

Putting customers first
Our customer care standards



Introduction

Our ambition is to make Hertfordshire an even better place to live and work, with the best possible services. We can only do this by providing exceptional customer service at every opportunity. Our commitment to customer care and our customer care standards help shape the way we provide services, whether you are a resident, visitor, local business or partner organisation.

“I am totally committed to improving the way we work with our customers and to make excellent customer service a part of our daily working lives. I will be working with colleagues across the organisation to ensure that we build on these standards and constantly improve our services.”

Caroline Tapster, Chief Executive

All our staff will try to meet and exceed these standards wherever possible and we will measure our performance against these, so that we can take action to improve if necessary.

Our customers are central to everything we do, and we will

- welcome feedback from you on the services you receive
- welcome comments, compliments and complaints about our services
- work hard to continuously improve our services
- involve you when we're developing our services
- recognise and meet the needs of our diverse communities, engaging those where our services are hard to reach
- measure how well we're delivering our services and publish the results
- publish and act on the results of customer satisfaction surveys
- monitor the way we work to ensure that we are efficient and deliver value for money
- address any discrimination and make our services accessible to everyone

When you contact us, we will

- Be polite and treat you with courtesy, fairness, honesty and respect
- Listen to you carefully and ask your views
- Use plain language when we speak or write to you
- Explain our decisions and the reasons for them
- Respect confidentiality
- Be realistic about what we can and can't do
- Take ownership of your enquiry or issue

If we make a mistake, we will

- Apologise and put things right
- Accept your right to complain and provide an appropriate response

If you have any comments about our standards or would like more information, please call 01438 737555* (Textphone 01438 737599), email hertsdirect@hertscc.gov.uk or visit www.hertsdirect.org/havesay

* Callers from 01923 or 0208 dialling codes may wish to call 01923 471555 in order to be charged at local call rates

Our customer care standards

If you contact us by telephone

- We aim to answer within five rings
- We will tell you our name and that we work for Hertfordshire County Council
- We will give you a full answer to your enquiry immediately, or respond within three working days. If we can't respond within that timescale we will give you the name and number of the person who is dealing with your enquiry and the date we intend to provide a full answer
- If we can't answer your call personally, we will provide the opportunity to leave a message and/or arrange for someone to call you back
- If we call you, we will give you our name, tell you we're calling from Hertfordshire County Council and explain why we're calling

If you contact us by email, letter or fax

- We will acknowledge this within three working days and provide a full response within ten working days*
 - * Response times are from date of receipt of email, letter or fax. This does not affect the 20 working days time limit for Freedom of Information requests

If you visit our website, www.hertsdirect.org

- We will make it easy for you to contact us, provide feedback or report a problem
- We take every effort to ensure our content is timely and accurate
- We strive to make our site as accessible as possible

If you visit us

- We will agree a time or timeslot and place to meet you
- We aim to see you within five minutes of your appointment time
- If we are delayed, we will explain why, tell you how long you may have to wait and give you the option of coming back on an alternative day or time
- If you do not have an appointment, we will aim to see you within 15 minutes. If you need to see someone who is unavailable, we will offer you an appointment
- We will always have our photo identification card clearly displayed to identify ourselves
- We will provide clean and comfortable waiting areas, with current information about our services
- Wherever possible, we will provide space for you to see us in private
- Our public offices will be accessible from at least 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 4pm on Fridays

If we visit you

- We will agree a time – however, for some of our work unannounced visits may be necessary
- We aim to provide at least five days notice of meetings
- We will always show you our photo identification card before coming in (you should always ask to see this – our staff won't mind), confirm who we are, that we are from Hertfordshire County Council and why we are visiting
- We will tell you as soon as possible if we're delayed or have to cancel the meeting

If you wish to comment about our services

- We welcome your feedback including compliments and comments on how we can improve our services

- We will acknowledge all complaints within three working days and a full response will be provided within ten working days
- We will pass on your comments and compliments to staff as soon as possible
- If you have a concern or query we will aim to answer this for you

Comments about our services can be made in person, in writing, by telephone or online at www.hertsdirect.org/havesay

Meeting your needs

Please let us know if you need to access information or our services in a different way. We can arrange for:

- Translations
- Interpreters - British Sign Language and other languages
- Information in large print, alternative format, audio or Braille
- Public meetings to be held in culturally sensitive and accessible venues, with induction loops or other suitable systems for people who are deaf or hard of hearing

How can you help us?

- Provide the right information and documentation we need to be able to help you
- Tell us when we do or don't meet your expectations, giving your compliments, suggestions and complaints about how we could improve our service
- Treat our staff with courtesy and respect

Delivering the best possible customer service

In order to gauge the levels of customer service our customers are receiving we will:

- Monitor our performance against these standards
- Monitor compliments and complaints to ensure we learn from your feedback
- Train and support our staff in customer care

How to contact us

- If you are unsure of who to contact, please call our customer service centre on 01438 737555. Callers from 01923 or 0208 dialling codes may wish to call 01923 471555 in order to be charged at local call rates

Our customer service centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 4pm on Saturdays and takes most of our calls from the public.

We welcome your call at any time. However, we are busiest on Mondays so if your call is not urgent you may be answered more quickly if you ring on other days.

- Our telephone translation service is available through our customer service centre, to assist callers whose first or preferred language is not English
- Customers with hearing impairments may wish to contact us by Typetalk or by Textphone, by calling 01438 737599

Italian: Per informazioni in italiano, o se desidera l'aiuto di un'interprete, contatti i numeri elencati in precedenza.

Bengali: বাংলা, ভাষায় তথ্যাবলীর জন্য অথবা আপনার একজন দোভাষী অর্থাৎ ইন্টারপ্রিটারের দরকার হলে, অনুগ্রহ করে উপরে যে সব টেলিফোন নম্বর দেওয়া হয়েছে সেগুলোতে ফোন করে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Punjabi: ਪੰਜਾਬੀ, ਏ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਏ ਲਈ ਜਾਂ ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਫਿਟਰਪ੍ਰੋਟਰ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨੰਬਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

Urdu: اردو میں معلومات کے لئے، یا اگر آپ کو ایک انٹرپرائز کی ضرورت ہے، تو برائے مہربانی اوپر دیئے ہوئے نمبروں پر رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese:

如果需要漢語、版本，或需要口譯人員，請用上述號碼聯繫。

Hertfordshire County Council – making Hertfordshire an even better place to live and work, by providing:

Care for older people

Support for schools, pupils and parents

Support for carers

Fire and Rescue

Fostering and adoption

Support for people with disabilities

Libraries

Admission to schools

Road maintenance and safety

Protecting adults and children at risk

Trading standards and consumer protection

Household waste recycling centres

These are only some of our services. Find out more at
www.hertsdirect.org or email us at hertsdirect@hertscc.gov.uk

Every Hertfordshire library has internet access for the public