

How do I make a complaint to my energy supplier?



Having trouble with your energy supplier? Lots of us do.

Here's what to do if you want to make a complaint.

Making a complaint to your gas or electricity supplier can be frustrating, especially, if like most of us, you're unfamiliar with your energy company's processes.

Our advice line deals with thousands of cases a year where people haven't received the right service from their energy company. In many of these cases we recommend that the customer makes a formal complaint.

You can raise a complaint via phone, email, online chat or letter. However, if possible, and you have access to the internet, we recommend Resolver (www.resolver.co.uk) for raising and following up complaints – though not all energy companies use this service.

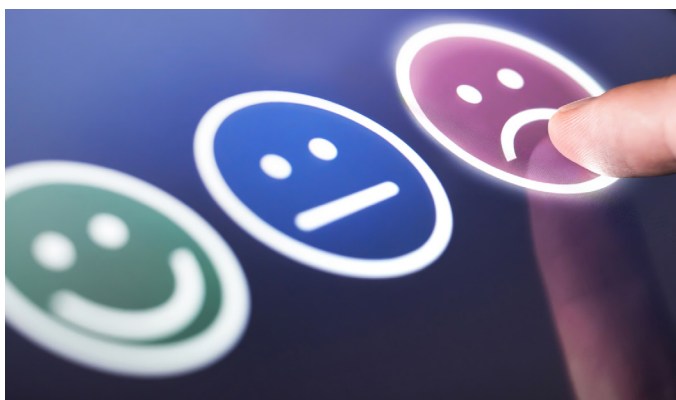
Resolver is a free online and independent tool for resolving issues between customers and organisations like energy companies. They will help you to write the complaint letter, let you know your rights and guide you through the complaints process.

They will also support you to take your complaint to the Energy Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the response from your supplier. Even if you raised your complaint directly to the supplier you can still use Resolver to follow up on your complaint.

Reasons to complain

There are many reasons why you might want to raise a formal complaint with your gas or electricity supplier. Some of the most common are when they:

- Don't turn up to an appointment, for example to check the meter
- Fail to provide information or to contact you within the specified time.
- Make a billing mistake that was not your fault.
- Cause you unnecessary distress and confusion.
- Refuse to offer you an affordable payment plan.



Poor customer service is one of the most common reasons why people make a complaint to their energy supplier.

- Give you poor customer service.

This list isn't exhaustive, and you can complain about more than one thing at a time.

Suppliers deal with complaints all the time. And it's in their interests to do it well, as it helps them improve their standards, and will strengthen consumers' trust in the energy market.

Note that they have set procedures that they must follow regardless of how you make the complaint. And you'll get the same result if you are polite as you will if you're angry.

Getting ready

Before contacting your supplier to complain, it's a good idea to make notes so that you are clear and remember everything you want to say. You might want to include some or all of the following:

- What you would like your supplier to do to resolve the issue.
- A brief outline of what happened, when it happened and how you were affected.
- Any evidence, like photos of meter readings, or bank statements showing payments.
- Information on any vulnerable people living in the house, for example anyone over 60 or under 5, or who has a physical or mental health issues, or who has difficulty understanding English.

You will also need to have your account number handy, and a current meter reading even if you have a smart meter.

If you're complaining on someone else's behalf, remember to have their address and phone number ready.

What you can ask your supplier to do

You can ask your supplier for different ways to fix your problem. For example:

- If you owe them money, that they stop sending you demands for 30 days while you seek debt advice.
- Your bills to be sent on time, every time.
- An updated bill that shows you what you owe.
- Copies of all of your past bills, payments and contracts.
- A payment plan that you can afford, if you owe your supplier money.
- A smart meter to be installed, or for someone to come to your house to read your meter every three months if you can't read it yourself.
- Your bills to be investigated if you think something is wrong.
- Compensation and an apology if you've been treated unfairly.

Priority services register

It is important to tell your supplier if anyone in your home could be considered vulnerable – for example if they have physical or mental health issues, if they are over 60 or under 5, or if they have difficulty understanding English.

If your supplier knows about vulnerabilities in your household, this can add weight to your complaint. And going forward, you may receive better service or a more affordable debt repayment plan.

Read more about energy companies' priority services registers on our website at www.cse.org.uk/psr.



Complaining by email or letter

To raise a complaint directly with your supplier by email or letter, take the following steps:

- 1 Find your energy company's email or postal address on your bill or on their website.
- 2 Make it clear in the first paragraph or heading that you wish to raise a complaint.
- 3 Include all the information you have prepared before making the complaint (as listed above).
- 4 Ask them to let you know that they have received your complaint and for a complaint reference number.

Complaining over the phone

You can find your energy supplier's phone number on your bill or on their website.

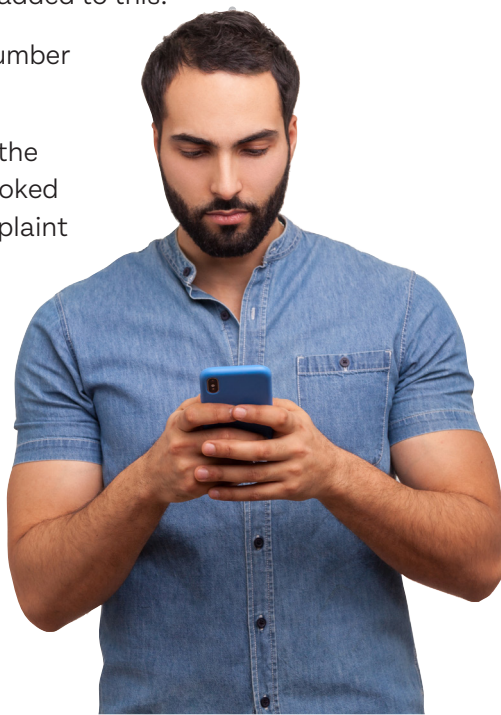
- 1 When you get through, say: "I want to make a complaint" and ask to speak to the complaints team. This team knows more about how to solve problems than the general customer service teams.
- 2 When discussing your issue with the supplier, refer to your notes (see above) to make sure you provide all the information you have prepared.
- 3 If you think you might be eligible for the company's priority services register, ask to be added to this.
- 4 Ask for your complaint reference number and make a note of it.
- 5 Before ending the call, ensure that the complaint is still open and will be looked into. They may try to close the complaint by thanking you for your 'feedback' or asking if you're happy with the outcome of the call.

Compensation

Sometimes, energy companies will give compensation to a customer who has a justified complaint about the service they've received. But whether to pay compensation and how much you'll get is up to the company. It may not be as much as you are expecting, and you may get nothing at all.

If you're not happy with the amount of compensation you're offered, reject the offer and ask for a different amount.

In our experience, it's a good idea to ask for compensation for every separate problem you have.





Energy Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with how your complaint has been dealt with by your energy company, you can register your dispute with the Energy Ombudsman. This is an independent organisation which acts as an impartial mediator to resolve disputes between consumers and energy suppliers.

Generally, this can only be done eight weeks (56 days) after you raise a complaint with your supplier. But you can approach the Ombudsman sooner if your supplier has sent you a 'deadlock letter' stating that they and you have been unable to come to an agreement on how your complaint should be resolved.

Registering your dispute with the Ombudsman

The Energy Ombudsman website is the fastest way to register the dispute, but you can also do this by phone (0330 440 1624), email (enquiry@energyombudsman.org) or post (Energy Ombudsman, P.O. Box 966, Warrington, WA4 9DF).

You can request a translator or advocate if required.

The ombudsman is likely to ask for evidence such as emails, letters and bills. It may also be helpful

to provide a list of the time and date of calls, the names of the people spoken to and the details of what was said.

It takes around six weeks for the Ombudsman to make an assessment. The possible outcomes could be that the supplier:

- Sends you a letter of apology.
- Provides compensation, usually £50 to £75.
- Does something practical like changing your tariff or installing a new meter.
- It is not the role of the Ombudsman to punish suppliers or to make them change how they operate.

The decision

If you feel your complaint hasn't been adequately addressed, you can reject all or part of the decision. Usually, the Ombudsman decision is final, but an appeal can be made if a mistake has happened or new information has come to light.

If you and your supplier accept the decision, the supplier is legally bound to implement it. The investigating officer will track progress and to keep the supplier on track.



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We're a charity (298740) supporting people and organisations across the UK to tackle the climate emergency and end the suffering caused by cold homes.

Our Home Energy Team offers free advice on domestic energy use to people in central southern and southwest England.

Contact us:

PHONE 0800 082 2234

EMAIL home.energy@cse.org.uk

See all our energy advice pages at
www.cse.org.uk/advice