitable manner. Unreasonably persistent and demanding actions can take up a disproportionate amount of time and can hinder the delivery of other services.
- The Courts Service policy on the Management of Unacceptable Actions is available on our website [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie) ([insert link](#))

### **Ethics and professionalism**

We will conduct our business to the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy.

### **Courtesy**

We will deliver our services promptly, courteously, efficiently and to the best of our ability. We will be polite and professional in all our dealings with you.

We will act with integrity, impartiality and fairness at all times.

All visitors to our offices will be treated with respect, courtesy and efficiency.

We will endeavour to do our best to ensure your privacy when you conduct business in our offices.

### **Equality and diversity**

We will deal with you in a fair and open manner irrespective of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, membership of the Traveller community and/or other social attributes.

### **Levels of service to expect when contacting or visiting the Courts Service**

Whether you write, telephone, e-mail us or call to a Court Office 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. While we are happy to provide information, the Courts Service cannot provide legal advice.

### **Written contact**

- 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 language which is understandable and concise, free from jargon and technical terms as far as possible.
- Our correspondence will identify the writer's name and position, the address of the court office, telephone number and an e-mail address.
- Contact details for each court office are listed on our web site [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

### **Telephone contact**

- Calls to our offices will be answered promptly.
- All staff will identify themselves when answering, giving both their name and their office.

- 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.
- If our staff cannot help you immediately, they will take your details and let you know when you may expect to hear from us.
- Voicemail messages will be updated regularly. Staff will respond to voicemail messages within two weeks.

#### e-mail contact

- 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.
- 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 Courts Service

- All visitors to our offices will be treated in a courteous manner and dealt with efficiently and promptly.
- We will ensure that all public areas 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 Courts Service**

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

#### Customers with Disabilities

- We are seeking to ensure that court facilities are safe, accessible and convenient to use. There will be clear sign-posting to assist your movement within court buildings.
- We aim to provide quality access for people with disabilities, including those with hearing and sight difficulties and we will endeavour to 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.
- We welcome comments from customers which might help us improve access to and within our buildings.

#### Service through Irish

- If you write to us in Irish we will reply in Irish. We will make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish.
- We publish our corporate documents in Irish (for example Strategic Plan and Annual Report).
- We will meet our commitments under the Official Language Act, 2003.

#### Website/Publications/Information

- The Courts Service has a responsibility to provide information on the Courts Service 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 promptly provide clear and correct information. In cases where we cannot release information, we will explain why.
- We will make available the Courts Service's information leaflets in all our public offices.
- We will make the Courts Service information leaflets and all court forms available on our web site [www.courts.ie](http://www.courts.ie)

**While we are happy to provide information, the Courts Service cannot provide legal advice.**

### 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.

### Consultation

- We will consult with stakeholders before implementing major changes.

### **How your input can contribute to the improvement of our services**

We welcome and value your comments, complaints and suggestions on all aspects of our services. This allows us to adapt our services to fully meet your needs and serve you better.

- You can help us to help you by participating in any customer survey material we send you and sharing your views and comments.

### **Note**

The judiciary is independent in its functions. Accordingly, any decision, finding, judgment or ruling of the courts can only be addressed through the courts. The Courts Service cannot comment on any decision made by the Court.

Certain quasi-judicial decisions can only be appealed to court (for example, decisions made by certain officials of the High Court and County Registrars).

Complaints about legal professionals or other bodies must be addressed to the appropriate organisation.

### **Customer Complaints Procedure**

The Courts Service makes every effort to ensure that the services we provide to our customers fully meet their needs and expectations and are delivered in a professional, courteous and efficient manner. However, on occasion the service provided may fall short of what you consider to be acceptable it is open to you to make a complaint.

In the first instance you should make your complaint by contacting the office manager of the relevant Courts Service Office. Where possible, he or she will try to rectify the situation without delay. If you do not obtain a satisfactory result you should make your complaint to the Customer Comments Co-ordination Office at the Courts Service, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor,

Phoenix House, 15/24 Phoenix Street North, Smithfield, Dublin 7, Email: [CCCO@courts.ie](mailto:CCCO@courts.ie) in writing using the official [Customer Comments Form](#).

All complaints will be dealt with promptly and in an objective and courteous manner. If after receiving a decision on your complaint you feel the matter has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you still have the right of appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman.

## **Freedom of Information**

The Courts Service complies fully with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act, 2014. We will make every effort to provide you with as much information as possible informally, without resort to the terms of the Act. However, if you wish to make a formal request under the Act, you should contact the Freedom of Information Unit.

### **Note**

All records created in relation to court proceedings are considered 'court records'. As these records relate to the business of the court, they are within the control of the judge concerned.

Therefore, records held or created by the Court Office, other than those relating to the general administration of the Office, are not accessible under the FOI Act. **This means that records concerning court proceedings are not accessible under the FOI Act.**

Persons wishing to have access to a court record in court proceedings to which they are a party should firstly make inquiries of the court office concerned.

Section 42 (a) (i) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 prevents the release of court records other than a record relating to the general administration of the courts, which states

'This Act does not apply to:

- (a) a record held by
  - (i) the courts, and relating to, or to proceedings in, a court, other than
  - (II) a record relating to the general administration of the courts or the offices of the courts.'

The Freedom of Information Act does not apply to court records and therefore access to 'court records' cannot be granted under the Act.

Court records are under the control of the courts and not the Courts Service, in accordance with section 65 of the Court Officers Act 1926 which states that:

'all proofs and all other documents and papers lodged in or handed in to any court in relation to or in the course of the hearing of any suit or matter shall be held by or at the order and disposal of the judge or the senior of the judges by or before whom such suit is heard.'

**Further details in relation to accessing information under the Acts is available on our website:** <https://www.courts.ie/freedom-of-information>.

## **Data Protection**

The Courts Service is committed to protection and respecting your privacy. Our Privacy Statement describes how we collect, store, use and share personal information. It also explains the rights you may have in relation to the personal information that we hold about you. The statement is available online at: <https://www.courts.ie/privacy-statement-cookies>.

## **Statutory Obligations**

The Courts Service 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 and Welfare at Work.