

Our Customer Service Standards



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

www.dardni.gov.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Our Customer Service Standards

Introduction by the Permanent Secretary, Pat Toal



Providing you with a high quality service is a matter of great importance to us in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD). We will work to make sure that our services and facilities are accessible to you and promote equality, dignity and respect for everyone. Treating you fairly is at the heart of our business, and we aim to make sure that you can enjoy the highest possible standards of service at all times.

I am very pleased to present this booklet that sets out the core standards of service that you can expect to receive from us, how we will treat you and what we expect from you, as our customer. It also tells you what you should do if things go wrong. These standards and values have been agreed following feedback from a sample of our customers, stakeholders and staff. Where appropriate, our business areas will also be developing other service standards that will relate to the particular programmes and services they deliver.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pat Toal". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

PAT TOAL CB

Permanent Secretary

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

What are the core standards of service that you can expect from us?

Within DARD, we aim to deliver our services to you in the following way:

1 Publishing Service Standards

- We will publish details of our core customer service standards and values in our public offices and on our website.
- We will monitor our performance against these standards and publish details of how we are performing against them in a variety of ways, including on our website.
- We will also review our core customer service standards and values following ongoing feedback from you, our stakeholders and our staff.



2 Informing the Customer

- Information about our programmes and services will be accessible, accurate, and up to date. It will be made available in our public offices and on our website. This information will contain relevant contact details including a telephone number, office address and e-mail address.
- We will take steps to make sure the information we provide is clear and straightforward so that it is easily understood. We will also make sure that your responsibilities are clearly stated in relevant leaflets, booklets, forms and on our website.
- We will only use information about you in a lawful and fair way as required by the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations and the Data Protection Act.



3 Service Accessibility

- We will take all reasonable steps to make sure our services and facilities are accessible to everyone, including people with particular requirements and those whose first language is not English. Printed materials produced by us can be requested in alternative formats, such as large print and/or in other languages.
- Where possible, you should let us know in advance if you need assistance, so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place. We will also make sure that our website complies with disability access requirements.
- Private facilities can be made available for you in some of our offices if you ask. Please give us as much notice as possible if you need private facilities so that we can make the necessary arrangements.
- You can telephone our offices between the hours of 9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday. The opening times of our public offices are displayed outside each office. Our offices are closed on most bank holidays and public holidays.
- Outside normal working hours, information on our programmes and services is available on our website, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at www.dardni.gov.uk. You can also access some of our services through the Rural Portal at www.ruralni.gov.uk.

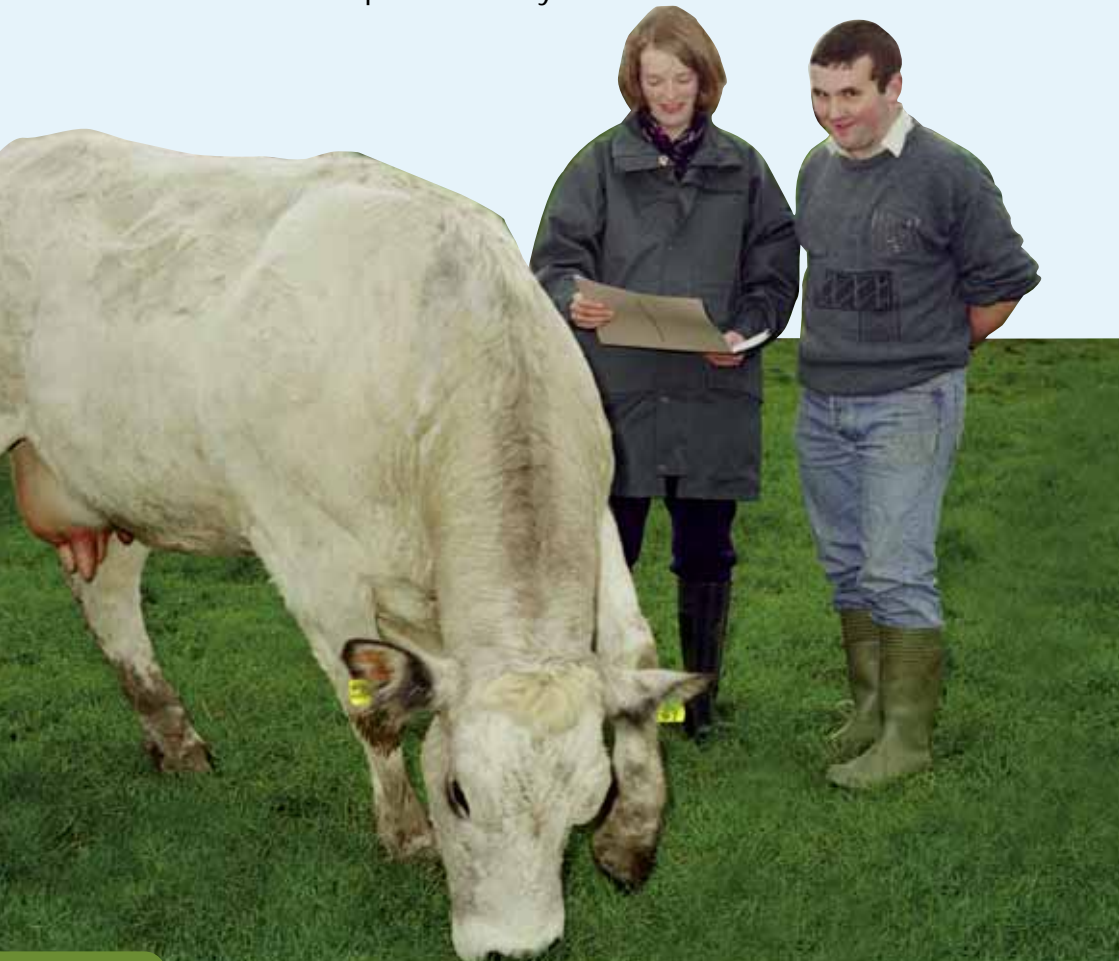
4 Consulting with Customers

- We will seek your views on how our service will be delivered, the quality of our service and the standards of service you can expect from us. We welcome your comments or suggestions on how we can improve the quality of our service. We will also tell you about any plans we may have for service improvements.
- If you wish to make a comment or you have a suggestion on how we can improve the quality of service you receive, please tell a member of staff or use one of our **Customer Service Comment or Suggestion Cards**. These cards are available in our public offices and are also available for downloading in the **Contact Us** section of our website.



5 Polite and Helpful Staff

- We will be polite and helpful, act with integrity and discretion and treat you with respect at all times. Our staff will receive appropriate customer service training to help them deliver our services to you in an efficient and professional way.
- Staff in our public offices will wear name badges. Our field staff will always carry identification passes, which will be produced if you ask.



6 Seeing Callers

- If you have a pre-arranged appointment, we aim to see you within 10 minutes of the agreed time. If we have to cancel an appointment, we will explain why, give you as much notice as possible and arrange a new time to suit you.
- If you have not made an appointment with us, we aim to see you within 15 minutes of your arrival. If you are waiting longer, we will explain why and keep you informed. A queuing system may be introduced in our public offices at busy periods.
- Our field staff have to enforce regulations which may sometimes mean that unannounced visits have to be made. When this happens, our field officers will identify themselves, explain what has to be done when they arrive at your premises and act reasonably when asking for your help.

7 Answering Telephone Calls

- We will answer telephone calls as quickly as possible. We aim to answer in person and we will give you our name and our work area. If we are unavailable, our telephones will be diverted to another member of staff or voicemail will be used.
- If the first person you contact is unable to help you, they will pass you to someone who can help you as quickly as possible. If we need to call you back, we aim to do so within 24 hours of your initial telephone call to us.

8 Answering Letters, Faxes and E-mails

- We will acknowledge your letters, faxes and e-mails requiring a response within 3 working days of receiving them.
- We will respond in full to your letters, faxes and e-mails within 15 working days of receipt*. If this is not possible, we will let you know why a response may take longer and when you can expect a full response.
- In our responses to you, we will provide contact details of the person dealing with your query including his/her name, office address and telephone number.

* This target does not apply to the following:

| Legislation | Information will be made available within |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Freedom of Information Act | 20 Working days |
| Environmental Information Regulations | 20 Working days |
| Data Protection Act | 40 Calendar days |

9 Having a Complaints Procedure

- If you are unhappy with the quality of service you receive, please let us know why you are unhappy as quickly as possible. You can make a complaint:
 - in person at any of our offices;
 - by letter, fax, e-mail, online; or
 - by telephone or text-phone.
- We will fully and fairly investigate your complaint, keep you informed of progress, offer a full explanation of the circumstances and take appropriate action.
- We will record and monitor complaints about the quality of service and try to address your concerns. We want to learn from complaints so that we can improve the quality of service we provide to you. We will also publish details of the number and type of complaints we receive in a variety of ways, for example, on our website.
- You can get more information about how to complain if you are unhappy with the quality of service you receive from **Our Complaints Procedure** leaflet. You can get this leaflet from any of our offices or download it from the **Contact Us** section of our website.

Our values – how will we treat you?

Within DARD we will:

- treat you fairly, with respect and with dignity;
- treat you with patience and understanding;
- respect your privacy and treat confidential issues concerning you in an appropriate way;
- comply with our statutory duties to make sure you receive equality of service;
- follow the Northern Ireland Civil Service Code of Ethics;
- enforce our legislative requirements fairly;
- take responsibility and be accountable for the accuracy and quality of our work;
- be open and honest in all our dealings with you; and
- act with integrity at all times.



What do we expect from you?

We expect you to:

- treat our staff and other customers politely and with respect and understanding;
- be on time for pre-arranged appointments;
- give us relevant, accurate, timely and up to date information to help us resolve your queries as quickly as possible;
- fill in applications accurately and fully, attaching any supporting papers that may be needed and apply in good time;
- tell us immediately about any changes that may impact on your subsidy or grant claim and/or your statutory obligations with regard to animal registration, movement and animal, fish and plant health and welfare;
- quote your relevant reference number and use the contact details you were given in any correspondence to us;
- respond to our letters, faxes and e-mails as quickly as you can;
- make sure that your footwear and clothing do not present a bio-security risk when you visit our offices; and
- where required, report cases of animal, fish or plant disease and incidents which threaten feed or food safety.

Please note that abusive behaviour towards our staff, other customers or our property is unacceptable.

Contact details for our offices are available in **The Phone Book** or **Yellow Pages** under Government Offices, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Further information on the full range of our services and contact details for our offices are also available in our Rural Connect Directory **At Your Service** and on our website at www.dardni.gov.uk.

You can also contact the DARD Helpline or the DARD text-phone for more information on our services or the contact details for our offices.

Contact Details:

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)
Headquarters
Dundonald House
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast
BT4 3SB

Telephone: 028 9052 0100 (Switchboard)

DARD Helpline: 028 9052 4999

Text-phone: 028 9052 4420

(For those people who are deaf or have hearing difficulties.
This text-phone can only be dialled from another text-phone.)

Fax: 028 9052 5546

E-mail: dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk

Or visit our website at www.dardni.gov.uk

This booklet can be made available in other formats and languages if you ask. Please use any of the contact details listed above.



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Talmhaíochta agus Forbartha Tuaithe

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