

## **THE SERVICE**

- Publicising the Housing benefit and Council Tax benefits schemes
- Encouraging and inviting applications for these benefits
- Working out Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit
- Paying Housing benefit to claimants and when requested, landlords
- Paying Council Tax benefit by reducing the Council Tax due
- Preventing and detecting fraud
- Recovering Housing benefit paid that has been found not to have been due

## **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
- Tell you how long it will take to deal with your query or application
- Tell you how to appeal if you are unhappy with a decision we have made
- Tell you how to make a complaint if you are unhappy with our service

You can contact us in any of the following ways



By **telephone** on 01271 388396

- 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
- We will follow up your enquiry in the manner agreed, for example we may write to you
- If your call needs to be transferred to another section, the details of your enquiry will be passed on
- 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, the message will tell you when we will contact you.



In **person**

**Lynton House:**

Monday – Friday 8.45am – 4.00pm

**Ifracombe Area Office:**

Monday - Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

**South Molton Community Office:**

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm

Closed 1.30pm – 2.00pm

Wednesday 8.30am – 12.30pm

- 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** to: Revenues & Benefits Business Unit, Lynton House, Commercial Road, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 1DG

- We aim to reply to 98% of letters within 10 working days
- Where we are unable to respond in the above time, we will advise when a response can be expected and who is dealing with the matter
- Responses will be typed and easy to understand



By **computer** by sending us an e-mail [benefit@northdevon.gov.uk](mailto:benefit@northdevon.gov.uk)

- We aim to reply to 100% of e-mails within 1 working day
- Where we are unable to respond in the above time, we will advise when a response can be expected and who is dealing with the matter
- Responses will be typed and easy to understand

## STANDARDS OF SERVICE

We will tell you when we are reaching our standards through the local press and on the Council's website at [www.northdevon.gov.uk](http://www.northdevon.gov.uk) and in the Council newspaper.

In addition to the above standards, the following are specific to this service :

- Process all new applications for Housing benefit and Council Tax

- Benefit within 35 days of receiving all the information we need
- Process notifications of changes in circumstances in 6 calendar days
  - Process 89% of renewal claims on time
  - Process 95% of new claims within 14 days of receipt of all necessary information

## **LEGISLATION**

Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit are statutory schemes. This means that the rules and procedures that we follow are almost entirely set out in legislation. You have the right to make an appeal about our decisions (within a set period of time) and we will tell you about your rights when we write to you.

## **NEW IDEAS AND IMPROVEMENTS**

We 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 and website.

## **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](mailto: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**

We will review our guarantees every year and aim to improve our customer service to you (for example, by processing claims more quickly).

## **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 on 01271 388412.

This Charter was produced on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2007