

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 aim to provide an excellent service to all our customers. We understand that some of our customers have particular needs when using our services and communicating with us. This Code of Practice tells you about the services we offer our vulnerable customers.

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

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

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

- a Special Services Register for those customers who are registered as vulnerable; and
- a Priority Services Register for 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 Irish Water provides. This Code of Practice applies to domestic customers only.

Our commitment

- We will work to make sure that the public and our customers know about our vulnerable customers register. We will work together with the relevant support and charitable organisations to inform the public about the register and how to access it.
- 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 politely and fairly.
- We will keep all the information our customers give 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.

On the following pages, we list specific commitments to customers on our Special Services Register followed by specific commitments to customers on our Priority Services register. As part of these listings we list who can be added to each register.

Special Services Register customer commitments

We offer a confidential Special Services Register for customers 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 in web pages and documents on our website. If a customer needs to access information in a different format, we will discuss these needs with the customer.

Hearing difficulties

If you have a hearing difficulty, you can contact us by calling our dedicated ITRS line **1800 378 378** or email us at customerservice@water.ie.

What is ITRS?

ITRS translates text into voice and voice into text to make it easier for deaf and hard-of-hearing people to make and receive calls. ITRS agents receive your calls and texts and translate them.

Do I need to register for the ITRS App?

Only a phone number is required to register. No further information is required. You can download the app or go to www.itrs.ie for further information. The app will ask you to register the phone number you will be using to make or receive calls. Follow the instructions in the app or click on the 'Getting Started' tab on the ITRS home page.

How do I register my 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 be asked to phone the ITRS number to confirm your chosen phone number.
- **Step 2:** Leave the app and make the call from the phone number you are registering. You will only have 60 seconds to make this call.
- **Step 3:** Open the ITRS app again to receive confirmation that your number has been registered successfully.
- **Step 4:** To end, hang up the registration call and close the ITRS app.

Your phone number will now be registered and you can use the ITRS app.

Extra support

Whenever possible, we will adapt how we provide services and communications 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 by text message. If you prefer that we call you on the phone, you can let us know by contacting us at the phone number at the beginning of this Code of Practice. We will then change your preferences for these updates.

We will, where possible, provide extra assistance or advice where additional assistance is needed to access alternative water supplies (water tankers), where provided.

Where there is an unplanned interruption

Where there is an unplanned interruption to the water supply that is expected to last for longer than 12 hours and where an alternative water supply is put in place, we will contact customers on the Special Services Register directly (or their named contact) to see if any help is needed.

When we send a text, customers can contact us at the phone number provided if they wish to discuss any extra help they need.

Where water is unfit to consume and an alternative water supply is put in place

We will contact those on the Special Services Register directly (or their named contact) to see if any help is needed to access this alternative supply. When we send a text, customers can contact us at the phone number provided if they wish to discuss any extra assistance they need.

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

Priority Services Register customer commitments

We offer a confidential Priority Services Register to domestic customers who have a critical dependency on water as a result of their medical condition.

Extra support

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

Advance notice of planned interruptions

We will prioritise getting information to customers registered as critically dependent on water services on the Priority Services Register. If we plan to interrupt the water supply, we will contact registered priority customers expected to be impacted at least two days in advance to let them know how long the interruption will last. We will try to make an alternative water supply available for those customers, if required.

Contacting you in an unplanned interruption

Where there is an unplanned interruption, we will investigate the issue to see what area is affected and what the possible cause is. After that, if we think that the interruption will last longer than four hours, we will contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted to tell them about the interruption.

If we text, customers can request extra assistance if needed

Where we send customers a text, customers can contact us at the phone number provided to tell us if they need extra assistance, and we can work out how best we can help.

Providing updated information

We will provide information to registered priority customers on updates to interruptions they are affected by and plans to restore the supply.

Water unfit for human consumption

Where water from the public infrastructure is declared 'unfit for human consumption', Irish Water and/or its agents will contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted to tell them it is not safe to drink the water and let them know of any precautionary measures they should take. We will also give further information or updates on the duration of the notice and give any extra assistance, where possible.

Updates given on alternative water supply arrangements

Where an alternative water supply arrangement is being put in place (due to public health and safety reasons, or other emergency reasons), we will contact all registered priority customers expected to be impacted. We will tell them it is not safe to drink the water and let them know of any precautionary measures they should take. We will also give information and updates on the location and duration of the alternative supply, give updates on progress to fix the issue and offer any extra assistance where possible.

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

Name an alternative contact

If you are on either the Special or Priority Customer Register and wish to name 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/>.

When we receive your 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 <http://www.water.ie/privacy-notice/>

Complaints

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;
- your property address;
- your telephone number; and
- the 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; and
 - 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

You can also email us at: customerservice@water.ie

Our response to your complaint

We aim to resolve any concerns as quickly and as fairly as possible. Within five working days of receiving your complaint, we will offer you a resolution or a plan of the steps we need to take to achieve a satisfactory resolution to your complaint

(under normal conditions). If your complaint is not resolved after five days, we will contact you with an update on or before the tenth working day from when you registered your complaint with us.

We are committed to resolving all complaints within two months (To do this, you may need to work with us during the investigation (for instance, we might need access to your home).

We will keep you up to date 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**.

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 members or service providers.

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

- Look through a window or door viewer before opening the door.
- Open your door only 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.
- 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.