



CITY OF
Lincoln
COUNCIL

Our vision is:

“A well-run Council, creating a City of strong and equitable local neighbourhoods, recognised for their enviable quality of life and range of opportunities for local people”

Service Standard

RENT COLLECTION

Contents:

1. What is a service standard?
2. What can you expect from City of Lincoln Council?
3. What does City of Lincoln Council expect from you?
4. Equality and Diversity
5. Rents and income management
6. Monitoring
7. Performance
8. What do I do if I wish to comment on a service provided?
9. Contacting us

1. What is a Service Standard?

We want to deliver an excellent Housing Service.

We want your help to make our services better. We want you to let us know if you've got a comment to make, whether it's good or bad on any of our services.

To help us achieve this, we set ourselves high standards of service and stretching performance targets and we monitor how we do against these to make sure we continue to improve the quality of the services we provide to our customers.

All City of Lincoln Council staff have a responsibility to ensure that the services provided to our customers meet the highest possible standards at all times.

These standards have been set because this is what our customers have said are important to them. Customers have been involved in agreeing the standards and will also be involved in monitoring our performance against the standards set.

For more information on our other standards, please contact our office or go to our website www.lincoln.gov.uk.

2. What can you expect from City of Lincoln Council?

We have developed Service Standards that set out the general standard of service you can expect when you contact the Housing Service:

We will:

- Greet you politely;
- Treat you with respect;
- Tell you who you are speaking to;
- Listen to your views and seek to improve our services;
- Try to resolve your problem if we can when you first contact us;
- If it is not possible to resolve your problem immediately we will, wherever possible, make an appointment for an officer to call at your home;
- Aim to ensure our offices and information are easily accessible for everyone;
- Call you back when requested and where possible at an agreed time;

- Aim to ensure that all our written communication is easy to understand;
- Provide telephone-based language interpretation for customers who need it;
- Ensure all our customer facing staff wear a name badge.

3. What does City of Lincoln Council expect from you?

We have set out standards to provide you with the best service we can. In return, we expect you to do the following:

- To treat all staff politely, courteously and with respect;
- Provide any information we ask for when we ask for it or as soon as possible thereafter;
- Read all the information we send to you;
- Ensure that you are at home when we have made an appointment to visit you;
- Out of courtesy to our officers when visiting your home we would respectfully ask you to refrain from smoking. Failure to do so could result in the visit being terminated.

4. Equality and Diversity

The Council is committed to service and employment practices that make sure no one is treated less favourably, disadvantaged or discriminated against because of their:

- disability
- race including ethnicity, national origins, colour or custom
- gender including gender identity
- sexual orientation
- age
- religion or beliefs
- marital or partnership status
- political affiliation
- trade union activities

The Council has a dual role as an employer and as a service provider, and will tackle equality issues appropriately in both of these roles.

This policy covers councillors, employees, job candidates, contractors working on our behalf and service users. The principles of the policy underpin all our other policies, service plans, procedures and practices.

To eliminate all forms of unfair and unlawful discrimination, we will:

- Ensure all rent account holders are dealt with in accordance with the City of Lincoln Council Equalities and Diversity Strategy which is available on request or by visiting our website at www.lincoln.gov.uk;
- Provide housing advice on request and information will be made available in other formats, languages, large print, Braille, audiotape and translators or British Sign Language users will be available if appropriate;
- Promote our Rents and income management policy to ensure it is accessible to all eligible sections of the community.

5. Rents and Income Management

The City of Lincoln Council aims to provide a service to residents which meets the highest possible standards at all times.

We aim to ensure that we deal with all your enquiries respectfully and courteously by doing the following things:

- Having well trained staff to help you with your rent account queries;
- Encouraging you to contact us at any time if you are worried about or having problems with paying your rent;
- Sending a rent account statement at least once every year;
- Ensure that we do everything to prevent you from falling in to arrears;
- Making contact with you as soon as any arrears start to occur;
- Agreeing affordable payment arrangements with you;
- Providing advice on whether you may be entitled to receive assistance with your rent;
- Help you to complete a Housing Benefit claim form;
- Advising you in writing and explaining your legal rights if we take legal action to recover any debts;
- Giving you 4 weeks notice of any rent increase;
- Providing advice and promoting a Home Contents insurance policy;

- Providing a number of convenient ways in which you can pay your rent such as:
 - ✓ Direct Debit;
 - ✓ Standing Order;
 - ✓ Debit or Credit card;
 - ✓ By post using a cheque;
 - ✓ Through various outlets in the City such as Post Offices and shops;
 - ✓ The Council's direct telephone payment facility;
 - ✓ Through the Council's web site.

6. Monitoring

We will monitor our Customer Care performance in the following areas:

- Recording the percentage of rent collected against the amount due;
- Recording the level of arrears against the total rent due;
- Recording the level of lost income due to empty properties;
- Recording the number of evictions due to rent arrears.

7. Performance

The results of our monitoring of performance against our Service Standards can be found in either your 'Homelink' magazine, performance posters in our reception areas and on our website at www.lincoln.gov.uk.

8. What do I do if I wish to comment on a service provided?

We aim to get it right first time. But we deal with thousands of housing enquiries each year, and occasionally things go wrong. If they do, we want you to know that we will take action to put them right as quickly as possible.

Dealing with Complaints

We will:

- Aim to provide the best possible services that meet customers' needs;
- Welcome all comments on service delivery and view complaints as constructive feedback;
- Aim to resolve complaints efficiently and effectively within set timescales and to the customers' satisfaction;

- Arrange for an officer to write down your complaint if you are unable to put your formal complaint in writing;
- Advise you if your complaint should be more appropriately dealt with by way of statutory review or appeal and explain how to apply for any such review/appeal;
- Try to resolve initial complaints informally and arrange for the responsible Manager to write to you within 15 working days of receiving your complaint with a written explanation for the decision/action taken in response to your complaint;
- Give you an opportunity to submit a formal complaint if you remain dissatisfied and arrange for the responsible Service Manager or Head of Service to investigate your complaint and respond to you with their findings within 15 working days of receiving the full details of your complaint;
- Give you a right of review by an independent Complaints Officer appointed by the Chief Executive or a right of appeal to the Housing Appeals Panel as appropriate.

9. Contact Us

Directorate of Housing and Community Services
City of Lincoln Council
City Hall
Beaumont Fee
LINCOLN
LN1 1DE

Tel: 01522 881188

Email: customer.services@lincoln.gov.uk