

Our Customer Services Standards

All our employees will be expected to meet and exceed these standards wherever possible.

Our customers are central to everything we do. We must:

- work hard to continuously improve our services
- consult users when we are developing our services
- measure how well we are delivering our services and publish the results
- publish and act upon the results of our customer satisfaction surveys
- monitor the way we work to ensure we work together and deliver value for money
- address any inappropriate discrimination and make our services accessible to everyone.

The council's performance will be against measured the standards so that we can take action to improve where necessary.

When customers contact us, we will:

- be polite and treat them with courtesy, fairness, honesty and respect
- listen carefully and ask for their views
- use plain language when we speak or write to them
- explain our decisions and the reasons for them
- respect confidentiality where possible; however, this is subject to the obligations contained under the Freedom of Information Act
- be realistic about what we can and can't do
- apologise when we make a mistake, and put things right
- accept our customers' right to complain and provide an appropriate response.

What we expect from our customers. Please:

- treat our staff with courtesy and respect
- avoid unacceptable behaviour – including verbal or threatening abuse
- provide the right information and documentation we need to be able to help
- tell us when we do or don't meet your expectations, giving your honest views and suggestions on how we could improve our services.

In the event that a member of staff suffers abuse we will take further action in conjunction with our violence policy.

Contact us on 01707 357000
or: contact-whc@welhat.gov.uk.

Our out of hours emergency line is available
on: 0800 1114484.

Our out of hours payment line is available
on: 01707 357755.

1. Contacting us by telephone

- We will answer the telephone or the call will be transferred to voicemail within eight rings
- We will identify ourselves clearly by greeting callers, detailing our name and department
- If we can't answer the call personally, we will provide the opportunity to leave a message and/or a clear indication of when someone will call the customer back
- If we call a customer we will give our name, say that we are calling from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, and explain why we're calling.

2. Contacting us by letter, fax, email or via the website

- We will acknowledge correspondence – email, letters and fax – within three working days. Where necessary we will provide a full response within ten working days.
- Response times are from the date of the council's receipt of an email, letter or fax (and do not affect the 20 working days time limit for Freedom of Information requests).

3. Visiting us

- We aim to see customers within five minutes of their appointment time
- If we are delayed, we will explain why, say how long they may have to wait and give the option of coming back on an alternative day or time
- If the customer does not have an appointment, reception staff will aim to see them within 15 minutes; if they need to see someone that is unavailable we will offer an appointment.
- We will always have our name badges clearly displayed to identify ourselves
- We will provide clean and comfortable waiting areas, with information about our services
- Wherever possible, we will provide space for our customers to see us in private.

4. Visiting our customers

- We will always show our name badge before entering a property, which customers should always ask to see – our staff won't mind!
- We will inform our customers as soon as possible if we are delayed or have to postpone the meeting.

5. Meeting our customers needs

We will ask our customers to let us know if they need to access information or our services in a different way. Wherever possible, we can arrange for:

- written translations
- interpreters – British sign and other languages
- information in large print, audio or Braille
- public meetings in accessible venues, with induction loops or other suitable systems for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

If customers have difficulty getting through to a particular service, they can call our Customer Contact Centre on 01707 357000 (8.45am to 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.45pm on Friday).

www.welhat.gov.uk

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