

# Benefit Team

## Service Standards

### General

- We will treat you with respect; listen to your needs; be quick to take action, where necessary; and give you as much realistic help and advice as we can
- We will explore the options to resolve any issues and explain clearly what we are able to do to help, even if sometimes this means having to say no to your requests
- We will deal with your enquiry consistently using Oxford City Council's policies and procedures
- We will keep our customers informed about significant changes to the service; will consult with customers on key issues; and encourage regular comment and feedback on our service
- We will use plain English in all letters, emails, forms, leaflets, and on our website
- We will provide aids to assist with how we communicate with you. We use an external translation service and have disability provisions within our Customer Services receptions.
- We will arrange home visits for our most vulnerable customers unable to travel to our offices. Our Officers will have picture identification when they visit you and are CRB checked.
- We will ensure our staff receive the appropriate training and qualifications to carry out their job effectively
- We will work with external organisations, local partnerships and accrediting bodies to keep up to date with best practice, meet legislative requirements and ensure continuous improvement.

### Telephones

- We will answer phone calls promptly. The person who answers the telephone will give their name and the service they provide
- We aim to answer your query immediately. If this is not possible we will forward your enquiry to the relevant officer; or we will give you a timescale when we aim to reply to you

## **Customer Services**

- Our reception areas will have easy access for all customers.
- We will provide a quiet area to discuss cases of a sensitive nature.
- We will provide free access to our and Government websites for the completion of on-line applications. Customer Services Officers will help you complete any application form required to obtain our services, if you require any assistance

## **Letters and Emails**

- We will send you a written notification of our decision on your benefit application, or change to your circumstances and provide you with advice on your right to dispute this if you do not agree with the decision
- Our letters and emails will confirm an office telephone number and e-mail address.
- We will respond to all correspondence in order of the date that we receive it. Some items may be prioritised in order to avoid making an overpayment of benefit to you or in response to severe financial hardship, please contact us if you feel this applies to you.
- We aim to reply to all correspondence within 4 weeks, however you are encouraged to contact us if you have not heard from us within this timescale.

## **Website**

- We will keep our web pages regularly under review with accurate, up-to-date and relevant information
- We will provide an electronic version of all our new and updated publications on Oxford City Council's website
- We will provide an opportunity wherever possible for customers to carry out as many functions on-line as possible

## **Complaints**

- If we have made a mistake we will seek to put it right as quickly as we can, and say we are sorry.
- We have a clear formal complaints procedure with details available from our website and offices
- If you write in to complain, we will send an acknowledgement within 3 working days, and seek to provide a full response within 10 working days

23 April 2019

**We expect customers to:**

- Treat staff with respect.
- Keep us informed of any changes in your life that affect your housing benefit or council tax reduction
- Respond to letters and other requests for information within the timescale requested.

The level of service relies on the co-operation between our partners, our customers and us. If you think of any ways to improve them, please write and tell us.

Oxford City Council Benefits Service will measure the compliance with these service standards through a variety of ways including, Complaints and Compliments monitoring, Feedback Surveys and via performance measures. We will report on compliance against the service standards regularly.

If you feel this standard has not been met you may follow the Council Complaints procedure set out in the Complaint leaflet available at all our receptions or on our website [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk).