

London Borough of Barnet

Housing Department

Housing Benefit Division

Service Accessibility Strategy

Telephone Service

- We will ensure that we are open on a normal working day for a minimum of 36 hours per week for telephone enquiries from members of the public. We will publicise our opening hours for telephone enquiries which are currently

Monday	9.00am to 5.15pm
Tuesday	9.00 am to 5.15 pm
Wednesday	1.00 pm to 5.15 pm
Thursday	9.00 am to 5.15 pm
Friday	9.00 am to 5.00 pm

- When the phone lines are closed on Wednesday mornings we will maintain an answer-phone service on the public lines and maintain an emergency line via the main Council switchboard.
- The telephones will be answered by fully trained benefit staff, who can answer the full range of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit queries. These specific members of staff will be supported by Senior Benefit Officers and Benefit Managers who will either speak to the person directly or ring them back within one working day if they are unable to take the call immediately.
- In accordance with the corporate standard, telephones will be answered within five rings.
- We support “type talk”
- We can be contacted by minicom
- We can be contacted by email and fax

Drop in Enquiry Service

- The enquiry office at Fenella will be open for enquiries from 9.00 am to 4.30 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 1.00 pm to 4.30 pm on Wednesdays.
- At least one booth at Fenella has been fitted with a hearing loop.
- The enquiry counter is wheelchair friendly with flat access from the pavement but no automatic doors. There are toilet facilities for disabled

customers. The enquiry office meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 1999.

- Disabled parking bays are nearby and Barnet supports the Blue Badge scheme.
- Customer Advisory Officers are trained in basic sign language.

Surgeries

Subject to the resources being available, we will hold regular benefit surgeries away from the main enquiry office where a trained benefit enquiry officer can help people claim, receive claim forms and give advice and information on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

First Contact or Action Points

Staff at First Contact and Action Points around the borough can receive claim forms and original documents, as can those in area Housing Offices.

Accessibility By Public Transport

The enquiry office in Fenella is well served by public transport with buses from most parts of the borough stopping within 0.5km. The nearest tube station is Hendon Central on the Edgware branch of the Northern Line.

Subsidised Travel

- Taxi card is a method of providing subsidised door-to-door transport for people who have serious mobility impairment and difficulty in using public transport. Taxi cardholders make journeys in licensed London taxis and the subsidy applies directly to each trip.
- Barnet Council issues a range of freedom passes for: people with physical disabilities, including people who are blind, partially sighted, deaf, or without normal speech; people with severe learning disabilities; and people with severe mental health problems.
- Freedom passes for Barnet residents aged over 60 are available from all post offices in the borough. The pass entitles these residents to free travel on buses, underground and trains within Greater London and immediate surroundings. The passes are reissued every two years.

Language

- Staff who speak a second language provide an interpretive service on the counter and the telephone. Where the language is not spoken by a member of staff, professional interpreters will be provided by the Council's translation service either at the publicized times for the telephone translation service or for pre-booked appointments.

- The translation service will also arrange for items to be translated into Braille.
- Information about the translation service will be published in the waiting area.
- Claim forms and leaflets will have information on them in the principal languages spoken in the borough. Leaflets will be available in the principal languages spoken in the borough.
- Publicity and take-up will be carried out with regard to the publicity and take-up policy.

