



Midlothian Council Building Standards **CUSTOMER CHARTER** v4

Version	Date	Notes
1	01/09/2015	
2	06/11/2017	National Customer Charter updated. Complaints section updated.
3	17/07/2018	Format and text updated.
4	31/07/2019	Management structure updated.

Introduction

This Building Standards Customer Charter is divided into 2 parts:

1. National Customer Charter

- 1.1 Purpose of a National Customer Charter
- 1.2 Our aims
- 1.3 Our vision/values
- 1.4 Our commitments
- 1.5 Our targets
- 1.6 Information

2. Local Customer Charter

- 2.1 Purpose of our Local Customer Charter
- 2.2 What we do
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- 2.5 When and how well we will do it
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- 2.8 How will we improve what we do
- 2.9 Who we are and how to contact us

1. NATIONAL CUSTOMER CHARTER

1.1 Purpose of a National Customer Charter

The National Customer Charter provides information about the standards of service that all verifiers should meet. This gives customers the reassurance that a consistent, high quality service will be delivered no matter which verifier provides the service.

1.2 Our aims

To grant building warrants and accept completion certificates:

- To secure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in and about buildings and others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings;
- Furthering the conservation of fuel and power; and
- Furthering the achievement of sustainable development.

1.3 Our vision/values

To provide a professional and informative service to all our customers.

1.3 Our commitments

Nationally, all local authority verifiers will:

- 1) Seek to minimise the time it takes for customers to obtain a building warrant or amendment to a building warrant.
- 2) Ensure continuous improvement around the robustness of verification assessments to ensure compliance.
- 3) Meet and seek to exceed customer expectations.
- 4) Carry out local customer satisfaction research, such as surveys, focus groups etc.
- 5) Address feedback obtained through local and national customer satisfaction research (including a National Customer Satisfaction Survey) to improve the customer experience.
- 6) Provide information on local formal complaints procedures, the LABSS Dispute Resolution Process, and the BSD Customer Performance Reporting Service, and refer customers as appropriate.
- 7) Provide accurate financial data that is evidence-based.
- 8) Engage and participate in partnership working at local and national level to identify and embed service improvements at a national level.
- 9) Adhere to a national annual performance report outlining our objectives, targets and performance.
- 10) Fully adhere to the commitments outlined in this Charter (including information on customer dissatisfaction in relation to building warrant processing timescales, processes and technical interpretation).
- 11) Use a consistent format for continuous improvement plans.

1.4 Our targets

The following national performance targets came into effect on 01 April 2017:

- 1) **KPO1** - Minimise time taken to issue a first report or to issue a building warrant or amendment to building warrant:
 - **1.1:** 95% of first reports (for building warrants and amendments) issued within 20 days - all first reports (including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
 - **1.2:** 90% of building warrants and amendments issued within 10 days from receipt of all satisfactory information – all building warrants and amendments (not including BWs and amendments issued without a first report).
- 2) **KPO2** - Increase quality of compliance assessment during the construction processes:
 - Targets to be developed as part of future review of KPO2.
- 3) **KPO3** - Commit to the building standards customer charter:

- **3.1:** National customer charter is published prominently on the website and incorporates version control detailing reviews (reviewed at least quarterly).
- **3.2:** 95% of BSD requests for information on a BSD 'Verifier Performance Reporting Service for Customers' case responded to by verifier within 5 days.

4) **KPO4** - Understand and respond to the customer experience:

- **4.1:** Minimum overall average satisfaction rating of 7.5 out of 10.

5) **KPO5** - Maintain financial governance:

- **5.1:** Building standards verification fee income to cover indicative verification service costs (staff costs plus 30%).

6) **KPO6** - Commit to eBuilding Standards:

- **6.1:** Details of eBuilding Standards are published prominently on the verifier's website.
- **6.2:** 75% of each key building warrant related process being done electronically:
 - Plan checking
 - Building warrant or amendments (and plans) being issued
 - Verification during construction
 - Completion certificates being accepted

7) **KPO7** - Commit to objectives outlined in the annual performance report:

- **7.1:** Annual performance report published prominently on website with version control (reviewed at least quarterly).
- **7.2:** Annual performance report to include performance data in line with KPOs and associated targets (annually covering previous year e.g. April 2016 – March 2017). The report is to include:
 - Adherence to the national customer charter (KPO3)
 - Appropriate actions to respond to customer feedback (KPO4)
 - Financial performance (KPO5)
 - Commitment to digital services (KPO6)

1.6 Information

National information on verification performance can be found at the Scottish Government website www.scotland.gov.uk/bsd.

2. LOCAL CUSTOMER CHARTER

2.1 Purpose of the Local Customer Charter

As well as a commitment to meet the aims of the National Customer Charter, Midlothian Building Standards is also aware of its service demands locally and its obligation to agree meaningful objectives and performance targets for the people of Midlothian.

2.2 What we do

Building warrant approval is required for all warrantable building work and conversions. Applications for approval must be made to the local authority who provides an independent check of the proposals.

The role of the Building Standards section covers three main aspects:

- Protecting the public interest, by independently checking compliance for applications for building warrant approval, inspecting the associated building works, and issuing completion certification.
- Enforcing building legislation in respect of building work carried out without approval.
- Ensuring public safety in respect of dangerous and defective buildings through enforcement processes.

We also have other responsibilities that are an important part of our service. We provide assistance on a variety of legislative functions and requirements, including:

- Property enquiries
- Structural engineering
- Accessibility issues
- Energy efficiency
- Emergency planning

2.3 How we will do it

Midlothian Building Standards is entirely independent from the building industry, warranty providers and financial institutions. We are committed to providing an excellent level of customer service to you. In providing the service to you, we will be:

- Impartial and employ transparent working practices.
- Competent and consistent in all our activities.
- Accountable for all our actions.

2.4 When and how well we will do it

We will provide the best service we can and in particular we aim to achieve the following:

If you telephone:

- Answer your call within 5 rings.
- Give you our name and service.

- Help you with your enquiry there and then if we can.
- If we can't help we will either suggest an alternative number or transfer you to an appropriate member of staff or to our switchboard.
- Provide an answer machine facility if we are not immediately available with all messages responded to within 24 hours.

If you contact us by letter/email:

- Respond to you within 10 working days 95% of the time.
- Keep you updated if we require longer to gather information.
- Use plain English and avoid the use of jargon.

If you visit our office:

We would always recommend that you make an appointment prior to visiting the office. If an appointment is not made we will:

- Have a building standards surveyor available within 10 minutes 95% of the time.
- Wear identity badges.
- Assist you with filling in forms.
- Provide a well-signposted reception that demonstrates our commitment to equal access and opportunities.
- Provide an area for private discussions.

Pre-warrant advice and discussions:

For smaller projects (for individual houses or flats), before finalising your building warrant application, you can contact us to seek advice on how we would interpret the Building Regulations in relation to your particular application.

For larger projects (such as housing sites and commercial or industrial projects), we can arrange a pre-warrant meeting to discuss your proposals and to provide guidance on the level of information that we require to assess and approve a building warrant application.

If you make a building warrant application:

- We will register the receipt of your valid building warrant application and notify you in writing.
- If your building warrant is deemed invalid, we will notify you in writing and explain the reason(s) why the application is invalid.
- Contact information for your case surveyor will be on all correspondence we issue once your application has been registered.
- In most cases, we aim to provide you with a first technical response (or issue a building warrant, if applicable) within 15 working days from receipt of your valid application.
- We will provide you with a first technical response (or issue a building warrant, if applicable) within 10 working days from receipt of a valid application if your application is for the adaptation of a dwelling to suit the needs of a person with a disability.
- In some cases, applications for a building warrant will result in a "customer agreement" between you and Building Standards, where the target first response period will be agreed.

- We will respond to your return correspondence within 10 working days and either advise you that further information is required or issue you with the building warrant.
- Other than those applications covered by a customer agreement, if you have not received a first technical response or a building warrant within 35 working days from receipt of your valid application, you have the right to request resolution to the matter. This may be done in the first instance by contacting our Building Standards Manager. You may also contact the Building Standards Division at buildingstandards@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

If you submit a completion certificate:

- We will respond to all completion certificate submissions within 5 working days.
- We will issue your completion certificate acceptance documentation within 5 working days.

2.5 What will happen when we don't do as well as we would like

Whilst it is never our intention that customers are let down, it is nonetheless likely that this may occasionally happen. If you are dissatisfied with our service or have a complaint, we will do our best to put things right. Problems can normally be resolved informally by simply contacting us and making us aware of the issues.

Both Building Standards and Midlothian Council both operate fully accessible complaints procedures that allow complaints to be easily made and effectively acted upon:

1) Technical complaints about Building Standards

We always seek to interpret the Building Regulations and associated legislation fairly and consistently. If you disagree with our interpretation, please follow our Dispute resolution guide:

<https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/buildingstandards/disputeresolution>.

2) General complaints

If you do wish to make a formal complaint, the Council operates a formal complaints procedure, details of which can be obtained from any of our offices or from:

www.midlothian.gov.uk/feedback.

2.6 How will we improve what we do

Customer care is held as a central part of Midlothian Council's priorities, which look to put our customers first and to deliver responsive, efficient and effective services.

Midlothian Building Standards actively encourages you to provide feedback using:

- Customer care surveys following the issue of a building warrant and acceptance of a completion certificate.
- Online customer satisfaction survey.
- Comments and suggestions for improvements, which you can provide via email, letter or talking directly with our staff.

Continuous feedback is important to us and provides invaluable information that will assist us to make ongoing improvements to our service, details of which can be found here: www.midlothian.gov.uk/buildingstandards/customercare.

2.7 Who we are and how to contact us

Midlothian Building Standards Team is headed by the Building Standards Manager and consists of Building Standards Surveyors working in two teams, East and West, each covering the geographical area shown in the map below.



Each team is lead by an experienced senior surveyor, who assumes responsibility for the operation of the team. Both teams are supported by a structural engineer, who attends the office on a regular basis. Administration for the section is handled by a dedicated Administration Team.

The main contact details are:

Role	Name	Contact
Building Standards Manager	John Delamar	Tel 0131 271 3322
East Area Team Leader	Philip Wilson	Tel 0131 271 3327
West Area Team Leader	David Ralston	Tel 0131 271 3325
Out of office hours number	Reception	Tel 0131 271 7500

You can also contact us at:

Building Standards,
Fairfield House,
8 Lothian Road,
Dalkeith,
Midlothian
EH22 3AA

Or email us at: buildingstandards@midlothian.gov.uk