



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

# Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

## Customer Charter 2016 - 2021

March 2016

## Customer Charter

### OUR MISSION

- To contribute to national recovery in support of job creation through the delivery of our policies and programmes
- To ensure good quality housing in sustainable communities
- To ensure planning and building contribute to sustainable and balanced development
- To support and enable democratic and responsive local government
- To protect and improve water resources and the quality of drinking water
- To promote and support the development of communities and the community and voluntary sector
- To monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate
- To contribute to public service reform

### OUR OVERARCHING GOALS

Goal 1 – Supporting our citizens in safe and sustainable communities

Goal 2 – Managing our resources and promoting sustainable growth

### OUR VALUES

Our values which inform everything we do in the Department in delivering for the public are:

- Integrity and professionalism
- Openness and transparency
- Flexibility, responsiveness, innovation and learning
- Consultation and partnership
- Commitment to society and citizens
- Pursuit of effectiveness, efficiency and value for money

### OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CUSTOMERS

As outlined in our *Statement of Strategy 2015-2017* our aim is to “ensure the ongoing development of a high performance Department committed to providing a quality, efficient and effective service to all our customers.”

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is committed to providing high quality, courteous and timely services to all its customers in accordance with the 12 Guiding Principles for Quality Customer Service outlined below.

While Met Éireann is operationally autonomous and prepares and publishes its own Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan, as a Division of this Department, it is committed to carrying out its functions in accordance with this Charter and Action Plan.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE**

### **1. Quality Service Standards**

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customer can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

### **2. Equality/Diversity**

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation and accommodate diversity. We will do so to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation. We will identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

### **3. Physical Access**

Provide clean, accessible offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

### **4. Information**

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

### **5. Timeliness and Courtesy**

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

### **6. Complaints**

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

### **7. Appeals**

Maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

### **8. Consultation and Evaluation**

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

### **9. Official Languages Equality**

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

## **10. Better Co-ordination**

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

## **11. Internal Customer**

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

## **OUR CUSTOMERS**

Given the diversity of our activities, we have a wide range of customers including members of the public, elected representatives, local authorities, our agencies, other partner bodies, other Government Departments and Offices, international organisations, NGOs and many voluntary and representative groups.

### **Our commitment to you, our customer**

Meeting your needs is important to us and we aim to achieve this by:-

- Giving you the best possible service and providing helpful advice
- Treating you properly, fairly, impartially and with courtesy
- Aiming to ensure that your rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services, and
- Aiming to meet any special needs you may have

Whatever means you use to contact the Department, we will deal with your enquiry efficiently and promptly and treat you with courtesy and respect.

If your enquiry relates to a matter that comes within the remit of another public body, we will direct your enquiry to that body and inform you accordingly.

### **Contact by Letter**

If you write to us:

- We aim to respond to your query in clear plain language within 15 working days. If we cannot do this we will endeavour to write to explain why and tell you when you can expect a full reply
- Where appropriate, all letters or emails from us will be in clear, simple language, free, wherever possible, from jargon and technical terms
- Our contact details including our name, telephone number and an email address will be included in all written correspondence

### **Contact by email**

If you email us

- We aim to respond to your email in clear plain language within 15 working days. If we cannot do this we will endeavour to write to explain why and tell you when you can expect a full reply.
- An automated email response will issue when staff are out of the office.
- A contact name, telephone number and email address will be included in the email correspondence.

## Contact by Telephone

If you telephone us,

- Calls to the main Department switchboard will be answered promptly. If you are calling outside of core hours, a recorded message will inform you of your options
- Our staff will answer your telephone enquiries promptly and politely
- We will give our name and the name of the Section you have called
- We aim to answer your questions straight away. If we cannot do so, we will take your details and tell you when you can expect to hear from us again
- Voicemail messages will be updated regularly. Staff with access to voicemail will use an 'out of office' message as appropriate and will endeavour to respond to voicemail messages within one day of receipt or upon their return to the office if absent for more than one day.
- If it is necessary to transfer your call, you will be advised of the reason for the transfer and the area or official to whom you are being transferred. No caller should be transferred more than once during a phone call

## Visiting our Offices

If you call to see us:

- We will try to arrange meetings at a time that suits you and will not keep you waiting unnecessarily
- We will aim to provide private meeting rooms to discuss your query
- We aim to answer your questions fully during your visit. If we cannot do this we will arrange to phone you, or write to you if you prefer, and
- We will ensure that our offices comply with occupational health and safety standards

## Services in Irish

We aim to ensure that:

- Customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so
- Documents such as our Annual Report, our Customer Charter and Customer Service Action Plan are available in both Irish and English, and
- Information leaflets on various schemes are available in Irish and English

## Services for people with disabilities

We will ensure that

- The needs of people with disabilities are identified and fully catered for
- Our offices are accessible for people with disabilities, and
- Any queries customers may have in relation to disability issues or physical access can be dealt with by the Disability Liaison Officer or the Access Officer in the Department. Additional information on [Access Officers](#) is available on our website

## Help us to help you

You, as our customer, also have an important role to play in helping us offer you the best service. By doing the following, you can greatly assist us provide the optimum service to you.

**Providing accurate information**

- Quote appropriate reference numbers, where available, in all correspondence and communications with this Department.
- Familiarise yourself with the terms and conditions of schemes before filling out forms and provide all necessary supporting documentation.

**Providing contact details**

- Provide a daytime telephone number or email address, if available, in all correspondence.

**Adhering to closing dates**

- Ensure, where applicable, that applications or forms are submitted in sufficient time to meet specified deadlines.

**Responding to requests for additional information**

- Respond as soon as possible to any queries raised, including supplying any additional information requested in support of applications.
- Inform us of any changes in circumstances which may have a bearing on a decision made by the Department.

**Making appointments**

- If you need to visit the Department about a complex matter, in order to ensure that the appropriate officials will be available, it is best to make an appointment or phone in advance. This will also ensure that any necessary preparations can be made.

**Cooperating with Department staff**

- We ask that you treat staff of the Department with the same courtesy and cooperation you expect to receive.
- Please accord staff the due respect and freedom to carry out their duties and not be intimidated or threatened in any manner whatsoever. The following behaviour is not acceptable from anybody in any of our facilities, or in the provision of any of our services:-

1. Harassment of staff by use of abusive, racist or threatening language.
2. Use of violence or threat of violence towards staff members.
3. Behaviour which is disruptive and interferes with delivering a quality customer service.

Customers are advised that where a staff member is subjected to such treatment, contact will be terminated.

**Provide feedback**

We are committed to consulting with our customers and to evaluating our services.

You can help us by:

- Providing comments, complaints or suggestions regarding the service you receive and
- Completing and returning any customer survey forms we may send you.

If you want to forward a suggestion on how we could improve our service to you, please email [gcsofficer@housing.gov.ie](mailto:gcsofficer@housing.gov.ie) or send your suggestion directly to the Quality Customer Service Officer, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Custom House, Dublin, D01 W6X0.

### How to Complain

If you have a complaint about the service we have provided, you should speak either to the line manager of the area concerned who will look into the matter or you should write to the Quality Customer Service Officer for the Department. We will do our best to put things right if we have made a mistake. We will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and try to deal with your complaint within 10 working days. If we need to carry out further enquiries, we will let you know and try to have them completed within 20 working days.

You can contact the Department in person, by post, by telephone, by email, fax or [online](#).

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Locations	Contact Numbers
Custom House, Dublin, D01 W6X0	LoCall 1890 20 20 21* Tel: (01) 888 2000 Fax: (01) 888 2888
Newtown Road, Wexford, Y35 AP90	LoCall 1890 20 20 21* Tel: (053) 911 7500 Fax: (053) 914 4639
Government Offices, Ballina, Co. Mayo, F26 E8N6	LoCall 1890 20 20 21* LoCall 1890 30 50 30* Tel: (096) 242 00 Fax: (096) 242 21 and 24222
Met Eireann, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin, D09 Y921	Tel: (01) 806 4200 Fax: (01) 806 4247

\* You should note that the rates charged for the use of 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

**Email:** [gcsofficer@housing.gov.ie](mailto:gcsofficer@housing.gov.ie), [press@housing.gov.ie](mailto:press@housing.gov.ie), [accessofficer@housing.gov.ie](mailto:accessofficer@housing.gov.ie)

**Website:** [www.gov.ie/housing](http://www.gov.ie/housing)

**In person:** Dublin, Wexford and Ballina at the addresses above. Access is available by ramp/lift.

**Opening hours:** Monday – Thursday 9am to 5.45pm. Friday 9am to 5.15pm

[gov.ie/housing](https://gov.ie/housing)

