



An Bille um an Earnáil Phoiblí (Teanga Shoiléir), 2019
Public Sector (Plain Language) Bill 2019

Mar a tionscnaíodh

As initiated



AN BILLE UM AN EARNÁIL PHOIBLÍ (TEANGA SHOILÉIR), 2019
PUBLIC SECTOR (PLAIN LANGUAGE) BILL 2019

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ACTS REFERRED TO

Ombudsman (Amendment) Act 2012 (No. 38)

Ombudsman Act 1980 (No. 26)

Ombudsman Acts 1980 to 2012



AN BILLE UM AN EARNÁIL PHOIBLÍ (TEANGA SHOILÉIR), 2019
PUBLIC SECTOR (PLAIN LANGUAGE) BILL 2019

Bill

entitled

An Act to improve access to public sector information and services by requiring plain writing in published documents, and to provide for connected matters. 5

Be it enacted by the Oireachtas as follows:

Interpretation

1. (1) In this Act—

“document” means written or printed material (other than a statutory instrument) in any form including in electronic form, in either the English or the Irish language or in both, published by a public body that provides information about an enactment, programme or scheme administered by the body, including information about— 10

(a) conditions or requirements,

(b) rights, privileges or other benefits, or 15

(c) obligations, liabilities, penalties or other detriments;

“plain writing” means writing that—

(a) is clear, concise and well-organised,

(b) avoids overly complex vocabulary and the unnecessary use of technical terms, and 20

(c) follows best practices appropriate both to the subject matter and the intended readership;

“publish”, in relation to a document of a public body, means publish to the public or a section of the public or to an individual in his or her capacity as a member of the public. 25

(2) Every entity that is a reviewable agency for the purposes of the Ombudsman Acts 1980 to 2012 is a public body for the purposes of this Act.

Preparing for implementation of plain writing requirements

2. (1) No later than nine months from the passing of this Act, a public body shall—

(a) designate a senior officer of the body to oversee the implementation of this Act 30

- within and by that body,
- (b) communicate the requirements of this Act to the employees of the body,
 - (c) establish a process for overseeing ongoing compliance by the body with the requirements of this Act,
 - (d) create and maintain a plain writing section on the public body’s website, and 5
 - (e) designate an officer of the body as responsible for receiving and responding to input from members of the public on—
 - (i) the body’s implementation of this Act, and
 - (ii) reports by the body under *section 4*.
- (2) The plain writing section referred to in *subsection (1)(c)* shall— 10
- (a) inform members of the public about the public body’s compliance with the requirements of this Act, and
 - (b) provide a means for the public body to receive and respond to input from members of the public on—
 - (i) the body’s implementation of this Act, and 15
 - (ii) reports by the body under *section 4*.

Requirement to use plain writing in new documents

3. (1) A public body shall use plain writing in every document of the body which it—
- (a) publishes for the first time after the first anniversary of the passing of this Act, or
 - (b) if a version of the document was published by the body before that date, which it republishes following substantial revision after that date. 20
- (2) The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform shall, no later than six months after the passing of this Act, publish guidelines for public bodies on compliance with *subsection (1)*.

Reports 25

4. A public body shall publish on the plain writing section of its website—
- (a) no later than nine months after the passing of this Act, a report of the body’s plan for compliance with the requirements of this Act,
 - (b) no later than 18 months after the passing of this Act, and annually thereafter, a report on the body’s compliance with the requirements of this Act. 30

Enforcement

5. (1) The Ombudsman Act 1980 is amended in section 4(2)(b) (inserted by section 6 of the Ombudsman (Amendment) Act 2012 by substituting the following for subparagraph (vii):
- “(vii) a failure to comply with section 4A or with the *Public Sector* 35

(Plain Language) Act 2019, or”.

- (2) Subject to *subsection (1)*—
- (a) nothing in this Act shall be construed as conferring on any person a legally enforceable right to any remedy or relief,
 - (b) a person shall not question the validity of an action of a public body by reason only of the failure by the body concerned to comply with the requirements of this Act. 5

Short title and purpose

6. (1) This Act may be cited as the Public Sector (Plain Language) Act 2019.
- (2) The purpose of this Act is— 10
- (a) to improve the effectiveness and accountability of the public sector by promoting clear and comprehensible written communication by public bodies with the general public,
 - (b) to promote awareness of the particular importance of clear and comprehensible written communication for persons who have literacy or numeracy difficulties, 15
and
 - (c) to encourage the development of a culture of respect for the rights of equal access, and of full participation on an equal basis, of persons with literacy or numeracy difficulties.

An Bille um an Earnáil Phoiblí (Teanga
Shoiléir), 2019

BILLE

(mar a tionscnaíodh)

dá ngairtear

Acht d'fheabhsú na rochtana ar fhaisnéis agus ar sheirbhísí earnála poiblí trína cheangal go mbeidh scríobh soiléir i ndoiciméid fhoilsithe; agus do dhéanamh socrú i dtaobh nithe comhghaolmhara.

*Na Seanadóirí Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Ivana Bacik,
Caoimhín Mac Unfraidh agus Gearailt de Nais a
thug isteach,*

29 Eanáir, 2019

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An Act to improve access to public sector information and services by requiring plain writing in published documents; and to provide for connected matters.

*Introduced by Senators Aodhán Ó Ríordáin, Ivana
Bacik, Kevin Humphreys and Gerald Nash,*

29th January, 2019

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