

Charter 4

THE SERVICE CHARTER

Dear customer

Welcome to our customer charter, which sets out our customer service standards. It also explains how we can help each other and what to do if things go wrong. We are an organisation that stands for improving services for older people and helping people to plan for their later years. We deliver our business through a network of centres and a face-to-face service in local communities. We are committed to delivering a service that focuses on our customers. We welcome your views on our service and how we can improve further.

(Options provided for contact including name of Chief Executive @ an email address.)

Contacting us (List of telephone contacts provided in table form, the costs of using this contact and details of what will happen when you phone)

What we will do

- We will pay you your entitlements accurately and on time.
- If you are not entitled, we will let you know why.
- We will provide an accessible and convenient service to deal with applications and any changes of circumstances you tell us about.
- We will give you accurate information about State Pension, Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments, and direct you to the right place for other related services.
- We will provide a forecast of your future entitlement to XXXXXX, if you ask for one, to help you plan for retirement.
- We will give you information on other help you might be entitled to, for example Social Fund, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance or Council Tax Benefit.

Our staff will:

- treat you with respect;
- treat you as an individual;
- listen to what you say;
- be fair, helpful and easy to talk to;
- give clear explanations;
- keep what you say to us confidential; and
- tell you exactly what you need to do and what information we need.

You can help us by:

- giving your National Insurance number when you contact us;
- giving us full and accurate information;
- telling us about changes in your circumstances and those of anyone else you are receiving an entitlement for;
- having any information you might need ready when you phone us; and
- treating our staff with respect.

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When you apply for your entitlement, we will:

- let you know how much you will get, when and how you will get it;
- let you know if you are not entitled and give you a clear explanation why;
- tell you how changes in your circumstances could affect your entitlement;
- contact you to let you know if we need more information;
- return, within five working days, any personal documents you send us. If we need to keep them for longer, we will tell you why.

When you write to us

We aim to reply fully within 10 working days of receiving your letter.

If you contact us by e-mail, we will acknowledge straight away that we have received your e-mail and send you a full reply within 10 working days.

If we can't give a full reply to your letter or e-mail within 10 working days, we will tell you why and how long it will be before we can give a full answer.

You can contact us by fax. You can get the fax number from our website, from letters you have received from us, or by phoning us.

About our Local Service

We offer face-to-face information and support to those customers who need it through our Local Service staff. (Provides ground rules for behaviour of staff and service levels provided e.g. appointment time, providing proof of who is visiting).

Giving you information

We will tell you about your entitlements to all benefits and payments.

We will also:

- Always try to be helpful to anyone who contacts us on your behalf. We may ask for your permission to give information to someone who is helping you.
- Provide a range of leaflets about our service, which are easy to understand.
- Provide help filling in our forms over the phone or in person if you have difficulty using the phone.

If you think a decision we have made on your application is wrong, you can do the following.

In most cases, you will be able to appeal to an independent tribunal. However, in all cases, you can ask us to explain our decision.

You can ask us to explain our decision again. If you want us to look at the decision again, you should usually contact us within one month of the date of the letter giving you the decision. If you are still not happy about the decision, you will usually be able to appeal to an independent tribunal. The letter telling you about our decision will tell you if you can appeal and how to do it.