



An Coimisiún
um Rialáil Fóntas
**Commission for
Regulation of Utilities**

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Commission for Regulation of Utilities

Irish Water Non-Domestic Customer Handbook

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1. Introduction

This document is written by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities ('CRU') as the economic regulator of Irish Water and provides guidelines to Irish Water in terms of required levels of customer service and customer protection measures to be implemented in their business operations.

This document covers the required content of the Non-Domestic Codes of Practice.

To clarify, unless otherwise stated, and for the purposes of this Handbook, a customer is defined as anyone who utilises water supplied by or wastewater services provided by Irish Water at a specific premises. An account holder is an individual or a legal entity that has the obligation to pay for the services supplied by Irish Water to a specific premises.

General obligations on Irish Water in relation to customer service

- 1.1.1** Each Code of Practice should clearly specify its objectives and the target groups it is intended to reach.
- 1.1.2** Each Code must be written in plain English and be set out in a way that is easy to understand.
- 1.1.3** Irish Water is required to prepare separate documents with regard to non-domestic customers in relation to each Code of Practice.
- 1.1.4** Irish Water is required to apply the principles of Universal Design subject to CRU approval, when implementing the requirements of and developing the services referred to in the Codes of Practice and in all associated communications with customers.
- 1.1.5** Irish Water is required to ensure all customer communication material, Codes of Practice documents are available in appropriate formats for customers.
- 1.1.6** Copies of the Codes of Practice must be published on Irish Water's website in an easily accessible and visible location.
- 1.1.7** Irish Water will be obliged to operate in line with any other existing legislation which covers their business.
- 1.1.8** Irish Water is required to train their staff and/or agents appropriately with respect to their Codes of Practice requirements.

- 1.1.9** Irish Water must implement business processes which allow them to monitor the implementation of the Codes of Practice and report to the CRU on a regular basis. The CRU may seek to review or audit these business processes and monitoring procedures as part of its remit as the economic regulator of Irish Water.
- 1.1.10** The requirements in relation to these Codes of Practice do not apply in cases where fraudulent or illegal activity on the part of the account holder in relation to their Irish Water account and water or wastewater service supply infrastructure has been demonstrated to have taken place.

2. Key Documents

2.1 Documents requiring preparation by Irish Water

Irish Water will be required to prepare the following key documents to outline their customer service standards; as outlined in the table below to reflect, at a minimum, the requirements set out in this Handbook.

Irish Water Non-Domestic Customer Handbook	
Codes of Practice	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Metering
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Billing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Network Operations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaint Handling

3. Document Approval Process

3.1 Outline of approval of key documents

- 3.1.1** Irish Water is required to submit any amended documents listed in the table above to the CRU as required, for review and approval in advance of publication.
- 3.1.2** The CRU may approve or refuse approval of the documents submitted.
- 3.1.3** Once approval is gained documents shall be published and made easily accessible on the Irish Water website.

- 3.1.4** Any changes to approved documents must be further approved by CRU in advance of publication.
- 3.1.5** If any of Irish Water's proposed Codes of Practice are not approved, then guidelines as issued in CRU's decision on the handbook document will apply.

4. Codes of Practice Requirements for Non-Domestic Customers

The following Codes of Practice apply to non-domestic customers; however where a non-domestic customer has entered into an individual contract or agreement for water and/or wastewater services, and those terms conflict with the obligations set out below in the Non-Domestic Codes of Practice, the terms of the individual agreement/contract will supersede the Non-Domestic Codes of Practice obligations.

5. Code of Practice on Customer Communication for Non-Domestic Customers

The use of the word customer in the Code of Practice on Customer Communication refers to existing and potential customers.

Irish Water will ensure that in all of their communication with customers and in all communication formats Plain English is used and the principles of Universal Design will be applied.

Irish Water shall supply a report to the CRU on how Universal Design has been implemented within their customer communication material and processes. This report shall be provided by Irish Water as directed by the CRU.

5.1 Customer information provision overarching requirements

- 5.1.1** Irish Water must adopt a transparent and fair approach to the communication of their services and the sign up of customer and account holders.
- 5.1.2** Irish Water must take all reasonable steps to ensure all customer communications are easy to understand and accurate.
- 5.1.3** Irish Water will provide through a range of communication channels detail of;
 - a)** Pipework responsibility and ownership-with diagrammatic representation including detail on the process a customer should follow if they notice a leak or an issue with pipework on their own property or outside their own property.
 - b)** Broad guidance on group water schemes and distinction between Irish Water supplied services and group water scheme services.
 - c)** The process a customer must follow to request a new connection to the water and/or wastewater network and relevant application forms.
 - d)** How to access information on a schedule of connection charges and a clear and transparent connection charging methodology, with worked examples of the typical Irish Water connection costs for domestic and non-domestic customers.

- e) How to access information on the process a customer must follow to request information on existing water/wastewater networks, including any associated charges for the use or connection to such networks.
- f) Contact details for new connections/connection queries at Irish Water.
- g) Guidance to Irish Water Customers with regard to disposal of substances not permitted through wastewater systems.
- h) Contact details for emergencies or pipeline faults.
- i) How a customer can make a complaint.

5.2 Customer communication during supply interruptions and poor quality supply periods

For the purpose of this Code a supply interruption is any incident related to Irish Water activities or assets that causes a customer's supply to be significantly impacted. This may include a complete interruption of supply or a significant drop in pressure at the customer's premises.

- 5.2.1** Irish Water shall ensure regular up to date information is available in advance of and during planned interruptions to normal supply on the planned timing of the interruption and the anticipated time of restoration of supply. Customers that Irish Water anticipates will be affected during a planned interruption shall be notified at least 2 days in advance of the event. Notification of a planned interruption may be through direct communication with the customer or through a range of appropriate communication channels and information shall be made available to customers through telephone helplines.
- 5.2.2** Irish Water shall ensure regular up to date information is available to customers understood by Irish Water to be affected by an unplanned interruption to water supplies. This information shall be publicised through a range of appropriate communication channels and shall be made available to customers through telephone helplines.
- 5.2.3** In instances where notices that declare water unfit for human consumption are implemented Irish Water shall make provision to communicate with all anticipated affected customers through appropriate communication channels to;
 - a. inform them it is not safe to drink the water and inform the customer of any precautionary measures that should be taken,
 - b. explain the reason for the notice,

- c. highlight the anticipated duration of the notice and
- d. provide regular updates on progress to rectify the issue causing substandard supply.

Updated information on the notice duration shall be regularly publicised through social media, customer emails, regularly updated website information and local broadcasts, and shall be made available to customers through telephone helplines.

5.2.4 In instances where (for public health and safety reasons, or other emergency reasons) customers are provided with alternative supply arrangements Irish Water shall make provision to communicate with all anticipated affected customers through a range of communication channels to;

- a) inform them it is not safe to drink the water and explain the reason why,
- b) inform the customer of any other precautionary measures that should be taken,
- c) inform them where Irish Water will locate and facilitate alternative water supplies,
- d) highlight the anticipated duration of the alternative supply and
- e) provide regular updates on progress to rectify the issue causing substandard supply.

Updated information on alternative water supply duration shall be regularly publicised through social media, customer emails, regularly updated website information and local broadcasts, and shall be made available to customers through telephone helplines.

5.3 Customer communication through printed material

5.3.1 Irish Water shall make available relevant printed material upon a request (by phone, email or in writing) from a customer or potential customer.

5.4 Customer communication by telephone

5.4.1 A customer or potential customer should have the opportunity to speak to an Irish Water staff member or agent working on their behalf to find out further information about water or wastewater service supply, connection policy, metering, billing and any other relevant area.

5.4.2 Telephone contact details should be made easily visible at all times on Irish Water's website, bills and in print media.

5.4.3 Irish Water shall make provision to have sufficient staff trained and available to deal with such contact from customers.

5.5 Customer Contact in Person

If Irish Water, an Irish Water representative or a contractor working on Irish Water's behalf engages in direct communication or has a need to visit in person for maintenance or operational reasons at a customer's premises (with or without a prearranged appointment) or by personal contact, the representative must immediately and at all times after that on request by the customer:

- a)** produce an identity card that shows his or her full name and photograph and the name, business address and contact number of Irish Water. Where Local Authority staff are working on behalf of Irish Water, then they are obliged to produce an identity card that shows their full name and photograph as well as the Local Authorities name, business address and contact number;
- b)** advise the customer of the purpose of the visit.

5.6 Customer Contact by e-mail

Irish Water may send electronic mail for direct communication purposes. Where Irish Water engages in direct communication via e-mail to customers, Irish Water must provide the following information to customers:

- a)** Irish Water's name and address; and
- b)** Irish Water's e-mail address or other means of electronic contact; or
- c)** Irish Water's contact number;

5.7 Customer Contact by SMS

Where Irish Water engages in direct communication via SMS to customers, Irish Water must identify themselves in the text, by providing their name.

5.8 Account holder Sign Up

In addition to requirements set out above, Irish Water must set out in their Code of Practice clear rules around customer sign-up, and third party sign up as appropriate. In addition, when signing an account holder up Irish Water must:

- a)** Where a joint account is to be opened, Irish Water should confirm with any other named person on the account that they wish to be named as soon as possible after the initial account opening.
- b)** Provide a simple method for account holders to add a third party contact to their account.

6. Code of Practice on Metering for Non-Domestic Customers

Irish Water will set out in a Code of Practice on Metering the procedures it will take in relation to installation of new meters, testing for suspected faulty meters and the maintenance or repair/replacement of meters that may malfunction.

6.1 Installation of new meters

- 6.1.1** Irish Water will give at least 2 weeks notification and meter installation information to a customer in advance of meter installation, with at least 2 days advance notification of anticipated installation.
- 6.1.2** Installation of water meters by Irish Water will be undertaken in as least disruptive and as professional a manner as possible to the property and the surrounding area.
- 6.1.3** Irish Water shall in line with relevant legislation ensure that water meters are installed in accessible locations, where feasible, and that the meter can, where required, be read by the customer.
- 6.1.4** Irish Water will remedy any damage to a property which has occurred as a result of its /its employees'/agents' activities during meter installation free of charge to the customer. Remedy of damage to a property during meter installation shall be processed through the normal complaint handling procedures and standards (if not otherwise agreed between Irish Water and the customer).

6.2 Meter ownership and meter access post installation

- 6.2.1** Irish Water will make it clear to customers at all times where Irish Water have the authority to read the meters.
- 6.2.2** Irish Water will be responsible for all operation and maintenance tasks on metering equipment installed by Irish Water or previously by a Local Authority.
- 6.2.3** The customer may if he/she so wishes, open the meter box to inspect the meter or to isolate their water supply from the stop valve. Irish Water will be obliged to provide information to the customer on how to access the meter

wherever possible, but will not permit a customer to remove any Irish Water apparatus from the Meter Box.

6.3 Meter testing

- 6.3.1** Irish Water will facilitate testing of water meters upon request from customer. Upon request from customer to test a meter; Irish Water will conduct this test within a reasonable timeframe.
- 6.3.2** Irish Water may impose an up-front cost reflective additional charge on the customer for this service, and must notify the customer of this charge in advance so as to allow a customer to decide whether to proceed with the testing.
- 6.3.3** If the meter is found to be faulty (excluding damage caused by the customer) then Irish Water shall be obliged to refund the cost of the meter inspection and testing to the customer and repair or replace said meter at no cost to the customer.

7. Code of Practice on Billing for Non-Domestic Customers

The guideline requirements within this Code of Practice apply to Irish Water's non-domestic customers. This Code of Practice sets out the minimum customer service standards Irish Water must offer to their non-domestic customers in relation to billing.

7.1 General customer service in relation to billing

- 7.1.1** Irish Water will ensure that all bills, scheduled or otherwise, are calculated accurately based on one of the following:
- a.** Actual meter readings conducted by Irish Water Staff or its agents.
 - b.** Customer Meter Readings.
 - c.** Assumed or calculated charges (where water meters are not yet installed or cannot be installed for technical reasons).
 - d.** Estimated readings - where Irish Water has not been able to visit and/or read meter an estimated bill can be issued based on historic or assessed consumption volumes for the account holder's premises.
- 7.1.2** For metered customers Irish Water will endeavour to ensure at least one bill in any 12 month period will be based on a meter read.
- 7.1.3** Irish Water will endeavour to issue scheduled bills to customers within a reasonable time frame after the completion of scheduled meter reads for the billing period involved except in situations where the account holder has agreed otherwise or where the meter reading data appears erroneous. Every effort should be made for a prompt revised bill in the event of meter reading affecting the outcome of arrears or proposed disconnection.
- 7.1.4** Irish Water guarantees to apply the applicable discount/rebate to a customer's bill in relation to notices that declare water unfit for human consumption in line with the CRU's decision on Irish Water's Water Charges plan.
- 7.1.5** Where Irish Water becomes aware of an unexpected delay in billing an account holder that will exceed one full billing period Irish Water will contact the account holder where reasonably practicable to notify the account holder of the late billing.
- 7.1.6** Where Irish Water offers electronic billing to customers, an account holder must opt into this type of billing format.

7.1.7 Where an account holder wishes to switch back to paper billing this will be facilitated in a simple process at no additional cost to the account holder.

7.1.8 Where an error is discovered in relation to the billing applied to an account holder or the meter readings or meter number associated with an account holder, Irish Water will determine whether the account holder has been in effect over or under paying for the water and/or wastewater services supplied. Where the account holder has been determined to have been underpaying and has previously paid bills in a timely manner, the account holder will only be required to pay the balance for the previous 12 months from the date the error is corrected.

Where the account holder has been in effect overpaying and unless any law limits, restricts or prevents Irish Water from doing so, Irish Water will refund in full any amount overpaid by the account holder as established by investigation.

For the avoidance of doubt where an account holder has consistently been in arrears with their bill payments and has not engaged with Irish Water in efforts to establish an appropriate payment plan, they will not be eligible for such protection from charging errors.

7.2 Information on the bill

The bill must be clear, simple and easy to understand for customers.

7.2.1 The following information must be placed on the front page of the bill in a manner that allows the account holder to find it easily:

- a. Account holder account number and account holder name
- b. Account holder address
- c. Summary of charges
- d. Billing period covered
- e. Water Point Reference Number

Other information required on the bill

- a. Irish Water's emergency reporting contact number
- b. Irish Water general enquiries contact number and contact email
- c. How customers can register a complaint with Irish Water
- d. Property/supply address if different from account holder address
- e. Water meter number
- f. Customer tariff category and contact details for customer queries
- g. Bill frequency

- h.** Meter readings, upon which the bill is based including and an indication as to whether the readings are either i) an actual reading by Irish Water; ii) an estimate or iii) a reading submitted by an account holder
- i.** Clear breakdown of tariff charges, water consumption and wastewater/trade effluent release unit data; including any applicable discounts, rebates, allowances or penalties
- j.** Clear breakdown of any separate connection works, connection repair, meter testing etc. where these are being applied to the account holder as separate charges
- k.** VAT as a separate line item, where applicable
- l.** Information as to how customers can access their historical Irish Water bills for the previous 12 months (where data is available). The bills will contain, where relevant, consumption volumes, wastewater discharge volumes, the unit price and standing charge for services provided, and any discounts/allowances provided. This Information shall be made available to the account holder through an online system and made available to customers who enquire about their historical bills by telephone
- m.** A list of payment options
- n.** The date upon which payment is due (where applicable)

7.3 Presentation of Information on Non-Domestic Tariffs

7.3.1 When presenting information on Non-Domestic tariffs and charges, and where relevant, Irish Water must:

- a.** Display all available standard tariffs and charges on its website at all times, including information about trade effluent tariffs and charging arrangements.
- b.** Display explanatory information on applicable tariff discounts, allowances and applications or procedures relating to changes to a customer's tariff or volume consumed/discharged.
- c.** Display information on assessed charges and assessed categories.
- d.** Ensure customers who enquire about tariffs by telephone are given detail on all applicable tariffs.
- e.** Provide information on applicable VAT rates (or VAT exemption).
- f.** Show all tariffs and charges inclusive and exclusive of VAT (as applicable).
- g.** Provide information on a customer's water supply zone.

7.4 Payment Options

- 7.4.1** Irish Water may provide a choice of payment methods which will be clearly communicated to the account holder by Irish Water in their billing process.
- 7.4.2** Where an account holder is paying by direct debit then the account holder must be in line with the Single European Payment Area (SEPA) standards for notification of direct debits.

7.5 Tariffs & Prices

- 7.5.1** Irish Water will notify customers of the tariff applicable to that customer.
- 7.5.2** Where there is a change in tariffs, this will be clearly indicated on the bill and the method of application will be explained on the bill or in an accompanying insert (this may be an electronic notice where an account holder has chosen this method of billing).
- 7.5.3** Where Irish Water uses a method of prorating bills at a tariff change, this will be indicated on the bill and the methodology explained on the bill or in an accompanying insert (this may be an electronic notice where an account holder has chosen this method of billing).

7.6 Closing Account & Issuing Final Bill

- 7.6.1** The Billing Code should set out clearly Irish Water's requirements for closing accounts. This should include the steps the account holder must take in order to close their account and any liability they may have in the event that they do not close their account correctly.
- 7.6.2** Irish Water may not keep an account holder's account open because the account holder has been unable to provide the details of a new account holder.
- 7.6.3** Irish Water will, upon request from an account holder to close an account, offer an estimated read at no charge to the account holder. If the account holder does not wish to accept this the account holder can provide a self-read, or can request an account holder specific Irish Water meter read to be conducted, for which a cost reflective charge may apply. Irish Water will endeavour to conduct such a read within 10 working days of the request from customer, subject to operational capacity.

- 7.6.4** Irish Water may not keep an account holder's account open and bill the account holder indefinitely for continued consumption where the account holder has made contact to close their account and has accepted an estimated read, provided a self-read or requested a specific Irish Water read. If none of these options have been accepted by the account holder Irish Water should put in place a process for addressing this which may include engaging with the account holder until a satisfactory outcome is reached before closing the account.
- 7.6.5** Irish Water may not keep an account holder's account open, apart from when there is a requirement to collect an outstanding balance and in this case Irish Water must ensure this account is not linked to the property where a new occupant or account holder has been registered at the property.
- 7.6.6** Where an account holder has closed their account the final closing bill will be issued not later than six weeks from the effective date of account close taking place.

7.7 Arrears & Arrangements for identifying and dealing with customers in difficulty

- 7.7.1** Irish Water is required to include in their Code of Practice a section outlining Irish Water's procedures for dealing with customers having difficulty paying and the options available for these customers.
- 7.7.2** Irish Water shall be proactive in engaging early with customers who are having payment difficulties to establish appropriate payment plans.
- 7.7.3** Irish Water will advise customers to contact them at an early stage if they are experiencing difficulty making payment on their bill.
- 7.7.4** Irish Water must direct customers to a copy of their Code of Practice on Billing at an early stage during the follow-up action for non-payment of an account or for failure to keep to an agreed payment arrangement.

7.8 Payment Plans

- 7.8.1** A payment plan, whereby a staged repayment of the account arrears is agreed between the account holder and Irish Water, is a method of assisting customers who are experiencing financial difficulties in paying

their bills. Irish Water is required to assist customers in making a payment plan.

7.8.2 Irish Water must take account of the individual customer's ability to pay when agreeing any repayment arrangement, by credit or other method and confirm with the account holder that arrangements are manageable.

7.8.3 Where a payment plan has been entered into with the account holder, details of the payment plan, including a clear explanation of the new payment arrangement and any associated terms, must be clearly communicated to the account holder through an appropriate communication channel(s) requested by the account holder. Irish Water is obliged to keep appropriate records on file to demonstrate direct engagement with the account holder.

7.9 Disconnection Procedure

7.9.1 Irish Water must operate their business to ensure that an account holder's water supply is disconnected only as a measure of last resort when all other methods of arrears repayment have been exhausted.

7.9.2 For avoidance of doubt a premises shall not be disconnected where this would involve another customer being disconnected.

7.10 Information requirements to be contained in the Code

Irish Water must specify instances which may lead to the disconnection of an account holder's water supply which may include:

- a. Failure to pay a bill relating to the supply of water/wastewater services.
- b. Upon request of the account holder. Irish Water should clarify that the person making the request is the account holder, or has the permission of the account holder to disconnect the water supply;
- c. No registered occupant at the property has been established after attempts to determine occupancy /ownership;
- d. Where the customer has entered into a payment plan and that customer fails to honour that plan.

7.11 Instances where Irish Water cannot initiate disconnection of a non-domestic customer's supply

Irish Water will set out in their Code of Practice situations where disconnection or reduction in pressure of a non-domestic account in arrears will **not** be initiated by Irish Water and must include as a minimum the following circumstances:

- a. Where the non-domestic premises has a known shared supply pipe with another customer and disconnection or reduction in pressure of the non-domestic customer would also disconnect supply or reduce pressure to another customer;
- b. Where an account holder has entered into a payment plan (as applicable) and is honouring that arrangement;
- c. Where an account holder is pursuing a genuine complaint and the complaint is related to the reason for disconnection. Irish Water may not initiate a disconnection in relation to the disputed amount until the appropriate complaint process is exhausted;
- d. In the event that an account holder is disputing a bill this clause only applies to the disputed bill and not any previous or subsequent bills which must be paid as normal;
- e. For failure to pay a bill which is not related to the supply of water or waste water services; for example site works charges;
- f. For failure to pay a bill based on a regular estimate unless it is fair and reasonable in the circumstances¹, (for example, access to read a meter is refused).

7.12 Process for Disconnection due to non-payment

Irish Water must put in place an escalation process which will be followed in advance of disconnecting an account holder due to non-payment of their account. This process will include contacting and notifying the account holder they are in arrears (in writing and other formats) and providing information on arrears payment options the account holder may be able to use to avoid disconnection.

7.12.1 Where appropriate, if an account holder wishes to nominate a third party to represent them this must be facilitated, for example sole trader may nominate a financial advisor.

¹ By way of example, it is considered reasonable to request a customer's disconnection where long term refusal or lack of access to a premise is an issue and the customer has been informed. However where a customer receives an estimated read and this appears not to match the customer's normal consumption pattern the customer may dispute this and should not be disconnected.

7.12.2 As a minimum, Irish Water is required to issue at least one direct notice in writing at least 5 working days in advance of carrying out a disconnection.

7.12.3 This requirement does not apply to Irish Water customers who have individually negotiated contracts. Irish Water may provide for an alternative notification process for these customers in the Terms & Conditions of their contracts.

7.13 Format of Notice of Disconnection

7.13.1 Where Irish Water has exhausted its escalation process and intends to initiate a disconnection:

- a. Any notice sent to an account holder regarding disconnection for non-payment of their account must be sent in writing by letter.
- b. The notice must specify the reason for disconnection. However, where Irish Water is aware that a non-domestic customer has gone into liquidation or receivership the notice period is reduced to 2 days or whatever contractual arrangement Irish Water may have with the account holder.
- c. The notice must highlight any charge for the disconnection as well as any charge which may apply to the account holder if the disconnection is cancelled or no access is possible at the premises.
- d. The notice must specify the contact details of debt handling/ credit control/ or appropriate division so that the account holder may make contact. Irish Water must facilitate customers who wish to pay immediately any bill arrears after the receipt of the notice.
- e. The notice must highlight that the payment of arrears cannot be made to the persons carrying out the disconnection.
- f. If an account holder opts for disconnection it must be made clear that arrears must still be recouped and that standing or other network charges may still apply.
- g. No disconnection may be carried out on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, eve of a Public Holiday or a Public Holiday.
- h. For the avoidance of doubt, disconnections for safety reasons to prevent injury to persons or damage to property may be made at any time and are not within the scope of this Disconnection Code of Practice.

7.13.2 Irish Water must keep and maintain detailed records of all the steps taken and all considerations made in relation to the disconnection of a customer's premises.

7.14 Settlement of Arrears and restoration of supply

- 7.14.1** Where an account holder has had supply disconnected due to outstanding debt and subsequently reached a settlement with Irish Water through payment plan or payment in full, the account holder shall be entitled to have normal supply restored
- 7.14.2** Where the account holder has agreed a settlement, Irish Water will restore supply within two working days, subject to operational capacity.

7.15 Dealing with premises with no registered account holder

The Code should include a separate section setting out clearly Irish Water's process for handling properties where there is no registered account holder, and clearly identify liability for water/wastewater charges as regards the owner or occupier of such properties.

- 7.15.1** Where it arises that a property has had an account holder close an account and no new account has been registered to that property Irish Water must clearly identify the appropriate party to which liability for water/wastewater charges is transferred.
- 7.15.2** Where Irish Water is supplying a property and the existing account holder has closed their account, Irish Water must issue a notice, in writing by letter, to inform the appropriate party that they are now liable for water charges, until such time as a new occupant registers with Irish Water.
- 7.15.3** Where applicable, Irish Water will work with other agencies in identifying ownership of property receiving Irish Water services (water supply and/or wastewater services) where a property is believed to be rented to tenants and arrears have occurred.
- 7.15.4** Irish Water will make all reasonable attempts to contact the party ultimately liable for water/wastewater charges where there is no account holder registered on Irish Water's systems.
- 7.15.5** Where Irish Water intends to disconnect a premises with no account holder they must issue a notice, in writing by letter, to the new occupier of the property at least 5 working days in advance of disconnecting the property. That notice should set out that a cost will apply due to disconnection of the premises and should refer the account holder to where they can learn more about the actual costs that will apply.

7.16 Monitoring of billing issues and reporting to CRU

7.16.1 Irish Water shall monitor and collate data on, but not limited to, customers who are in arrears, are on payment plans or have been disconnected. Irish Water shall be required to report data to the CRU, as directed.

7.16.2 The CRU will use this information to inform its customer protection activity and economic regulation of Irish Water. The CRU may also, from time to time, amend the specific reporting requirements that must be provided by Irish Water.

8. Code of Practice on Network Operations for Non-Domestic Customers

8.1 Information provision on Water/Wastewater connections

In this context 'connections' refers to the water and wastewater network assets of Irish Water, and Irish Water shall have a Code of Practice that covers how customers can access information on connecting to the network and the levels of service customers can expect from their connections to the wider networks.

8.2 Operation and maintenance responsibility of pipework

- 8.2.1** Irish Water is obliged to make available on their website clear and concise guidance on the split in ownership between Irish Water assets and a typical non-domestic customer, including diagrammatic representation.
- 8.2.2** Irish Water will engage with a customer requesting clarification of pipework ownership at specific properties within 3 working days of receiving the request, and provide an answer within a reasonable timeframe.
- 8.2.3** Where a customer has notified Irish Water of a fault on an Irish Water asset Irish Water are obliged to respond to the customer within 2 working days and give an outline of Irish Water's planned action in relation to the fault.

8.3 Planned network interruptions affecting customers

- 8.3.1** Irish Water shall endeavour to restore supply to the affected customers within 24 hours of supply cut off, or as advised in planned works notification. Irish Water must meet all legal obligations with respect to providing alternative supplies to customers.

8.4 Unplanned network interruptions affecting customers

- 8.4.1** Where Customers are affected by unplanned water supply interruptions Irish Water will endeavour to restore supply within 12 hours. For large water main issues Irish Water will endeavour to return supply within 24 hours. Irish Water must meet all legal obligations with respect to providing alternative supplies to customers.

8.5 Customer asset flooding

- 8.5.1** Where a building or wider property is affected by flooding (either water or wastewater) assumed to originate from an Irish Water asset, Irish Water will attend the property affected within 4 hours of the notification and attempt to stop the flooding. Where it can be proven that an Irish Water asset had failed and caused damage to a property then Irish Water shall be obliged to engage with the customer to agree how to resolve or ameliorate the damage. Exceptions to this requirement exist for failure of assets due to extreme or severe weather events which cause reasonable design capacity of Irish Water assets to be exceeded.

8.6 Water pressure

- 8.6.1** Where a customer experiences reduced water pressure the customer can request an investigation into reduced pressure. Irish Water shall supply information as to the likely cause of the pressure reduction or agree to investigate the cause within 5 working days and communicate this to the customer directly. If after investigation the cause of the reduced pressure is likely to be as a result of leak on the customers assets Irish Water will highlight this to the customer. Where a customer is suffering reduced pressure as a result of Irish Water activity or Irish Water's assets Irish water will give advice within 10 working days as to how they intend to rectify the situation (where possible).

8.7 Out of hours service

- 8.7.1** Irish Water shall provide details of the services for customers reporting emergency situations. This must include a contact number that is available to customers 24 hours a day.

9. Code of Practice on Complaints Handling for Non-Domestic Customers

9.1 Definition of a complaint

A complaint is defined as: *The expression (through various possible channels, letter, email, phone call, physical claim) of a customer's dissatisfaction and his/her explicit expectation for a response or resolution.*

Explicit – the customer states he/she is seeking some action to address his concern, even if he/she is not able to identify and state what action is required.

For clarity a customer in this context is defined as any person that wishes to complain to or about Irish Water.

9.2 General obligations in Complaint Handling

- 9.2.1** Irish Water is required to provide an easy process for customers/potential customers to use when they are experiencing difficulties with their water/wastewater service supply and wish to make a complaint to Irish Water. The Code of Practice must set out Irish Water's complaints handling process and commitments in a step by step, easy to follow process.
- 9.2.2** Irish Water is required to appropriately attempt to resolve all relevant complaints as soon as possible in house. Irish Water is required to accept complaints from recognised agencies or third parties who are confirmed as acting on behalf of the customer.
- 9.2.3** Where requested or in cases where the customer is unsure of the complaints process, Irish Water is required to refer customers its Code of Practice on Complaint Handling and to send it to them where requested.
- 9.2.4** The Code, as a minimum, should include the following:
 - a)** An undertaking to provide the customer with a satisfactory explanation of their issue, an apology or some form of redress as appropriate depending on the circumstances and outcome of the complaint.
 - b)** Details of how to contact Irish Water to make a complaint. At a minimum a customer should be able to initiate their complaint by post, by email and over the phone.

- c)** An outline of the procedure of complaint escalation enacted by Irish Water if the customer remains dissatisfied having completed the first step in the complaints process. This will include escalation to a more senior level where appropriate. Irish Water must outline that complaints must be made in writing in order for them to be escalated.
- d)** Timescales for each stage of complaint handling and investigation with clear commitments to response times and details of any company standards and payments for failure to respond within the set time. The complaints process should lead to a response to the complaint in 5 working days with a resolution or an outline plan of the timely and specific case related steps required to achieve a resolution, under normal conditions. If a visit is required to resolve or investigate a complaint Irish Water will arrange a visit within a reasonable timeframe. In all cases the complaints process should lead to a final decision which includes an answer to the query, issuing to the customer within two months, except in cases where the customer is not engaging with Irish Water.
- e)** Details of how the CRU can assist in resolving complaints which Irish Water has not resolved to the customer's satisfaction and how the CRU can be contacted. This must include the fact that the customer must have communicated their complaint in writing to Irish Water and completed their complaint process before it can be accepted by the CRU. The CRU's contact details must appear at the end of the Code as a point of reference for unresolved complaints at the end of the escalation process.
- f)** The arrangements for making charter payments (where applicable) to customers, including details of when such payments may be due and the time limit in which the customer should receive payment.
- g)** The Code should include a commitment to making payment to the customer within a reasonable timeframe, where payment is due to the customer.
- h)** Guidance that outlines where a customer has completed Irish Water's complaints handling process and is not satisfied with the outcome, the customer will be informed that their complaint has been closed and will be referred to the Code of Practice on Complaint Handling. Irish Water shall keep a record of the final outcome of all complaints received.
- i)** Details of the roles of the CRU and the EPA in relation to complaints.

9.2.5 In the case of an unresolved complaint in relation to the quality of water supply, or pollution incidents then Irish Water will advise the customer of the EPA's role in water quality complaints and provide contact details for the EPA.

- 9.2.6** For cases of complaints which have been closed as unresolved (other than those relating to water quality or pollution incidents) Irish Water will supply or direct the complainant to all Codes of Practice applicable to Irish Water. The customer must receive from Irish Water written notice of closure of their complaint (by letter or email) including details of the CRU's Customer Care Team should they wish to escalate their complaint.
- 9.2.7** Where the CRU is investigating a customer's request to investigate a case of non-compliance with a Code of Practice Irish Water must refrain from taking follow up action in relation to any monies that are the subject of dispute. No such action should take place prior to the CRU issuing a judgement on breach or non-compliance with a Code of Practice. This does not mean that Irish Water cannot follow up additional monies accrued before or after the bill in dispute which remain unpaid.
- 9.2.8** This Code may include different complaint handling procedures for different customer categories.

9.3 Monitoring of complaints and complaint resolution and reporting to CRU

- 9.3.1** Irish Water shall at all times keep and maintain adequate records of complaints lodged with Irish Water and the actions taken by Irish Water to resolve such complaints.
- 9.3.2** Irish Water shall report on the number of complaints handled by Irish Water, as directed by the CRU. To clarify, this constitutes all complaints received by Irish Water (not only those considered valid by Irish Water) through all communication formats. The CRU will use this information to inform its economic regulation of Irish Water and will liaise with the EPA with regard to unresolved Water Quality complaints.

The CRU shall engage with and issue directions to Irish Water on the exact details to be included in such reports and the frequency that the reports shall be supplied.

From time to time the CRU may amend the content and detail that Irish Water must report on in relation to customer complaints as well as the frequency of this reporting.

10. Terms & Conditions of Supply for Non-Domestic Customers

There will be a transition period from 2014 onwards for the migration of non-domestic customer data to Irish Water and the development of an enduring tariff regime. In the meantime, the existing contracts in place between Non-Domestic Customers and the local authorities will be honoured by Irish Water.

This section will be updated in the future in line with the transition arrangements to an enduring tariff regime.