



Scarborough Borough Council

Benefits Service

Vision Statement & Customer Charter 2019/20

Our commitment to you is to:

“Ensure the right benefit is paid first time, every time promptly and accurately to all those entitled, whilst guarding against fraud.”

What does the Benefits Service do?

- We provide financial help towards private tenants' housing costs and Council Tax through the Housing Benefit and Local Support for Council Tax schemes for those people with limited income.
- We also assist owner-occupiers in paying their Council Tax bills through the Local Support for Council Tax scheme.
- We offer an enquiry service for tenants and landlords seeking advice on Housing Benefit and Local Support for Council Tax.
- We administered Housing Benefit and Local Support for Council Tax to an average 11,243 customers paying £33.5m in Housing Benefit and £9.3m in Local Support for Council Tax, assessing 4,774 new claims and 78,182 changes in circumstances in 2018/19.
- We actioned 869 requests for Discretionary Housing Payments, awarding £212,025 to those in need of additional financial assistance towards their housing costs in 2018/19.

Scarborough Borough Council is committed to providing a quality Benefits Service to our customers by ensuring that:

- It is accessible and customer-focused.
- The right benefit is paid accurately and promptly to all those entitled.
- All documents are clear and easy to understand.
- Customers can contact us using a variety of methods; face to face, by telephone, by email or through the internet.
- The person assisting you is polite and knowledgeable and has received appropriate training, support and development.
- We put things right when they go wrong.
- Customers are informed of what their responsibilities are in order to minimise fraud and overpayments.

Our Aims

- To provide a professional, efficient, cost effective, active and forward looking Benefits Service.
- To treat all customers with courtesy, respect and fairness and provide friendly help and advice.
- Protect public funds and refer all allegations of fraud for investigation.
- Work closely with various agencies – encourage partnerships to harmonise customer interaction, embracing and supporting diversity and promoting equality.
- Process claims swiftly, accurately and securely whilst continually driving up standards to aspire to top quartile National Performance Indicator for 'Right Time'.

Our Objectives

- To continue the upward trend in claim processing performance by adopting best practice and harnessing innovations in new technology/ICT.
- To focus on improved customer service and accessibility through remote working, web-enabled facilities, telephone & other electronic media.
- To forward plan and manage the effects on our service and our customers in light of wider welfare reforms.
- To challenge our service and encourage others to challenge us ensuring continuous improvement to the service.
- To compare and evaluate our performance with other benefit services and regularly report on our progress.
- To continue to provide a cost-effective and competitive service that maintains respect for the individual.

Our Standards of Service 2018/19

- We took on average 5.51 days to process Housing Benefit new claims & changes in circumstances ('Right Time Indicator' target 10 days).
- Paid 97.9% of complete rent allowance claims on time or within 7 days (target 95%).
- We took on average 7.28 days to process Local Support for Council Tax new claims & changes in circumstances (target 10 days).
- Saw 89.8% of customers within 10 minutes in Customer First (target 80%).

Customer Charter 2019/20

In 2019/20 The Benefits Service will:

- Aim to process new benefit claims and changes in circumstance from date of receipt on average within 10 days.
- Aim to pay 95% new rent allowance claims on time (within 7 days of processing).
- Notify applicants within 14 days of processing a claim of their Housing Benefit entitlement.
- Carry out regular consultation with customers & stakeholders to seek your views on how well we are meeting your needs and how we can work better in the future.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to improve access to the Benefits Service.
- Benchmark our service against other Local Authorities to ensure continued Value for Money.

In return we expect you to:

- Be polite and courteous to us.
- Make sure you complete all details on any benefit claim or review form and provide all necessary documents in support of your claim.
- Return your application form without delay.
- Provide us with any further information or supporting proof we need to process your claim.
- Advise us promptly of any changes in circumstances which may affect your benefit entitlement.
- Pay back any recoverable overpayments quickly.

As one of our customers you have a right to expect Scarborough Borough Council to provide a professional, efficient, cost effective, active and modern Benefits Service.

Any suggestions you have on how we can improve our service are welcomed.

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