



Scarborough Borough Council **Housing Options Team Service** **Standards**

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Our commitment to you.

If you have nowhere to live or think you are about to become homeless in the Borough of Scarborough, we can help. This service is called Housing Options. The Housing Options Team offer practical and useful advice and your details and situation will be treated in confidence (unless there are Safeguarding concerns that have to be shared with other statutory agencies).

We will do our best to prevent you from becoming homeless or to relieve your homelessness.

To access the Housing Options Service, call in to the Customer First Centre of Scarborough Town Hall where a drop-in service is provided Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) or call us on 01723 232323. We are also available on an appointment only basis on Mondays and Thursdays (excluding Bank Holidays) in the Jobcentre Plus office in Whitby.

You can also email housingoptions@scarborough.gov.uk and you can go on-line at www.scarborough.gov.uk where you can also make an on-line referral.

About these Service Standards.

This leaflet tells you what you can expect from us when you are using the Housing Options Service.

Customer Service Standards.

Our service standard aims are to:

- Answer all direct phone calls to the Team within six rings during normal office hours. The person who answers the phone will give their name and service area.
- Deal with phone calls straight away or, where this is not possible, call you back within two working days or at an agreed time.
- Reply to letters and emails within 10 working days (if we need to follow with a more detailed reply, we will let you know when to expect it).
- Send forms or information leaflets you ask for within five working days.
- Provide you with clear and relevant advice and information in response to any query.
- Treat the information you tell us as confidential unless we have serious concerns for the welfare of an adult or child that requires a Safeguarding referral.
- Visit you in your own home if you cannot come to our offices.
- Leave a calling card when we visit you at home and you are not in.
- Staff will carry identity badges at all times. Please always ask to see identification before letting anyone into your home.
- When you access the Housing Options Team in an office, if you have an appointment you will be seen within fifteen minutes of your appointment time wherever possible.
- If you call in without an appointment and your enquiry can be dealt with there and then, we will deal with this at the time of your visit.
- If you do not have an appointment but you do have an urgent housing problem. For example, if you are homeless when you see us, we will give you advice and assistance on the same day
- If your enquiry means that you need to see one of our officers we will offer you an appointment within seven working days or when convenient for you.

- We will provide all of our service users with equal access to our service.
- We will not discriminate against anyone because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We will...

- Treat you with respect and deliver our service in a way that meets your needs.
- Train all our staff in equality and diversity issues.
- Act quickly and correctly against any kind of discrimination.
- Make sure our offices are accessible.
- Provide induction loops and sign language facilities if you need them.
- Use written and spoken language that is clear and easy to understand.
- Provide you with written documents that are easy to read and offer them in large print, Braille or an audio format if required.
- Arrange to translate documents or for an interpreter to explain written documents to you if you are a non-English speaker.
- Share information with the police in order to assist them to prevent and detect crime, for your safety and security and the safety and security of others.

Applying as Homeless.

If we believe you are homeless or threatened to become homeless within 56 days you may need to make a 'homeless application'. When we are processing your homeless application:

- We will develop a Personalised Housing Plan with you which we will keep under review. If your homelessness may be able to be prevented we will attempt to do this for 56 days or more, unless you become homeless in the meantime. If you are homeless, we will exercise our duty for 56 days to try to relieve your homelessness.
- If we cannot prevent or relieve your homelessness, we will write to you with a final decision on your homelessness application as soon as any necessary final investigations are completed.
- We will tell you about your right to ask us to review our decision, and your right to appeal against any review decisions.

- If you ask for a review of our decision, we aim to complete the review within 56 days of receiving your request. If we require more time than this, we will contact you to agree more time for us to make a decision.
- We will provide an emergency service outside of office hours, 365 days of the year.
- If you ask what is happening to your homelessness application, we will contact you with the information you asked for, within 10 working days.
- We will give you the contact number for the officer dealing with your case so that you know who to contact with any queries.
- We will always try to provide advice and information on your first visit or contact either in person or by telephone or email.

Temporary accommodation.

If you are homeless and have nowhere to stay, we may have a duty to give you temporary accommodation while we finish processing your homelessness application. Regardless of if you need temporary accommodation or not and if we have a duty to provide it or not, our service is the same:

- If you have nowhere to stay and you ask for assistance, we will tell you on the same day whether we have a legal duty to arrange temporary accommodation for you.
- If you are placed in a temporary accommodation, we will tell you the name and contact details of your caseworker. Your caseworker will regularly update you about your homelessness application, and give you general housing advice.
- We will look at your accommodation needs, to give you accommodation that suits you as far as is practicable in the circumstances.
- We will make sure that families with dependent children or where someone in the household is pregnant, do not stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than six weeks.
- If you are entitled to housing benefit we will arrange for an application to be made, and if you need us to, we will help you to fill in the forms.
- We will not accommodate any homeless individual 16 or 17 year olds in bed and breakfast accommodation.
- If you are placed in temporary accommodation, we will arrange a support worker for you.

- The support worker will tell you their name and will look at any support needs that have been identified and work with you to address these, including adding any additional areas of support that are required.
- Your support worker will attempt to contact you at least once every week that you remain in temporary accommodation.
- Your support worker will refer your details on to other agencies who may also be able to offer you specific support around your exact needs (unless you specifically state that you don't want such referrals making).

Can you work with us to make the service better?

We are always looking for service users to tell us how we can improve our service. If you would like to comment on our service please contact us.

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