

Customer Service Standards: Our Commitment to You



1. Introduction

Why do we need standards?

We have standards in place to tell you what level of service you can expect from us. It also tells you what we expect from you and what to do if things go wrong. We want to give you the best service possible and these standards help us to deliver a consistently high level of service across the whole of the council.

2. What you can expect from us

Principles that are important to us

If you need to contact your council then please be reassured that we are committed to the following principles:

- Being open and responsive to the communities we serve
- Providing a choice of access to the services that people want and need
- Consultation with our customers, learn from their views and feedback when consultation has taken place
- Investing in our technology to provide better on-line services for those customers that prefer this method
- Retaining more traditional methods of access as well as introducing on line services
- Investing in our staff so they are equipped to serve you better
- Our equalities policy and why it is so important.

Customer Service Standards Contributing to our Corporate Ambitions

Everything we do to improve services will be done to achieve a specific aim or ambition identified in the corporate plan.

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's vision for the organisation. It shows how we will get to where we want to go over the next four years and it looks back at our progress to date.

Our values set out our aspirations for Barnet as an organisation and place, serving its residents:

1. Barnet – the place: We want Barnet to play its part on the wider stage as a successful city suburb in a successful London
2. Barnet – the people: We want to work with our partners to understand the needs and aspirations of our residents so that we consistently provide excellent public services to our diverse population
3. Barnet – the organisation: We want to provide high quality services offering value for money and maximum choice.

3. How will we know we are achieving better services?

Do we monitor our standards?

At Barnet Council we take monitoring against the standards seriously. Over and above performance indicators we also use a variety of other methods to check the quality of service being provided. These methods include:

- Telephone monitoring
- Complaint monitoring
- Mystery shopping
- Quality checks on correspondence
- General observations
- Feedback from customers
- Focus groups with staff and customers.

These methods enable us to identify areas of good practice, areas for improvement and where we are in our journey to improve services to you, the customer.



4. Our Standards

At Barnet Council we aim to provide a first class service for our customers by achieving those ambitions identified in the corporate plan. We want you the customer to experience a real improvement in the way you access council services. We take this commitment very seriously and we have a number of principles that we strive to achieve to ensure you receive the best service possible from your council.

We will provide:

- A range of ways for you to access the services you need, in a way that is most convenient for you. This will include electronic methods, as well as telephone, in writing and face to face
- An excellent service and will always strive to deliver regardless of how you contact us
- The best services with value for money.

Our commitment to you, we will:

- Be welcoming, polite and helpful
- Do our best to help you
- Communicate in plain language, not jargon
- Listen to your feedback and use this to improve the quality of our services
- Respect your right to privacy and confidentiality.

Help us to help you , you should:

- Be polite and treat our staff with respect
- Let us know if you have any special requirements so that we can provide the right help
- Feedback to us if you feel we are not performing accordingly.

When contacting us by telephone

- We aim to answer your call **within** 25 seconds or nine rings
- If we are unavailable we will divert our phone to voicemail or a colleague
- Tell you the department and give you our name when we answer
- Return your phone calls on the same day or when you ask us to
- Provide a telephone interpreting service if you are hard of hearing or speak a different language.

When contacting us in writing (either letter, e-mail or web form)

- We aim to acknowledge your correspondence with in two working days or respond fully within 10 working days
- If we are unable to respond in full, we will update you on progress and advise you when we can respond
- Provide well structured responses, using plain language responding to all the points raised.

When visiting us

- We will welcome you and offer assistance to help
- Ensure all of our staff are wearing a name badge and can be easily identified
- Provide a pleasant, clean, tidy and safe reception area
- Direct you to the appropriate person or team
- Keep waiting times as short as possible for those with out an appointment
- If you have an appointment with us we will see you within 15 minutes of your appointment time
- Ensure everyone can gain easy access to our services.

Our Commitment to Equality

- Our staff will deal with your needs accordingly and treat you with the respect and understanding that you deserve and make the necessary arrangements to do so.

5. Comments, compliments or complaints

Our approach

- It is your right to make comments, compliments or complaints
- Your views matter
- All formal complaints or comments will be thoroughly and fairly investigated
- If we are at fault we will attempt to put things right
- No one will be treated less favourably because they make a comment or complaint.
- If you wish to feedback to us you can visit www.barnet.gov.uk, selecting contact us, where there is a form you can complete to make a complaint, comment or feedback on council services or consultations.