



Office of the Director of
**Telecommunications
Regulation**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Telecoms Regulator to Consult on procedures for handling Consumer Complaints by Telecoms Operators.

Etain Doyle, Telecoms Regulator today (14th May 2001) initiated a consultation on Codes of Conduct for the handling of Consumer Complaints by Telecommunications Operators.

According to the Regulator “Scope exists for considerable improvement in handling consumer complaints by the operators. Increased effort must be put into the provision of high quality services and prompt delivery and repair. While all telecoms and mobile licensees are required to implement a code of practice for handling consumer complaints I believe there is merit in exploring the possibility of setting minimum criteria which would be included in such codes.”

The criteria proposed for inclusion in the code cover how complaints are handled from the first point of contact at which the complaint is lodged to its final resolution. The code would provide consumers with practical guidelines for the step by step handling of a complaint as well as informing them as to the level of service they can expect from the operator handling it.

She continued “Improved practices for the resolution of consumer complaints would benefit both customers and operators. Standardised criteria would ensure that consumers are in a position to expect a similar approach to complaint handling across all operators and would be a useful development in a competitive market where

consumers are switching service providers. Operators would also gain a competitive advantage from providing superior customer service.”

The ODTR receives approximately 60 complaints a month from the general public and their representatives concerning the level of service provided by their telecom operators. Most of these complaints are from residential customers who are not satisfied with the response they have received from their operator on foot of a particular complaint. Complaints regarding the fixed line services vary in nature but the majority relate to billing. Other complaints include delay in connection of new services, quality of new and existing connections and service disconnection. Most of the complaints regarding mobile operators relate to billing, coverage, mobile contracts and network faults such as drop out and congestion.

The ODTR will take up substantiated complaints on behalf of consumers who have first attempted to resolve the issue with the operator in question. However the ODTR is not the first port of call for a dissatisfied customer. The onus should be on each company to have in place an effective complaint handling system and encourage better delivery of service for all customers. The introduction of minimum criteria should reduce the need for consumers to seek redress from third parties such as the ODTR.

The consultation will run from 14th May 2001 to the 15th June 2001. The Director of Telecommunications Regulation welcomes comments from interested parties, in particular, consumers and their representative organisations. The full consultation paper is available on the ODTR website www.odtr.ie “ 01/34 Codes of Practice for handling Consumer Complaints by Telecommunications Operators.”

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Issued by
Brighid Smyth
Public Affairs Manager
ODTR

Ph: 01 8049639
Mobile: 086 8270905