

TAX & BENEFITS SERVICE - Standards of Service

New Forest District Council's Benefits Service gives financial help to low-income households. This year we will award over £40 million in benefits to help residents to pay their rent and council tax.

We work hard to provide the best possible service and continually seek to improve.

Below, we explain our Standards and what you can do to help us to achieve them.

We aim to:

- pay benefit within 14 days of receiving all information needed to deal with claims*.
- reply to letters and e-mails within 7 days*.
- answer at least 8 out of 10 phone calls within 1 minute*.
- keep to pre-arranged appointment times for interviews*.
- work out benefit entitlement accurately.
- be polite and courteous and provide the clearest and fullest information we can.
- respond to individual needs where possible, including home visits for housebound, elderly or disabled customers.
- do all we can to prevent and detect benefit fraud.
- pursue overpayments firmly but fairly.

*At busier times we might not always be able to meet these targets. But we will still aim to provide the best possible service to you.

Help us to help you

There are things you can do to speed up your claim:

- Check that you have completed your claim form in full and signed the declaration. Contact us if you need help or advice in filling in forms or telling us about a change.
- Giving us your telephone number on the claim form will speed things up if we have any questions.
- Give us all the documents we ask for - the claim form tells you what we need. We always need to see original documents, not copies. If you cannot provide the documents straight away, send your claim form in immediately and tell us why you cannot supply the information and when you will be able to provide it.
- If we write to you, reply to us fully and as quickly as you can.
- Tell us quickly if your circumstances change. You must tell us within one month if your circumstances change or you may lose benefit