

# Customer Services

How we can help you



## How we can help you...

When contacting Torbay council, it is likely that you will speak to one of our Customer Service Advisors who answer calls in our telephone Contact Centre and deal with enquires face to face in one of three connections offices based in Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

We aim to help with all council related queries and if this is not possible we will point you in the right direction or put you in touch with the right person who can answer your query.

Our aim is to:

- Resolve 80% of enquiries at the first point of contact
- Answer 90% of telephone calls within fifteen seconds
- Use plain language and avoid unnecessary jargon
- Apologise when we are wrong and do our best to put things right
- Inform customers of how they can be provided with information in other formats and other languages.

This leaflet outlines the services that we provide and the standards that we adhere to.

## Telephone / Face to face

Torbay Council operates a call centre which is located in Torquay. Also we have three Connections offices, one in each town of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. These offices are manned by the same highly trained Advisors as the call centre. The offices provide a location for customers to visit and speak to an Advisor in person for information or advice on the following:

- **Council Tax / Business rates** – We can record and give advice on any changes that may affect your account and take card payments. If you fall behind with payments we can give assistance in creating a payment plan or advise on other steps you can take to help reduce the bill if you are on a low income. We can also receive any documents relating to your account over the counter and scan to the system for an officer to deal with
- **Benefits** – We can offer advice on Housing and Council Tax Benefit, create a claim and take all information needed to pass to the benefit assessors. Any questions you may have with your claim our Advisors will also be happy to answer or set up an appointment with an assessor if it is an issue we are unable to resolve. We can also take any documents relating to your claim over the counter and scan to the system for an assessor to deal with.

- **Housing Services** – We recently expanded the service we provide to include Housing Services. We can make appointments for homeless applications or advise and liaise with housing officers to ensure we can offer the maximum assistance possible. We will also record any changes the Housing team needs advising of.
- **Parking** – We can take card payments for any fines you may have received and take cash payments via the cash kiosk in Torquay Connections. We give advice on how to contest the fines or apply for permits, ranging from disabled parking permits to controlled parking zone permits.
- **Refuse & Street Cleansing** – We can give advice on collection times and which collection scheme you are part of. We can also arrange special collections for garden waste and bulky items. If you have any other requests regarding street cleansing we can pass on all the relevant details to the Street Cleansing team for them to deal with accordingly.
- **Anti Social Behaviour** – We can take details of any anti social behaviour you have witnessed or been subject to. These details will then be passed to our safer communities' team for the problem to be resolved.
- **Highways** – If you see any defects with the road or footpaths in Torbay we can take details of the location and problem for the highways team to maintain and repair.
- **General Enquiries** – If a customer is unsure about what action to take with anything related to Torbay Council they can call us or come into Connections and we will help as best as we can.
- **Complaints, compliments** – If you wish to log a complaint or compliment we can do this for you or give you the relevant forms and information on how to do it yourself.
- **Payments** – If you want to make payment to the Council you can do this in a number of ways. Torquay Connections is the only office to accept cash payments via the cash kiosk; all offices accept cheques and card payments which can also be taken over the phone with an advisor or by using the automated payments line.
- **Bus Passes** – In our front facing offices there are facilities to take details for national bus passes and student bus pass photos. The advisor will check all relevant documents whether it is for an over 60's pass or disabled pass, they will take your photo and put all details on the system for the pass to be issued in the post. If you are requiring a student pass we can also take your photo in the office to be forwarded to the Education Dept for processing.
- **Planning** – You can make enquiries regarding planning at all offices, obtain the relevant forms and view current plans that are awaiting approval in Paignton and Brixham, Torquay plans are held at Roebuck House.

## Additional Services

As well as being able to see an advisor face to face we provide a number of other services when visiting Connections:

**Free Phone** – All three Connections offices have a free phone which you can use to speak directly with further departments, these are:

- Parking
- Environmental Protection
- Planning and Development
- Refuse and Street Cleansing
- Adult Services (Torbay NHS Care Trust)
- Highways
- Fraud Hotline
- Dept of Work and Pensions
- Torbay Pound

**Internet Pods** – In Torquay Connections there are four customer ‘computer pods’ these are free of charge to use and allow instant internet access to the following organisations via easy to use desktop links:

- Torbay Council
- Devon County Council
- Direct Gov
- Consumer Direct
- Devon Home Choice
- Homeswapper
- South Devon College
- Age Concern
- English Riviera Tourist Information
- NHS Direct
- HM Revenue & Customs
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Dept of Work & Pensions
- Jobcentre Plus
- Devon & Cornwall Police
- Devon & Somerset Fire Services

**Security Team/ Triage** – In Torquay Connections the security/ triage team can accept documents for scanning if you do not need to speak to an advisor directly or if you have an appointment they will let the officer know you have arrived.

**Surgeries** – The Connections offices hold a number of weekly surgeries, this enables us to provide a wide range of services as listed below.

## Torquay Connections

### Monday

Housing Service .....	9.00am - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Benefits.....	9.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

### Tuesday

Torbay Pound .....	12.30pm - 5.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Services.....	9.00am - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Benefits.....	9.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

### Wednesday

Housing Services.....	10.30am - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Benefits.....	10.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

### Thursday

Torbay Pound .....	9.30pm - 5.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Services.....	9.00am - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Benefits.....	9.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

### Friday

Housing Services.....	9.00am - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Housing Benefits.....	9.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Adrian Sanders MP (One Friday per month) .....	4.00 - 5.30pm	Drop-In Service

## Paignton Connections

### Monday

Housing Services.....	9.00am - 2.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
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### Tuesday

Primary Care Trust Drugs Service	10.00am - 12.30pm	Drop-In Service
Housing Benefits.....	9.00am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

### Wednesday

Housing Benefits.....	9.30am - 3.30pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>
Torbay Pound .....	12.30pm - 4.00pm	<i>(Appointment Only)</i>

## Thursday

Housing Services.....9.00am - 2.30pm (Appointment Only)

Housing Benefits.....9.30am - 3.30pm (Appointment Only)

## Friday

Torbay Pound .....9.30pm - 4.00pm (Appointment Only)

## Brixham Connections

### Monday

Citizens Advice Bureau .....9.30am – 12.30pm (Appointment Only)

### Tuesday

Torbay Primary Care

Drugs Service.....1.30pm - 3.30pm Drop-in Service

### Wednesday

Housing Benefits.....10.30am - 12.00noon (Appointment Only)

Torbay Pound .....1.30am - 4.00pm (Appointment Only)

Citizens Advice Bureau .....9.30am - 12.30pm (Appointment Only)

### Friday

Housing Services.....9.00am - 4.15pm (Appointment Only)

Citizens Advice Bureau

(Debt Advice) .....9.30am - 2.30pm (Appointment Only)

## Email

If you ever need to contact us out of office hours you can email us using the first stop shop email address: **FSS@torbay.gov.uk**

Any emails that come through to the first stop shop mailbox are responded to by our Advisors. We aim to answer or forward on any departmental specific emails within 2 working days.

Queries that we cannot deal with are forwarded onto the relevant department for them to respond to within 10 working days, or in the case of a freedom of information request, 20 working days. We always include in our reply the feedback departments email address and details of the departments that we are forwarding to. Below are listed some useful email addresses.

**Council.tax@torbay.gov.uk**

**Housing.benefits@torbay.gov.uk**

**Housing.advice@torbay.gov.uk**

**Refuse.streetcleansing@torbay.gov.uk**  
**Planning@torbay.gov.uk**  
**CSenquiries@torbay.gov.uk**  
**Customer.feedback@torbay.gov.uk**

## Quality Standards

In order to ensure the highest quality of service:

- You will always be given a warm and enthusiastic welcome by polite and friendly staff.
- We will listen to you in order to understand how best to deal with your enquiry.
- We will always provide you with up to date information relating to your enquiry.
- All matters are treated fairly and in the strictest confidence.
- We will explain what will happen or what to do next.
- Supply feedback forms so that you can let us know of any compliment, complaint or comment that you have.

## Addresses and Opening Times for Connections

### **Torquay Connections**

**Electric House**

**Castle Circus**

**Torquay**

**TQ1 3DR**

### **Paignton Connections**

**56 Palace Avenue**

**Paignton**

**TQ3 3HF**

### **Brixham Connections**

**Brixham Town Hall**

**New Road**

**Brixham**

**TQ5 8TA**

### **Torquay Connections/ Call centre**

Monday 8.30am - 5.30pm

Tuesday 8.30am - 5.30pm

Wednesday 9.30am - 5.30pm

Thursday 8.30am - 5.30pm

Friday 8.30am - 5.30pm

Saturday - Call Centre only:

8.30am - 12.00noon

### **Paignton / Brixham Connections**

Monday 9.00am - 4.15pm

Tuesday 9.00am - 4.15pm

Wednesday 9.30am - 4.15pm

Thursday 9.00am - 4.15pm

Friday 9.00am - 4.15pm

Each office also has a post box for you to deposit documents with us. Original documents will be returned within 5 working days.

Other useful numbers:

**Housing Benefit .....01803 207201**

**Council Tax .....01803 207207**

**Housing Advice.....01803 208723**

**Anti Social Behaviour.....01803 207900**

## Improving our service to you...

Here are some examples of recent changes we have made as a result of your comments:

**You said...** 'you found the new cash machine unfriendly in Connections'.

**We did...** 'placed a sign advising all of our customers that our Triage person is happy to help and offer assistance'.

**You said...** 'you would like a children's play area in connections'.

**We did...** 'Torquay connections now has a children's play area set up'.

**You said...** 'the pre-recorded telephone message plays too fast'.

**We did...** 're-recorded the message at a slower pace'.

We are always looking for new ways to improve and enhance our services 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 let us know by contacting us.

Email: [customer.feedback@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:customer.feedback@torbay.gov.uk)

Phone: please contact Torbay Council on **01803 207201**

By letter: please write to us at the following address

**Torbay Council – Customer First Core Group**  
**Town Hall**  
**Torquay**  
**TQ1 3DS**

*Please note:*

*At Torbay Council we strive to provide the best possible service to our customers and we aspire to meet the standards set out in this document.*

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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 207201.