



QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER

CONTROL

This policy is a controlled document and must not be amended in any way without the permission of the Risk Officer (Corporate Services Director) or CEO. Any authorised changes should be recorded in the amendment/revision history below.

Amendments and Revisions

Review Date	Document Owner	Version No.	Amendments & Revisions	Author	Authorised By	Next Review
23 April 2018	NTPF Board	1	New policy	Audit, Quality Assurance and Research Director (Secretary to the Board)	NTPF Board	
27 June 2022	NTPF Board	2	Insertion of a Consumer Complaints Procedure and Handling of Vexatious or Malicious Complaints	Corporate Services Director (Secretary to the Board)		Q1 2024

1. Introduction

The NTPF was established by Statutory Instrument S.I. No. 179 of 2004 – The National Treatment Purchase Fund Board (Establishment) Order, 2004.

The key functions are

- To make arrangements with persons, whether resident in the State or elsewhere, for the provision of hospital treatment to such classes of persons as may be determined by the Minister, from time to time;
- To collect, collate and validate information in relation to persons waiting for hospital treatment and to put in place information systems and procedures for that purpose;
- To furnish whenever it is so required by the Minister or on its own initiative, advice to the Minister on issues relating to its functions under this Article;
- To perform any other function in relation to the purchase of hospital treatment that the Minister may from time to time assign to it.
- To make arrangements with a person it considers to be appropriate, being a proprietor of a nursing home, relating to the price at which long-term residential care services will be provided by such person to persons requiring such services, and who are in receipt of financial support under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act;

The purpose of this Charter is to set out the NTPF's commitment to a high standard of service and behaviour that underpins our interactions with all customers including but not exclusive to the general public, patients, public and private hospitals, Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE), our service providers and suppliers.

2. Vision & Mission Statements and Corporate Values

Vision Statement

Our Vision is that patients have timely access to appropriate treatments and that those in need have access to appropriately priced long term care services

Mission Statement

Our Mission is to support timely access to appropriate care by:

- Arranging treatment for patients
- Providing independently assured waiting list information
- Delivering expert advice and support to the health system
- Negotiating prices for nursing home services

The work of the NTPF is underpinned by the following values:

1. Patient Centred

“Respect for the patient is at the centre of everything we do.”

2. Integrity

“We maintain our independence as a statutory agency, operate within an ethos of integrity and equality, and are appropriately accountable and responsible for the decisions that we make.”

3. Innovative

“We are innovative, agile, proactive and responsive in our approach.”

4. Expert

“We are experts in our field and we adopt an objective and evidence-based approach to our work.”

5. Collaborative

“We work in partnership with our key stakeholders in a spirit of consultation and collaboration within a culture of mutual respect to benefit those in need of our services.”

3. Our Commitment to our Customers

We will provide you with high quality customer service in an efficient and courteous manner. Providing this high quality service to our customers is very important to us and we aim to achieve this by -

- Responding to and engaging with our customers over the phone or in writing including email, in a timely and courteous manner;
- Providing customers with clear, accurate advice and information
- Treating everyone in a proper, fair and impartial manner while at all times remaining courteous and sensitive with due regard to privacy and confidentiality;
- Ensuring that rights to equal treatment set out in equality and diversity legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services;
- Meeting the special needs our customers may have, where possible;
- Taking a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely, accurate and where possible meeting with your needs.

We are committed to the twelve principles of Quality Customer Service as approved by Government and can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/89dbad-guiding-principles-of-quality-customer-service/>

4. Co-ordination

We will work with other Government Departments and Agencies, where appropriate, to co-ordinate our services to you.

5. Complaints, Queries & Feedback

This Charter relates to the services provided by employees of the NTPF to members of the public, service providers and other stakeholders.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of our service please inform us at ask@ntpf.ie and we will try to rectify the problem. We have a formal complaints and appeals procedure found in *Appendix 1* of this document. You may also refer complaints to the Ombudsman if you wish, details also contained at *Appendix 1*.

Please let us know what you think of the service we provide by submitting comments, views and suggestions. We will always endeavour to use this feedback to assist us in providing the best possible customer service.

If you were happy with the service provided please let us know. It is always nice to hear. Contact us at ask@ntpf.ie.

6. Languages

Every effort will be made to accommodate people who wish to conduct their business through the Irish language.

Signage in our offices is available in both Irish and English. Corporate documents and recruitment information is also available in both Irish and English.

We will try to provide a service through sign language and other languages where possible.

7. Equality and Diversity

The NTPF is committed to ensuring that:

- the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and to accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation, as laid down in the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000;
- the service we deliver is accessible to customers within the nine grounds of the Equality legislation.
- we identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

8. Physical Access

Although most of our work does not require customers to travel to our offices, they are kept clean, safe and accessible to people with disabilities.

Personal callers

The NTPF office address is included in the contact information section below. Our staff will be available to meet by appointment only with our customers and contractors during normal office hours. Such appointments are only possible once they adhere to public health and safety advice.

Staff will greet visitors politely, be fair and helpful and deal with their enquiries as quickly as possible.

9. Consultation and evaluation

We will provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery, review and evaluation of service delivery.

The NTPF will record and analyse queries, complaints and customer feedback to ensure that they are being dealt with effectively, and to improve the service given to customers.

10. Contact Information

The Contact details for the National Treatment Purchase Fund are as follows:

Address: National Treatment Purchase Fund
Ashford House
Tara Street
Dublin 2
D02 VX67

Phone: 01-6427101

Email: ask@ntpf.ie

Members of the public contacting the NTPF by telephone

Customer service queries are dealt with between 9.00am and 5.00p.m. Monday to Friday, excluding weekends and public holidays.

Standards of Service

- We will answer phones quickly and courteously.
- We will give the information you ask for in a helpful way.
- As far as possible, we will deal with your query at your first phone call.
- If we cannot give you an answer immediately, we will take your details and either write or phone back.
- We will tell you when you can expect to hear from us or arrange to call at a time which is convenient for you.
- We will give you the name of the person dealing with your query in case you need to phone again

Contact by email or post

- The NTPF will acknowledge your letter/email within 3 working days of the query/complaint being received. If this reply is an acknowledgement rather than a full reply it will indicate the name and contact details of the person dealing with the query/complaint and the estimated time scale for a full reply.
- All communications with you will be in 'plain English' as much as possible and avoid the use of jargon.
- You will be kept informed if the original time scale changes.

Appendix 1 – Complaints Procedure

Consumer Service Complaints

The NTPF is committed to dealing with complaints about the quality of the service provided. Complaints about our customer service should be made in accordance with the following protocols:

- In the first instance where a member of the public or other stakeholder that engages with the NTPF, feels that the service being provided via a staff member is deficient the matter should be raised directly with the staff member concerned.
- If the individual is still unhappy following the staff member's response, the matter can be referred to the staff member's Head of Function. In this regard, the staff member will give the individual the name and contact details of the Head of Function and will inform the Head of Function as soon as possible of the nature of the issue concerned.
- The Head of Function will contact, or be put in contact with, the individual as soon as practicable but no later than 3 working days from the date the issue has been raised.
- Following contact with the Head of Function and if the individual is still unhappy and wishes to sustain the complaint, then a formal written complaint should be made to the respective Head of Department, The National Treatment Purchase Fund, Ashford House, Tara Street, Dublin 2, D02 VX67.
- Formal complaints relating to Heads of Department will be investigated by an independent Head of Department.
- Formal complaints relating to the CEO will be investigated by the NTPF Chairperson.
- We will acknowledge all written & email complaints within 3 working days. Formal complaints received will also be logged on the NTPF Customer Complaints Register.
- We will investigate all complaints and issue a reply to your complaint within 15 working days or, where this is not possible, an interim reply will issue explaining the position and advising when a substantive response will issue.
- All complaints will be treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- We will keep records of complaints separate from other records.
- We will ensure that no complaint you have made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in the future.
- We will endeavour to learn from mistakes to ensure that errors are not repeated.

Vexatious and Malicious Complaints

What is a vexatious complaint?

A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; something that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted.

What is a malicious complaint?

A malicious complaint is one that is made with the intention of causing harm, for example:

- deliberately seeking to defame a staff member and raising a complaint with

- this intent;
- through lying about an issue or incident in the knowledge that this will cause harm;
 - through knowingly basing a complaint with the intention of causing harm.

All complaints received will be handled fairly, always applying a presumption from the outset that the complaint has been made in good faith, unless and until there is clear evidence to the contrary. All complaints, even if thought to be made with malicious or vexatious intent, will be investigated.

Every complaint will be considered on its merits and, even if someone has made a vexatious or malicious complaint in the past, it will not be assumed that any other complaint they make will also be vexatious or malicious.

During investigation if the Head of Function determines the complaint to be vexatious or malicious, he/she will not pursue the complaint any further. However, this does not remove the Complainant's right to submit their complaint to independent agencies such as the Ombudsman/Ombudsman for Children.

If a complaint is found to be vexatious or malicious, there will be no record of the complaint in the file of the staff member / service about which the complaint was made.

Before the complaint is deemed vexatious the Head of Function must bring it to the attention of the relevant Head of Department or CEO where appropriate.

Rights of appeal

If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our decision on your complaint, it is open to you to contact the Office of the Ombudsman. By law the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in your dealings with us. The Ombudsman provides an impartial, independent and free dispute resolution service.

Contact details are as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lower Leeson Street,
Dublin 2.

Tel: Lo-call 1890 22 30 30
Tel: 01 639 5600

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.ie

Website: www.ombudsman.ie