



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE NORTH WEST

Customer Service Standards

**The standard of service you can expect from
Government Office for the North West
and our expectations of you**

What you can expect from us

Government Office for the North West (GONW) is committed to providing a high standard of service at all times.

This leaflet sets out the standards of service you can expect from us. If we don't meet these standards, then you can expect a full explanation from us. We'd like to know if you are not satisfied. Your feedback helps us to put things right if they've gone wrong and to improve the standard of our services.

We realise that sometimes people only contact us when they want to complain, but we'd also like to hear from you if we've done something particularly well.

We will:

- **meet and take you** to your meeting (the lifts in our Manchester office are undergoing refurbishment, so please bear with us if it takes slightly longer)
- **answer** your letters, faxes and emails quickly and clearly within 15 working days (for general correspondence), 20 working days (for Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations requests) and 40 calendar days (for Data Protection Act requests)
- **answer** telephone calls promptly within six rings and ensure that enquiries are dealt with courteously and professionally
- **provide** clear and straightforward information about our services
- **do** all that we can to make our services available to everyone, including people with special needs
- **listen** to comments about our services and ensure that if problems occur, steps are taken to ensure that they don't happen again
- **treat** you respectfully, considerately and fairly.

Visiting Government Office for the North West

If you have an appointment and are unfamiliar with our location(s), we'll give you an appropriate location map and directions. We'll also give all visitors to our offices a contact name and telephone number. If you require special access, we'll make the necessary arrangements.

We'll meet you on arrival at GONW, and take you from reception to your meeting within 10 minutes of the time of your appointment.

In the event of an emergency, the person you are meeting will be responsible for ensuring your safe evacuation from the building.

If you don't have an appointment our reception staff will contact the appropriate team to help you.

If you need privacy we'll arrange suitable 'quiet' accommodation.

If we have to cancel a meeting we'll do our very best to give you at least 24 hours' notice unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this.

Answering your letter

We will:

- answer your letter, fax or email within 15 working days of receiving it in GONW
- if we cannot do so, we'll acknowledge receipt of your letter and explain when we expect to be able to send you a full reply
- include the name, e-mail address, direct line telephone and fax number of the person replying to your letter, and our office's full address in our reply
- reply to your letter clearly, concisely and courteously and in plain English, avoiding jargon, abbreviations and acronyms unless we're certain that they will be understood.

Answering your telephone calls

Our switchboards are open 8.30am-5pm Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am-4.30pm on Friday (except during public holidays). The numbers are:

0161 952 4000 (Manchester) and 0151 224 6300 (Liverpool)

If you have a direct line telephone number for the person you wish to speak to, you can also expect this to be answered between these hours. However should the person you are calling be out of the office, or if their phone is in use, you will be able to leave a message on their voicemail.

All answerphone messages left after 5pm will be dealt with as soon as possible the following working day.

If your enquiry is not in fact for GONW, we will do our best to provide you with a contact number for the organisation we consider the most appropriate to deal with your enquiry.

We will always aim to:

- answer our telephones promptly and within six rings
- tell you the name of the person you're speaking to
- transfer your call to another Government Office for the North West number if we consider someone else is better able to help you. We will always give you the person's name and extension number - in case you are cut off and need to call back
- tell you when the appropriate member of GONW staff can be contacted if they are not available. Alternatively, we will leave them a message to contact you by a given time
- treat you respectfully, considerately and fairly.

What we expect from you

We have outlined our responsibilities to you. This is what we expect in return:

- **that you'll treat us with respect.** We will not tolerate harassment, threats or assaults. If you call or visit us and behave in a threatening or abusive way, or use threatening or abusive language, we may terminate the telephone call or ask you to leave the office. If you write to us using threatening or abusive language we may not reply to your letter
- **that you'll be on time for appointments that we arrange with you** – or let us know if you are delayed or unable to attend
- **that you'll be polite and considerate to other customers.** If you visit us, especially without an appointment, you may find that we are already dealing with other customers. Please be patient and show them the same courtesy that you'd expect to be shown yourself.

Complaints about the service we provide

Government Office for the North West takes all complaints about the quality of its services seriously. We will provide a speedy response and a full and fair investigation of your complaint, respecting your right to confidentiality.

A complaint about the service we provide might include the following:

- **attitude and conduct** of GONW staff
- **quality** of service
- **maladministration** e.g. failing to follow the right procedures
- **delays** in receiving information or a response from us.

GONW has the following three-stage complaint process to ensure that if you are not happy with the initial response we give you (in Stage 1), you can ask more senior staff to consider the issue again (Stages 2 and 3).

Stage 1: You should first take up your complaint directly and informally with the person with whom you have been in contact. You can express your dissatisfaction by letter, fax, email or telephone. You can expect a reply from us within five working days.

Stage 2: If you are not satisfied with the response you should then write to your first contact's immediate line manager setting out your complaint clearly and in detail. Our target for replying to such formal complaints is 20 working days from the date of receipt.

Stage 3: If you are still not satisfied with our explanation you can write to our Regional Director (at our Manchester address). You will receive a full response within a further 10 working days.

These procedures do not affect your right to ask your MP to refer your complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman (officially known as the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration). **We will respect your confidentiality at all times.**

Please note that this procedure relates to complaints about the services we provide and not about Government policy, the content of legislation or contractual issues. However, when your complaint does not involve GONW or is a matter outside our control, we will do our best to advise you how to pursue it.

Paying our bills

All acceptable invoices will be paid within **30 days** of receipt.

Helping us to improve our service

We aim to improve our service by:

- **listening** to your views and ideas
- **taking** full account of your complaints
- **monitoring** our performance against our published standards
- **reviewing** and evaluating our performance annually and publishing the results
- **undertaking** customer surveys

Any comments and suggestions you may have which might help us to improve our service can be sent either direct to the person with whom you have been dealing or to mailbox.gonw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

Contacting Government Office for the North West

We have two offices in the region, located in:

City Tower
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester
M1 4BE

Tel: 0161 952 4000
Fax: 0161 952 4099

Email: mailbox.gonw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.go-nw.gov.uk

Cunard Building
Pier Head, Water Street
Liverpool
L3 1QB

Tel: 0151 224 6300
Fax: 0151 224 6470



In the spirit of the Rights of Access legislation (Data Protection Act, Environmental Information Regulations & Freedom of Information Act) Government Office for the North West affirms its commitment to fostering a culture of open access to information throughout the organisation.

The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) enables you to access information of which you are the subject e.g. your own education/medical records/credit reference files/personnel file etc. DPA requests have a £10 charge each. A valid request will be answered within 40 calendar days of its receipt. More information can be found at: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs) enables you to access environmental information relating to:

- air, water, land, natural sites, flora and fauna, the built environment and health
- all information relating to decision or activities affecting, or likely to affect, any of these, including environmental protection and cost benefit analysis.

Enquiries can be made on the telephone or in writing and you should receive a response within 20 working days. However, the 20 working day limit can be extended up to 40 working days if the request is for complex or high volumes of information.

More information can be found at www.sustainable-development.gov.uk

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) gives you a general right of access to all types of 'recorded' information held by public authorities, including Government Office for the North West. The Act has created two rights for you:

- to know if information exists
- to have it supplied on written request.

What Government Office for the North West must do

- Maintain a 'Publication Scheme', which sets out the information that we will routinely make available. The Government Office Publication Scheme, is part of the Publication Scheme of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and can be found at: http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_about/documents/page/odpm_about_600100.hcsp
- Tell you whether we hold the information requested and provide it or explain why it has not been provided, quoting the relevant exemption under the Act
- Reply to you within 20 working days
- Advise and assist you to make your request. We may contact you to clarify your request
- Although there will be no charge for information that costs GONW less than £600 to produce, we may request a fee if this limit is exceeded. If you do not wish to pay the fee, we can refuse to supply the information.

More information about the Freedom of Information Act can be found at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk or www.dca.gov.uk/foi/index.htm

What you need to do

- For any of the three types of query, Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Regulations (EIR) or Data Protection Act (DPA) please put your request in writing (this includes by fax or email) to the appropriate individual or team, or you can write to:

Information Manager

Government Office for the North West
City Tower
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester
M1 4BE

Fax: 0161 952 4099

Email: mailbox.gonw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

- State clearly what information is required
- State your name and an address for correspondence
- You may request the information in any format. However, we may take into account the cost of supplying the information before complying with your request.
- If you wish to appeal against a decision made by Government Office for the North West not to release certain FOI/EIR/DPA you will be advised of your right of appeal in a leaflet accompanying the response. The leaflet is also available here: <http://www.go-nw.gov.uk/gopages/appeals-leaflet.pdf>