



# Customer Complaints Policy

**Policy Statement Owner:**

Victoria Keen, Director

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# 1. Aim

- 1.1. We always put our customers first and pride ourselves on delivering reliable and efficient services and the highest standard of customer care.
- 1.2. We recognise however that sometimes things can go wrong. If this happens, we want to make it quick and easy for customers to get in touch with us so we can put things right and learn from our mistakes.
- 1.3. This policy sets out our approach towards managing and resolving customer complaints.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to customers who own or occupy homes or properties connected to any of the heat networks that we provide heat related services to. This includes our fully managed service, standalone metering and billing services, meter supply, installation and commissioning, and planned, preventative and reactive maintenance services.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all contractors and other parties providing services on our behalf. We expect them to work with us to resolve and learn from customer complaints.
- 2.3. Unless there is a good reason for the length of time taken to log a complaint, this policy does not apply to complaints relating to a specific incident or service failure which occurred over 12 months prior to the complaint being made.
- 2.4. We are not able to investigate complaints about organisations or individuals for whom we are not responsible, or for services outside our control.

# 3. Policy Statement

## 3.1. We're committed to:

- Being approachable and understanding, making it easy for customers to raise any issues and concerns directly with us.
- Taking customer complaints seriously.
- Providing customers with a single point of contact for their complaint.
- Investigating complaints in a confidential and respectful manner, treating each complaint on a case-by-case basis.
- Taking responsibility and apologising when we have failed.
- Giving clear timescales for fixing the issue and keeping customers informed throughout the complaints process.
- Working hard to try and reach a resolution that the customer is happy with.

- Resolving complaints quickly to get our relationship back on track.
- Fully and accurately recording details, actions and investigations into all complaints made by customers.
- Learning from our mistakes.

## **4. What is a Complaint?**

- 4.1. We adopt the same definition of complaints as used by the Heat Trust.
- 4.2. We define a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction made to us, relating to our services or the way we have dealt with a customer's complaint.
- 4.3. Where applicable, service requests will only be treated as a complaint if we have failed to deal appropriately with the initial request in line with the site-specific service standards.
- 4.4. Service requests and performance against our service standards are recorded and monitored for performance management purposes and to aid service improvement.

## 5. Making a Complaint

5.1. Customer complaints will be accepted via any of the following means of communication:

- Telephone: 0330 324 0018 (local rates apply)  
Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm
- Email: [help@watkinsenergy.co.uk](mailto:help@watkinsenergy.co.uk)
- Online: Using the online Complaints Form on our website
- By post: Faraday House, 1 Faraday Close,  
Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 9BH

5.2 Clear information will be provided to all customers in their welcome pack and on our website [www.watkinsenergy.co.uk/complaints](http://www.watkinsenergy.co.uk/complaints) about our complaints process and how to contact us should they wish to make a complaint about our services.



## **6. Complaints Process**

6.1. There are two stages to our complaints process.

### **6.2. Stage 1: Complaint Investigation and Resolution**

6.2.1. We aim to respond to Stage 1 complaints as soon as possible and no later than 10 working days from receipt.

6.2.2. For complaints made by telephone, wherever possible, we will always try to resolve the issue there and then with the customer.

6.2.3. We will acknowledge receipt of complaints within 2 working days and issue a unique reference number to the customer for the complaint, which will be used throughout the complaints process.

6.2.4. Upon receipt, complaints will be allocated to a named person who will be responsible for looking into and resolving the complaint. As far as is possible, this person will be the

sole point of contact for the customer throughout the first stage of the complaints process.

- 6.2.5. Upon being assigned a complaint, the named person must contact the customer, using their preferred method of communication, to personally acknowledge the complaint. They will make sure that they fully understand the issue and the outcome that the customer is looking for. The frequency and preferred method of receiving updates should also be agreed.
- 6.2.6. Within 10 working days of having received the complaint the customer will be contacted to update them on our findings and to propose a solution to the problem.
- 6.2.7. When trying to resolve a complaint, we will provide an explanation of what went wrong, do everything we can to put things right and apologise if we have made a mistake.
- 6.2.8. If the complaint refers to one of our service standards and the customer lives in a home

connected to a heat network where we offer Guaranteed Service Payments, we will award the customer the relevant Guaranteed Service Payment. This will be credited directly to the customer's heat account within 31 days of the payment being approved.

- 6.2.9. At no point will any compensation be considered to cover loss of earnings.
- 6.2.10. If we are unable to provide a full response within our target timescales, we will advise the customer as soon as we are aware that additional time will be required. We will provide an indication of how long we think it will take to complete our investigation and we will ask the customer how frequently they would like us to provide them with updates.
- 6.2.11. If the issue cannot be resolved immediately, the resolution may take the form of an action plan which we will look to agree with the customer. The action plan will set out

the steps we are going to take to resolve the problem, with clear timescales.

- 6.2.12. We aim to resolve all complaints at Stage 1 of our complaints process. If the customer is not happy with the proposed resolution and/or is not happy with how we have handled their complaint, they can ask for the complaint to be escalated for senior management review.

### **6.3. Stage 2: Senior Management Review**

- 6.3.1. If looking to escalate a complaint for senior management review, the customer must be very clear on what aspects of their original complaint remain outstanding or have not been addressed. The customer will also need to be clear on their desired outcome.
- 6.3.2. An internal investigation into how the original complaint was handled and the proposed resolution will be carried out by senior management.

- 6.3.3. The senior manager looking into the complaint will be responsible for:
- Engaging with the customer to understand the issue and the resolution that they are looking for,
  - Reviewing details of the investigation carried out in Stage 1 of the complaints process and any action taken, and
  - Identifying any additional action that may be required to resolve the complaint.
- 6.3.4. Within 10 working days, the senior manager will be required to reach a decision and to send a written response to the customer summarising their findings.
- 6.3.5. If it is found that the complaint was not handled how we would have liked, a new solution may be offered.
- 6.3.6. Where the decision is reached that no further action is required and it is felt that all reasonable and appropriate measures have

been taken, the customer will be informed that they have reached the end of our complaints process. If the customer remains unhappy with the outcome, they can ask for a final response or deadlock letter.

6.3.7. This is the final stage of our internal complaints process.

6.4 We will work with customers to try and resolve all complaints to the customer's satisfaction within 8 weeks.

## **7. Independent Complaint Review**

- 7.1 If after we have made a final decision the customer still isn't satisfied, or if their complaint has not been fully resolved in eight weeks, then the customer can ask for a final response or deadlock letter. In this, we will explain that we have not been able to resolve the issue to the customer's satisfaction, recapping what has happened and what we have suggested. We will also provide the customer with contact details for independent organisations who will be able to review the complaint and advise.
- 7.2 For heat networks registered with the Heat Trust, once eight weeks have passed, customers will be able to escalate their complaint free of charge to the Energy Ombudsman. Contact details for the Energy Ombudsman will be provided to customers in the deadlock letter.

## **8. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

- 8.1 At Watkins Energy we treat all complaints as an opportunity to learn from our mistakes and to improve the services we provide to our customers.
- 8.2 All complaints are recorded and senior management meet monthly to review the volume and nature of complaints. This allows us to identify any trends and immediate areas for improvement.
- 8.3 As an organisation that is registered with the Heat Trust, for all our Registered Site we are required to report bi-annually on the number of complaints received by type, number of complaints resolved and timescales for resolving, and the number of deadlock letters issued. The Heat Trust closely monitors the performance of Registered Participants and will investigate and take disciplinary action where performance falls below that expected.
- 8.4 As a minimum, this policy will be reviewed once a year or in response to changes to the Heat Trust



Scheme Rules, or the introduction of new regulation directly affecting the services we provide.

## 9. Contacting Us

Whatever you need, we're here to help.

Get in touch today to talk to one of our friendly Customer Care Team.

- **Telephone:**

0330 324 0018 (local rates apply)

Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

- **Email:**

[help@watkinsenergy.co.uk](mailto:help@watkinsenergy.co.uk)

- **In writing:**

Faraday House, 1 Faraday Close

Eastbourne

East Sussex, BN22 9BH

For more information about our services check out our website which has lots of useful information, tips and answers to frequently asked questions:

[www.watkinsenergy.co.uk](http://www.watkinsenergy.co.uk)