



Benefits Service Standards



Putting the Customer First

Torbay Council is committed to putting the customer at the heart of all we do.

Improving customer care is an important part of the Council's work and our aim is to provide you with high quality services and information. To help you get the high level of service you demand and deserve; we have introduced our customer care standards.

The standards explain the level of service you can expect to receive when you contact the Benefit Section.

We aim to do the following

Dealing with our customers

- Treat you fairly with courtesy and respect.
- Reply to your handwritten correspondence, emails and telephone enquiries within ten working days. Acknowledge emails sent via our website within one working day.
- Use plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon.
- Be on time to see you for any arranged appointments and let you know a day in advance if we need to cancel an arranged appointment.
- Provide appropriate services for people whose first language is not English or who have individual requirements.
- Provide a confidential service to all our customers displaying official identification at all times.
- Wherever possible use your preferred methods of contact.
- To pay your claim as quickly as possible and get it right the first time

Dealing with comments, complaints and compliments

- Record your comments, complaints and compliments and use them to improve our services.
- We will deal with any complaints in line with the policy detailed in our Complaints Procedure Leaflet.
- Apologise when we are wrong and do our best to put things right within 5 working days.
- Treat all complaints confidentially, whilst remaining fair to all concerned.

Keeping customers informed

- Produce useful and up-to-date information about us and our services
- Tell you how to get hold of information in other formats or languages, such as large print, Braille or via audio tape.

Claim if in doubt – don't go without!

Our friendly and approachable Benefits staff will be pleased to help you all the way through the claims process.

You can make a claim in several different ways;

- Through Age concern
- At the Job Centre and through the Pensions Service
- In any of our three Connections offices
- Electronically via our website at www.torbay.gov.uk/hbform
- Over the phone by calling 01803 207201

You may need to provide proofs to help us decide your claim. We will let you know exactly what we need and why. We will not be able to award your benefit without all the items requested from you.

Once we have all we need our aim is to assess your claim within 10 days of all the information being received.

A letter will be sent to you detailing your benefit award and showing how we calculated your entitlement. We aim to get it right first time, if we don't please tell us immediately so we can correct it for you.

Measuring the service we provide

The performance of the benefits service is constantly monitored to ensure we maintain and raise our standards.

We are also required to report our performance and plans for improvement to the Government.

Our current performance in claims clearance times is featured on our website and on the screens displayed in our Connections offices. Our customer advisors will be able to tell you approximately how long it will take to deal with your claim.

Feedback

We are always looking for new ways to improve and enhance our service to you and we welcome any comments you would like to make. We also need to hear from you if we are not achieving the standards set out in this leaflet, so please contact us by:

Email: customer.feedback@torbay.gov.uk

Phone: please contact Torbay Council on 01803 201201

By letter: please write to us at the following address
Torbay Council – Benefits Service
Town Hall
Torquay TQ1 3DS

Help us to Shape our Service

We regularly hold Customer Forums to meet with our customers and find ways to improve our service to you. If you wish to take part please ring 01803 207247 or email customer.engagement@torbay.gov.uk

Alternatively write to us at:

Customer Engagement
5th Floor Roebuck House
Abbey Road
Torquay TQ2 5TF

This document can be made available in other languages, on tape, in Braille, large print and in other formats. For further information please contact 01803 207536.