

## **Darlington Borough Council's Customer Charter**

This Customer Charter re-inforces the value the Council places on ensuring that the public's interaction with us is a good experience. It sets out the Council's overarching general principles for going the 'extra mile' in our customer focus approach. We aim to provide quality services to the public of Darlington. This Charter shaped by consultation with customers and staff, sets out the standards of service our customers should expect, what to do if something goes wrong and how to contact us.

### **When you get in touch with us we will:**

- Be welcoming and polite
- Tell you who we are and which service we work for when you ring us
- When you visit us we will greet you and ask how we can help.
- Listen carefully to what you say
- Record your details accurately
- Give enough time to deal with your enquiry
- Deal with your query in a fair, helpful, respectful, friendly and efficient manner, aiming to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact where possible and doing all we can to support you
- Explain what more information we need from you to help resolve your query
- Be prompt with our responses
- Provide correct information and explain things clearly
- Give you the details for the right organisation if your enquiry is not part of our business
- Provide a fair and unbiased service, regardless of your race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability.
- Respect your legal rights under the Data Protection Act
- Treat all information in confidence and ask your permission to share it unless we are legally bound to pass information on to others
- Provide opportunities for you to be consulted and give us feedback on how we are delivering our services
- Apologise if we make a mistake and correct it as quickly as possible
- Provide you with a full explanation if we are unable to give you what you are asking for

### **If you visit us we will:**

- Keep our reception areas warm, clean, tidy and comfortable
- Welcome you on arrival
- Wear our identity badges so you know who we are
- Deal with you promptly keeping any delays down to a minimum (we aim to see 90% of visitors to the Customer Service centre within 10 minutes)
- Respect your privacy and see you in a private place if you prefer
- Offer an appointment where this may be more suitable
- Ask your permission to answer the telephone should it ring whilst dealing with you
- Assist any visitors with particular access requirements
- Offer you help with completing forms or with seating if you need it

### **If we visit you we will:**

- Visit you at a time that is convenient for you where possible
- Identify ourselves and show you our identity badge

- Keep our appointment or make contact with you if we are delayed
- Respect your home

#### **If you telephone us we will:**

- Answer 80% of calls within 10 - 20 seconds
- Greet you with Hello/Good Morning or afternoon, give you our name and which service you have contacted
- Try to answer your query. If we are unable we will give you the contact details of the person who should be able to answer your query before we transfer you
- Take your contact details if the person you wish to speak to is unavailable and ask that person to make contact with you either the same day if possible or the next working day
- Only use voicemail when it is not possible for us to answer the telephone. If voicemail is activated we will either make contact the same day if possible or the next working day

#### **If you write, fax or email us we will:**

- Provide a full response to 90% of letters faxes and e-mails within 10 working days making reference to the date of your enquiry. If we are not able to we will write to give you a date when you can expect a full reply. Please note that if you make a request under planning or information rights legislation, you will receive a full response within the appropriate statutory timescale.
- Use language which is clear to understand in our reply
- Include a contact name and direct telephone number to help you if you need any further information
- Use Braille, large print and different languages if you need us to

#### **If you make a complaint we will try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible, usually at the first point of contact. If you want a more formal reply or you are unhappy with our first response we will:**

- Acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days
- Investigate your complaint
- Provide a written response within 10 working days in relation to a stage 1 (informal) complaint. Where we are unable to do so we will write and tell you why, and advise you of when we hope to resolve it  
(Adults and Children Social care are governed by legal timescales. To investigate a stage 1 complaint the timescale is within 10 working days with the option to extend to 20 days in consultation with the complainant).
- Provide a written response within 20 working days in relation to a Stage 2 (formal) complaint. Where we are unable to do so we will write and tell you why, and advise you of when we hope to resolve it.  
(Adults and Children Social care are governed by legal timescales to investigate a stage 2 complaint the timescale is between 25 to 65 days).
- Further information on our complaints process is available from the Town Hall or on our website [www.darlington.gov.uk/connectingwithcommunities/](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/connectingwithcommunities/)

#### **Help us to Help You**

To help us deliver our Customer Charter it is important that customers treat our staff with courtesy, politeness and respect. We will not tolerate abusive behaviour and we will support our staff who experience discrimination, abuse or threats.

**How to contact us**

Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington, Co Durham, DL1 5QT Telephone 01325 380651

Town Hall Opening Times:   Monday-Thursday   8.45am - 4.45pm  
  Friday                      8.45am - 4.15pm

Central House Gladstone Street opening time:   Monday- Thursday   8.30am - 5pm  
  Friday                      8.30am – 4.30pm

Email: [enquiries@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@darlington.gov.uk)

Website address: [www.darlington.gov.uk](http://www.darlington.gov.uk) -

**Monitoring our Customer Charter**

To make sure we are delivering to our standards we will monitor our Customer Charter every three months and post the results on our website [www.darlington.gov.uk/connectingwithcommunities/](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/connectingwithcommunities/)

To help us with this you may be asked to complete a Customer Charter satisfaction survey.

If you feel this Customer Charter is not being delivered then please contact Sharon Brown Head of Connecting with Communities (01325) 388684.

This Charter will be included as an integral part of the Council's customer training programme.