

# Domestic Vulnerable Customer Code of Practice



## Contact details

If you have any questions or need more information please contact us.

Web: **www.water.ie**  
Twitter: **@IWCare**  
Email: **customerservice@water.ie**  
Address: **Irish Water, PO Box 448**  
**South City Delivery Office**  
**Cork City**

### Account information or account enquiries

9am-5.30pm, Mon-Fri

Telephone: **0818 778 778** or **+353 1 707 2827**

ITRS: **1800 378 378** (for hard of hearing customers)

### Water supply queries and emergencies

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Telephone: **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828**

ITRS: **1800 378 378** (for hard of hearing customers)

**You can also register as a vulnerable customer on our website.**

This publication is available in Braille, in audio on CD and in large text format on request by calling 1800 278 278.

**Safeguarding our water for our future**

**December 2021**

## **Introduction**

We understand that some of our customers have different needs when it comes to using our water services and communicating with us.

A vulnerable customer in relation to water supply is someone that is either:

- critically dependent – critically dependent on water for their medical needs; or
- someone who, for reasons that may include advanced age, or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health reasons requires additional support communicating with, or receiving services from, Irish Water.

This Code of Practice informs our vulnerable customers how we plan to respond to their needs when using water services. We will also address their information requirements. To look after our vulnerable customers, we have developed:

- a Special Services Register for those customers who are registered as vulnerable;
- a Priority Services Register for those customers who are registered as critically dependent on water.

These registers are available at <https://www.water.ie/help/domestic-account/vulnerable-customers/register/>

In this Code of Practice, water services means the public water and wastewater services that we provide. This Code of Practice applies to domestic customers only.

## **Our commitment**

- Irish Water shall work to ensure there is full public and customer awareness of our vulnerable customers register. This will include working collaboratively with

relevant support and charitable organisations to highlight the existence of, and access to, the register;

- We will train our staff to deliver the services outlined in this Code of Practice and will keep our training up to date;
- We will deal with all customer enquiries courteously and fairly while in line with stated policy;
- We will keep all the information given to us in the strictest confidence;
- We will provide customers with a choice of ways to communicate with us;
- We will monitor the service we give to make sure we are meeting our commitments.

## **Special Services Register customer commitments**

Irish Water offers a confidential Special Services Register for those who:

- are aged 66 or over;
- are blind or vision impaired;
- are deaf or hard of hearing;
- have mobility difficulties;
- have an intellectual disability; or
- have a mental health difficulty.

## **Information provided in other formats**

We offer a 'BrowseAloud' function on our website so that you can listen to information within documents on the website. If there are other communication formats required by a customer, Irish Water will engage with them to ensure their communication needs are met.

## Hearing difficulties

If you have a hearing difficulty, you can get in touch with us using our Irish Text Relay Service (ITRS) by calling **1800 378 378** or, email us at [customerservice@water.ie](mailto:customerservice@water.ie)

### What is ITRS?

ITRS translates text into voice and voice into text to facilitate deaf and hard of hearing people in making and receiving calls in Ireland. Calls are relayed through ITRS agents who perform this translation.

### How do I use ITRS?

#### Do I need to register for the ITRS App?

There is no registration required, just download the app or go to [www.itrs.ie](http://www.itrs.ie) for further information. The app will require you to register the phone number you will be using to make or receive calls. Just follow the instructions in app or click on the “How Do I Use ITRS” tab on this site.

#### Register your number

To use the ITRS app you must first register the phone number you will be using to make and receive calls on the app.

- Step 1: In the ITRS app, go to “Menu” then “Registration”. Enter your phone number and then press “Register”. You will then be asked to make an activation call.
- Step 2: Leave the app and make the activation call from the mobile or landline number you are registering. You will only have 60 seconds to make this call.
- Step 3: Open the ITRS app again to receive confirmation your number has been registered successfully.
- Step 4: To end simply hang up the registration call and close the ITRS app.

## Additional support

Whenever possible, Irish Water will adapt the services and communications provided to suit the needs of customers on the Special Services Register.

Irish Water's Vulnerable Customers Registration Form asks you to provide your mobile telephone number so that you can receive important updates via text message. Should you wish to receive a phone call instead you can let us know by contacting us using the details at the top of this code and we will change your preferences for these updates.

We will, where possible, provide extra assistance or advice where:

- additional assistance is needed in accessing alternative water supplies (i.e. water tankers), where provided, due to mobility restrictions;
- specific communication assistance is needed due to sight, hearing or intellectual impairments;
- there is an unplanned interruption to water supply that is anticipated to last for longer than 12 hours and where an alternative water supply is put in place. In such circumstances Irish Water will directly contact those on the Special Services Register (or their nominated contact) to determine if any assistance is needed. Where an SMS is sent, customers will have an option to contact Irish Water using the phone number provided to discuss any additional assistance which may be required;
- water from the public infrastructure is declared 'unfit for human consumption' and/or an alternative supply is put in place. In such circumstances Irish Water will directly contact those on the Special Services Register (or their nominated contact) to determine if any assistance is needed to access this alternative supply. Where an SMS is sent, customers will have the opportunity to contact Irish Water using the phone number provided to discuss any additional assistance which may be required.

All of the above will be provided free of charge to the registered customer.

## **Priority Services Register customer commitments**

Irish Water offers a confidential Priority Services Register for domestic customers who have a critical dependency on water as a result of their medical condition.

## Additional support

We offer additional support to those on the Priority Services Register. This includes:

- Provision of information will be prioritised for those customers registered as critically dependent on water services on the Priority Services Register. If we plan to interrupt the water supply, we will directly contact registered priority customers expected to be impacted at least two days in advance to highlight the anticipated duration of the interruption. Irish Water will endeavor to make an alternative water supply available for those customers, if required;
- Where there is an unplanned interruption, we will investigate the issue to determine the area affected and the possible cause of the unplanned interruption. Following that investigation, if we think that the interruption will last longer than four hours, we will directly contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted to inform them of the interruption;
- Where an SMS is sent, customers will have an option to contact Irish Water using the phone number provided to discuss any additional assistance which may be required, and we can determine how best we can help;
- We will provide information to registered priority customers on updates to their interruptions and plans for restoration of supply;
- Where water from the public infrastructure is declared 'unfit for human consumption', Irish Water and/or its agents will directly contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted to inform them it is not safe to drink the water and let them know of any precautionary measures that should be taken. Irish Water will also give further information or updates on the duration of the notice and facilitate any extra requirements, where possible;

- Where an alternative water supply arrangement is being put in place (due to public health and safety reasons, or other emergency reasons) Irish Water will directly contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted to inform them it is not safe to drink the water and let them know of any precautionary measures that should be taken. We will also give information and updates on the location and duration of the alternative supply, give updates on progress to rectify the issue and facilitate any extra requirements.

All of the above will be provided free of charge to the registered customer.

### **Nominate an alternative contact**

If you wish to nominate an alternative person to deal with your bills and correspondence, you should register their contact details with us on the Vulnerable Customer Registration Form at <https://www.water.ie/help/domestic-account/vulnerable-customers/register/>.

With this permission, we can send the named person any correspondence about your water services account. We can also contact the named person if we need to get in touch with you.

### **Data Protection**

As part of a customer's interaction with Irish Water, a customer may provide personal data to Irish Water. All personal data will be treated in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and the Data Protection Act 2018. In order to provide services to our customers, Irish Water engages service providers to help us deliver our services. Accordingly, personal data may be passed to our service providers or collected by service providers on Irish Water's behalf but only insofar as is necessary to provide water services to the customer.

For further information about how Irish Water processes personal data, data protection rights or to raise a query, please see our Privacy Notice at [www.water.ie/privacy-notice/](http://www.water.ie/privacy-notice/)

## Complaints

At Irish Water, we are committed to delivering the best service possible. If you are unhappy with any part of our service, we encourage you to let us know and we will do everything we can to resolve the matter quickly and to your satisfaction.

When lodging a complaint with us, please provide the following information:

- Your name;
- Property address;
- Telephone number;
- Details of the incident or issue, including:
  - dates (where appropriate);
  - reference or account numbers;
  - any information or documentation you believe would assist us to understand and investigate your complaint further;
  - what you would like Irish Water to do to make things right.

Call us on **1800 278 278** or **+353 1 707 2828** (9am - 5.30pm, Mon - Fri) and we will try to resolve any problems over the phone.

Or write to us at:

**Irish Water**  
**PO Box 860**  
**South City Delivery Office**  
**Cork City**

Email: [customerservice@water.ie](mailto:customerservice@water.ie)

We aim to settle any concerns as quickly and as fairly as possible. Within five working days of receiving your complaint, we will offer you a resolution or an outline plan of the steps we need to take to achieve a satisfactory resolution to your complaint (under normal conditions). If your complaint is still open after five days, we will contact you with an update on or before the 10th working day from when you registered your complaint with us.

We are committed to resolving all complaints within two months (where you are engaging with Irish Water).

We will keep you informed on progress we are making in resolving your complaint. We have a separate 'Code of Practice on Complaint Handling'. To receive a copy, please call us on **1800 278 278** or view it online at **[www.water.ie](http://www.water.ie)**

## Visiting your home

Our staff and service providers are trained to always identify who they are and who they are representing. They will always show you their identity card. You can contact us on **1800 278 278** to confirm the identity of our staff member or service provider.

Below is a series of sensible steps you should follow when dealing with people calling to your home:

- Always look through a window or door viewer before opening the door;
- Only open your door after connecting a door chain lock or placing your foot behind the door;
- Switch on outside lights when it is dark;
- Request and examine identity cards;
- Always think 'safety' – do not leave strangers alone on your doorstep while you go into another room. Always close the door if you need to do this. Do not leave strangers alone in your home;
- Take precautions – if you are unsure or suspicious, please refuse access and contact us on **1800 278 278** to confirm the identity of our staff member or service provider.