

Pension Service customer charter



SOCIAL
SECURITY
AGENCY

Delivering a high-quality customer
focused pension service in Northern Ireland



Pension Service

SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY

Pension Service Application line 0808 100 6165
Textphone 0808 100 1165

DSD
Department for Social Development

The Social Security Agency is an Executive Agency within the Department for Social Development

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Welcome to our customer charter.

We are aiming to develop a new way of delivering pension services to people of, or nearing, pension age and to those whose husband or wife has died.

We are modernising the way pensions are delivered and are committed to providing support for you and your representatives, by providing a high-quality, reliable and professional service.

This charter tells you about the range and level of service that you can expect to receive. It also tells you what we expect from you, as our customer, and what you should do if things go wrong. As our service develops, we will update this charter to reflect the changing needs of our customers.

Tommy O'Reilly

Chief Executive,
Social Security Agency

Our service

We aim to:

- make sure that people approaching state pension age are aware of, and have access to, our service;
- give advice about your income when you retire including providing a forecast of your state pension entitlement, to help you plan for your retirement;
- give you advice about Bereavement Benefit; and
- promote and support the uptake of all benefits and services available to pensioners.



Applying for benefits

When you apply for any benefits, we will do the following.

- Give you information, advice and help on all benefits and social security services which you may be entitled to.
- Let you know what benefit you will get and when, or let you know if we need more information.
- Help you fill in application forms either face to face or over the phone using our phone application service.
- Pay you the right amount of benefit on time.
- Tell you how changes in your circumstances can affect your benefit. We will also tell you about any other help you may be able to get.

How we will pay you

We pay benefits and pensions directly into bank, building society or Post Office® accounts. If you do not have an account, we will tell you about the different types of account that are available. If you are unable to open one, please contact us.

Further information

We also offer a full range of leaflets and information about other services that are available.

Contacting us

If you want to phone us, our offices are open from:

- 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday for Pension Credit; and
- 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday for Retirement Pension and Bereavement Benefit.

You can contact us by phoning any of the following numbers. If you have a speech or hearing problem, you can contact us by textphone.

Pension Credit application line (free phone)	Phone	0808 100 6165
	Textphone	0808 100 1165
Pension Credit enquiry line (local rate)	Phone	0845 601 8821
	Textphone	0845 601 8841
Retirement Pension Tele-claims service (free phone)	Phone	0808 100 2658
	Textphone	0808 100 2198
Retirement Pension/Bereavement Benefit enquiry line	Phone	028 9054 9393

If you want to visit us, you can call into any local Social Security Office or Jobs and Benefits office between 9am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday. Our offices are closed on most bank holidays and public holidays.

We can arrange for one of our Pension Advisors to visit you in your own home or at a suitable venue, usually between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Information on the internet

You can get more information about us and the full range of social security benefits and services at www.ssani.gov.uk

You can get information about tax credits at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk



Our standards

Identification

Whenever you contact us, the person you deal with will give you his or her name. When you meet a member of our staff, they will wear a name badge. When any of our staff visit you they will provide photographic identification.

When you phone us

We aim to answer calls to our application and enquiry lines within 20 seconds. If we cannot deal with your enquiry immediately, we will arrange to return your call at an agreed time.

When you visit the office

When you visit our offices we will ask you how we can help. If you call without an appointment, we will try to see you within 15 minutes. If you have an appointment, we aim to see you within 10 minutes of your appointment time. If you are waiting longer, we will keep you informed.

Other arrangements

If you cannot call at our offices, in certain circumstances, we can arrange to meet with you at a convenient time and place.

When you write to us

When you contact us by letter, fax or e-mail, we will acknowledge any request for information within two working days and reply within 10 working days of the date we receive it.

If we cannot deal with your letter, fax or e-mail fully within 10 working days, we will tell you why and let you know:

- if there is anything you need to do; and
- how long it will be before we can give you a full answer.

If your first language is not English

If you need an interpreter when you visit us, we can (if you want us to) arrange an interpreting service over the phone. We can usually do this straight away. If this is not possible, or if it suits you better, we can also arrange a face-to-face interpreter. The interview will take place as soon as possible.

Responsibilities

What we will do for you

We will:

- treat you with respect and be polite and helpful in all our dealings with you;
- treat you fairly and in line with current law, whatever your religious belief, sex, political opinion, race, age, marital status or sexuality, and whether you have a disability or any dependants;
- have staff who are fully trained to carry out their duties quickly and effectively;
- keep any information you give us confidential and only pass on information where necessary;
- provide a face-to-face service in our offices, which will have open-plan modern facilities that provide a welcoming and pleasant environment; and
- return your personal documents to you as quickly as possible.

What we ask of you

In return, we would ask you to:

- be polite and considerate to our staff;
- be polite and considerate to other customers;
- give us relevant information when we ask you, including information about our services and any suggestions for improvement;

- tell us immediately about changes in your circumstances and changes in the circumstances of anyone you have responsibility for; and
- have your National Insurance number ready when you contact us.

We will not tolerate violent or abusive behaviour towards our staff or our property.

Decision making

If you think a decision on your application is wrong:

- you can ask us to look at the decision again; and
- you may be able to appeal to an independent tribunal. The letter telling you about our decision will tell you if you can appeal.



If you want us to look at the decision again, you need to contact the office dealing with your claim. You must do this within one month of the date of the letter giving you the decision. You can get more information in the leaflet **GL24, 'If you think our decision is wrong'**, which you can get from any Jobs and Benefits office, Social Security Office or from the 'leaflets' section of our website at www.dsdni.gov.uk

Complaints

If you have a complaint about something that has gone wrong, we want to know so that we can try to put it right. We also want to know what we have done well. We will use this information and that gained from regularly consulting our customers to continuously improve our service.

Our complaints procedure is easy to use. You can make a complaint in the way that suits you, including:

- by phone or fax;
- by visiting the office;
- in writing; or
- by e-mail.

If you complain, we:

- will acknowledge your complaint within two working days;
- aim to reply within 10 working days; and
- will try to learn from your complaint to improve our service.

You can get more information about how to complain from our leaflet called **'Making a comment or complaint'**. You can get this from any of our offices or from the 'leaflets' section of our website at www.dsdni.gov.uk



Our targets and performance

We have targets to deal with applications and to pay benefit. You can find out if we are meeting our targets each year in our annual reports or by contacting us. We will display information about our performance.

More about the charter

We published this charter in October 2004 and we will review it regularly. You can also get a copy in Braille, on audiotape or in other languages. You can ask for these at any of our offices.

