

Housing Advice Centre Customer Charter



THE SERVICE

- Housing Options and Advice. We have a free service that is focussed on preventing homelessness. In some cases we may be able to provide financial assistance to prevent homelessness. Housing Options Officers provide free advice and assistance, ensuring that people are aware of their options, rights and obligations regarding housing.
- Homelessness – ensuring the Council's statutory duties to Homeless people are fulfilled. This means assessing applications, making decisions, placing people in temporary accommodation (finding it and paying for it) and securing permanent accommodation.
- Housing Association vacancies. The Council is not the landlord of Social Housing/Housing Association housing (ex-council Housing Stock). However, we do hold the North Devon Housing Register allowing us to make nominations to the many of the Housing Association vacancies. For some, in order to ensure consideration for ALL Housing Association vacancies, there is a need to also register directly with a few of the Housing Associations.

CONTACTING US

When you contact us we will:

- Be approachable, helpful and considerate
- treat you with courtesy and politeness
- listen and understand customer needs
- treat all customers equally

You can contact us in any of the following ways



By **telephone** on 01271 325757.

- We aim to answer 96% of all telephone calls within 6 rings (20 seconds)
- When we speak to you we will say good morning or afternoon, give the name of the service or person you are speaking to and ask how we can help you
- If we cannot help you immediately we will let you know who you have been speaking to and when we will contact you
- If your call needs to be transferred to another section, we will tell you the number you need to ring (unfortunately the Housing Advice Centre cannot transfer calls)
- We aim to answer all messages left on answer machines within 24 hours (Monday to Friday)
- If you leave a message on an answer machine and it is likely to take

more than 24 hours to reply we will do so as soon as possible



In **person** at the Housing Advice Centre Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and Wednesday from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- You may not be able to see the officer you wish to but an appointment will be made if necessary
- We aim to see 80% of callers within 15 minutes of visiting one of our reception areas
- All staff will wear name badges
- You will be seen in a private place if you want to



In **writing** at Housing Advice, 25 Boutport Street, Barnstaple, N Devon EX31 1RP.

- We aim to reply to 98% of letters within 10 working days
- Responses will be typed and easy to understand.



By **computer** by sending us an e-mail housing_advice@northdevon.gov.uk

- We aim to reply to 100% of emails within 1 working day.
- Responses will be typed and easy to understand.

STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE & SERVICE

We will tell you when we are reaching our standards through the local press, in our reception area, and through the Council's newspaper and also it's website at:

www.northdevon.gov.uk

For all our different types of "Requests for Service" we have
The following performance standards specific to this service are:

1. The number of households we prevent from being homeless
2. The number of households we accept as homeless
3. The length of time households spend in temporary accommodation
4. The number of rough sleepers

LEGISLATION

The work in Housing Advice (homelessness, advice and allocations) is governed by legislation contained in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homeless Act 2002).

Where the Council makes decisions in relation to this Acts it will advise applicants of their right of appeal. Ultimately applicants may be able to pursue their right of appeal in the County or High Court.

NEW IDEAS AND IMPROVEMENTS

We will undertake surveys to help to improve our services. We would appreciate your help and welcome any comments you wish to make.

We will take into account your views and give feedback through the local press, Council's newspaper, website and in reception areas.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

We intend to get things right first time, but if things do go wrong we want you to feel comfortable about challenging us and making a complaint.

You can make a complaint by contacting the service direct by any of the methods previously listed, or you can ring the Complaints Line on 01271 388260.

We will acknowledge all complaints received within 3 working days and send a full response within 10 working days.

Should the response be longer than 10 working days we will contact you and let you know when we will be able to reply.

If you are unhappy with the response, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed. This will normally be undertaken by Customer Services.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you would like this information or any information we produce to be provided in alternative languages, in braille or on audio tape, please contact Customer Services on 388240 or e-mail us on customer_services@northdevon.gov.uk.

We aim to provide this information within 15 working days of any request. We will let you know if this is likely to take longer.

REVIEW

This Charter will be reviewed every 2 years and any feedback on it would be welcome, we can then use this to inform our revised charter.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like further information on any of the services we provide or have any comments about how this Charter could be improved, please contact us in any of the ways noted in the contact section of this charter.

This Charter was produced on 3rd May 2007