Our commitment to customers of our Housing Advice Service

These are the standards you can expect from Cambridge City Council’s Housing Advice Service and what we can expect from you:

Contacting us in person
All staff dealing directly with the public will wear identification badges.

Private interview facilities can be provided when necessary. In cases of domestic violence, we will offer you an interview with an advisor of the same sex as yourself if you’d prefer (this may not be possible in an emergency).

We will offer you an appointment for general housing advice within 21 days.

In an emergency, or if you are already homeless, you will be seen by a housing advisor within one working day.

Contacting us by telephone
We will respond to telephone calls within 24 hours. When returning your calls, staff will clearly state their name, their section and their reason for calling.

We will respond to housing advice duty telephone calls within 5 working days or within 24 hours if your call requires urgent attention.

We will aim to respond to voicemail messages within one working day.

If we are on leave our voicemail will tell you the date we return from leave and will give you the option to leave a message or contact someone else.

Contacting us by email
As with other council services, we will respond fully to your email within seven working days, unless, for example, your query is complex or involves several service areas.

In this case, we will acknowledge receipt of your email within seven working days and let you know who is looking after your query, what action we are taking, and when a reply can be expected.

If the staff member is unavailable, you will receive an ‘out of office’ notification to your email. The notification will include contact details for urgent enquiries and a date when the staff member will be available to reply.

Contacting us by letter
If you contact us by letter we will try to respond fully within seven working days, unless your query is complex or involves several service areas.

In this case we will acknowledge your letter within five working days of receipt and let you know who is looking after your query, what action we are taking, and when a reply can be expected.

Letters providing information may not require a response.

Dealing with housing advice enquiries
We will offer you confirmation of advice in writing within seven working days of your housing advice interview.
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Your housing advisor will deal with your case from start to finish.

Dealing with applications for social housing (Home-Link)
When you submit a Home-Link application, we will provisionally assess your application within 28 days. The assessment will be based on the information you provide.

If you appear to qualify to join Home Link, we will write to you explaining how the scheme works within three days of your assessment being completed.

If you edit your application, we will provisionally re-assess it within 28 days. If you submit a medical form, we will aim to assess it within 28 days.

If you find it difficult to complete a Home-Link application we will advise you on how to access support. If you need assistance to place bids we can do this for you.

More information is available at:
- https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-and-housing-association-properties

Dealing with people who are threatened with homelessness
If you are threatened with homelessness, we will work with you to try and prevent this from happening. We will do this by assisting you to remain in your existing home or find alternative housing.

We work closely with other council services to prevent your homelessness (e.g. in cases of illegal eviction, rent arrears etc) and our aim is to provide a streamlined service to you.

If we need to provide you with temporary accommodation because you are homeless, we will only offer you bed and breakfast in an emergency where there is no alternative.

We aim to make a decision on your homeless application within 33 working days, provided we have received all the information necessary to reach a decision.

We can assist you to secure private rented accommodation through the Access Scheme and the Single Homeless Service to prevent homelessness.

More information is available at:
- https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/homeless-people
- https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/helping-homeless-people-access-private-rented-accommodation

Complaints
We aim to reply to all complaints within seven working days. If we need longer, we will tell you why. We will also let you know who is dealing with your complaint and when we will reply.

More information is available at:
- https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions

Requesting a copy of your file (making a subject access request)
You have a right to a copy of the information we hold about you. This is called a subject access request.
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You must make this request in writing using the subject access request form. A fee of £10 is payable.

More information is available at:
- [https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/content/make-subject-access-request](https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/content/make-subject-access-request)

Freedom of Information requests

We will supply information requested in Freedom of Information requests within 20 working days, except in exceptional circumstances.

In such circumstances, we will contact you to let you know if it is going to take longer than 20 days to collate the information requested, or if there are reasons why it is not appropriate to release all the information requested.

We will explain why we are not releasing the information, if that is the case, and explain the appeal process.

Translation and interpretation

If English is not your first language and you need some help in understanding any of the services the council delivers, we offer telephone or face-to-face language interpretation services.

Accessibility

We can arrange the availability of a hearing induction loop or, if you prefer we can arrange for a reply on audiotape or in large print.

If you are unable to come into our offices and would like a home visit please ask and we will consider if we can visit you at home.

Confidentiality

You will be asked to provide written consent for us to get and share relevant information. Details of your application will be confidential, although we may need to disclose information to other organisations during our investigations, or in order to assist you in finding a solution to your housing difficulties. We will not make contact with anyone where to do so would affect your safety.

If we believe someone has knowingly lied to us or withheld information in order to fraudulently obtain housing services we will refer to our Fraud Team for further investigation.

What we expect from our customers

We expect our customers to treat staff with respect. We will not tolerate abusive behaviour towards our staff.

We expect customers to provide information we reasonably request in order to progress an application for housing.

We expect customers to be honest. We will prosecute applicants who deliberately mislead or withhold information relevant to their application for housing.

We expect customers to work with us and our partners to find solutions to their housing difficulties.

We expect customers to let us know if there is a relevant change of circumstance that might affect their application for housing.