

Welfare Reform Team – Customer Service Standards

We are committed to putting our customers' needs first, and these service standards set out what you should expect from us when you ask us for help.

We will keep our performance against these service standards under continuous review, and we welcome any comments, compliments or complaints that will help us to improve our service to you.

We will deliver our service in line with the council's Employee Code of Conduct, our General Customer Service Standards, and any other relevant council policies and procedures.

Our service to you

- We will treat you fairly, politely and with respect at all times.
- We will deliver a consistent level of service to all our customers.
- We will do what we say we will do when we say we will do it.
- If we cannot help you, we will always explain why and we will give you the opportunity to ask us to change our mind.
- We will avoid using jargon and we will use plain English in all our communications.
- If English is not your preferred language, we will provide a translation service if you ask for this. We can also provide a British Sign Language interpreter, subject to availability.
- If we need to meet you and you cannot come to our offices, we will arrange a meeting at a more suitable place for you.
- When you ask us for help, we will give you a named officer who will be your main point of contact while we are working with you. We will inform you if your main point of contact changes.
- Once we have met you or had an in depth phone conversation with you, we will agree a plan of action with you and (where possible) advise you how long this is likely to take.
- If your enquiry means that other services within the council need to be involved, we will deal with this for you where possible.
- If we need to contact someone else about your case, we will ask for your consent and ask you to sign a data protection agreement if required.
- We will keep you informed about what is going on with your case by phone, text, email or letter as appropriate. Where necessary, we will use more than one way of keeping you informed.
- If requested, we will confirm an appointment with you by text.
- We will ask for your permission before sending you a text.
- If we make a mistake, we will apologise and put this right as quickly as we can.
- We will keep accurate, up-to-date and relevant information about our service on the council website, and all Welfare Reform Team publications will be available in electronic form on our website.
- We will encourage you to give us feedback about our service so that we can help all of our customers better.

In return, we expect all our customers to treat us politely and with respect. We also expect you to let us know about any relevant changes in your circumstances and to get back to us within any time we have asked you to do so.

How long will it take?

We know that many of our customers have an urgent need for help, and we aim to reply to any enquiries within the times given in the table.

If you...	...we will...	...within...
Drop into our office for the first time and ask to speak to us	See you to give you one off advice or arrange a full appointment	1 hour
Leave us a phone message	Call you back	1 working day
Ask us to send you an application form for a discretionary housing payment	Send you an application form for a discretionary housing payment	1 working day
Send us a text	Reply to your text	1 working day
Send us an email	Reply to your email	3 working days
Contact us through Twitter	Reply to your tweet	3 working days
Contact us through our website	Reply to your enquiry	3 working days
Make an enquiry on behalf of one of your constituents, if you are an MP or councillor	Reply to your enquiry	3 working days
Refer a customer to us for help, whether you are another team within the council or an outside agency working with your customer	Attempt to contact your customer and confirm the outcome to you	3 working days
Make a comment, compliment or complaint about our service	Acknowledge your comment, compliment or complaint	3 working days
Ask us to look again at a decision we have made about a discretionary housing payment	Look at your claim again and make a new decision (a "review")	5 working days
Ask us for an appointment	Contact you to arrange an appointment in our offices or somewhere more suitable for you if you cannot come to us.	5 working days
Write us a letter	Answer your letter	5 working days
Apply for a discretionary housing payment	Assess your claim or ask for more information to help us to assess your claim	10 working days
Apply for a discretionary housing payment and we ask you for more information before we can assess your claim	Assess your claim once you have returned the information we have asked for	10 working days
Make a comment, compliment or complaint about our service	Give you a full response to your comment, compliment or complaint about our service	10 working days

If we cannot give you a full service within these times, we will contact you to let you know when you can expect to hear from us again.

Comments, compliments and complaints

If you have a comment, compliment or complaint about our service, we would like to hear from you. We will acknowledge all feedback within 3 working days, and will give you a full reply within 10 working days.

If we cannot deal with your comment, compliment or complaint within 10 working days, we will contact you to let you know when you can expect to get a full reply.