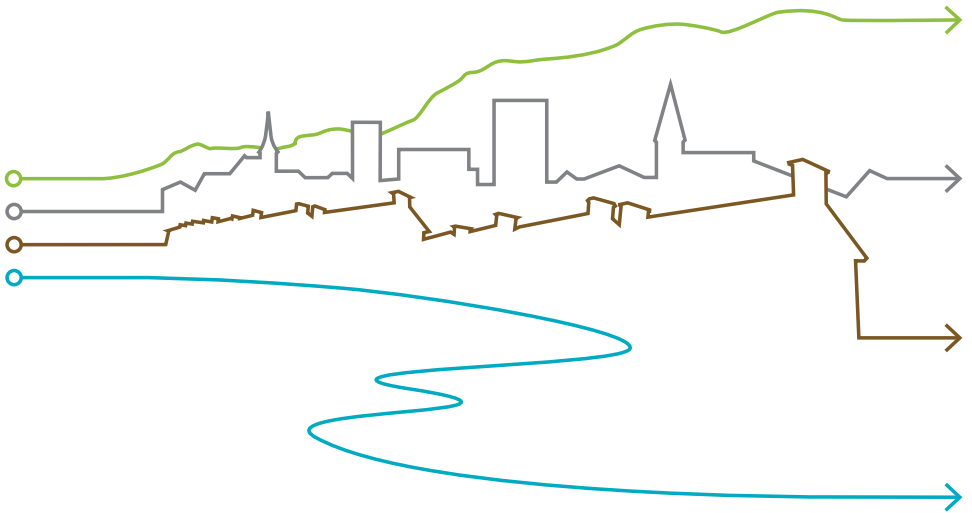


Land & Property Services Customer Charter



Land &
Property
Services®

This booklet explains the work we do and sets out the standards we want to achieve. If you need this information in a different format or language, such as in large print or in Irish or Ulster-Scots, please contact

The Customer Services Team

1st Floor, Lincoln Building
27-45 Great Victoria Street
MALONE LOWER
Belfast
BT2 7SL

Phone: 028 9025 1515

Fax: 028 9025 1659

Email: customerservices@lpsni.gov.uk

Introducing Land & Property Services

On 1 April 2008, a new Agency, Land & Property Services was formed to replace the former Valuation and Lands Agency (VLA), Rate Collection Agency (RCA), Land Registers of Northern Ireland (LRNI) and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland® (OSNI®).

We are responsible for the following four main areas,

- Rating
- Valuation
- Registration
- Mapping

You can find more information about our work in this booklet and on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk.

We are committed to

- Providing an excellent service to all of our customers
- Working hard to improve our standards

In this booklet we set out the standards and level of service that you can expect from us. Your suggestions and feedback can help us improve our service. Comment cards are available from all of our public offices and there is a feedback section on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk.

Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	What we do	1
2	Where we are	2
3	Our customer service standards	3
4	Other standards of service	6
5	Our performance	11
6	If things go wrong	12
7	Consulting you	13
8	Data protection	14
9	Improving our service	15

1. What we do

We are responsible for the following,

- Valuing all domestic and non domestic properties in Northern Ireland
- Maintaining valuation lists
- Carrying out general revaluations
- Providing a general valuation, estate management and property information service to government departments and the public sector in Northern Ireland
- Issuing rates bills for private domestic properties and non domestic properties, such as shops and factories
- Following up and processing payments for rates bills
- Inspecting vacant properties
- Processing refunds if someone has paid us too much
- Managing the Housing Benefit Scheme (for owner occupiers) and the other rate relief schemes (see www.helpwithratesni.gov.uk)
- Managing the Disabled Person's Allowance Scheme
- Maintaining the Title Register in Land Registry, the Statutory Charges Register and the Register of Deeds and providing up to date, accurate land information services
- Supplying mapping information for Northern Ireland
- Providing records and information about places and locations

2. Where we are

We have offices in the following towns,

- Belfast
- Londonderry
- Ballymena
- Omagh
- Portadown
- Bangor
- Lisburn
- Craigavon
- Enniskillen

All of our public offices and facilities are open between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Thursday, and 10am and 4.30pm on Fridays.

You can find the contact details and addresses for all of our offices on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk.

3. Our customer service standards

We will do the following,

- Provide a professional and fair service
- Be polite and treat you with respect
- Deal with your enquiry quickly, efficiently and to the highest professional standards
- Treat all enquiries and any information you give us in confidence and only use it as we are allowed to by law
- Be open about how we run our services, who is in charge and whether or not we are meeting our targets. We will publish this information in our business plan, annual report and accounts. You can see these at any of our offices, or get copies from the TSO Stationery Office, 16 Arthur Street, Belfast. BT1 4GE.
- Give you our name or work title when we speak to you over the phone or when we write to you (by letter or email)
- Carry, and let you see, our official identification if we need to call at your home or business
- Leave an official calling card giving our name and phone number if we have not been able to contact you

If you call to see us at our office we aim to do the following

- See you within 10 minutes. If this is not possible because we are very busy, you should not have to wait for more than 20 minutes
- Answer your questions in full. If we cannot do this, we will arrange to phone you or write to you within 10 working days, when we have found out all the facts

If you write to us we will do the following

- Answer your questions within 10 working days
- If we need longer to deal with your enquiry, we will let you know as soon as possible and tell you when you can expect our full reply in writing
- Deal with your letters or emails that ask us to change our records within 10 working days and, where appropriate, issue you with an amended rates bill within five working days

If you phone us we will do the following

- Answer your call within 20 seconds
- If the first person you speak to cannot deal with your enquiry in full, they will pass you on to someone who can
- If we can't help you the same day, we will explain why and tell you within 10 working days when you can expect our response

If you have special needs

We are fully committed to helping all our customers. All of our public offices have a loop hearing system and access for people with disabilities.

- If you have a hearing difficulty, please tell us so that we can make arrangements to suit your needs
- If you have a sight difficulty, we will provide information and communicate with you in a format you are able to use (for example, in large print or Braille). If you let us know the format you prefer, we will use that particular format to communicate with you
- If you would prefer us to visit you at home because you have special needs, please let us know and we will arrange to visit you at a convenient time

If English is not your first language

- If you write to us in the language you prefer to use, we will write back to you in the same language
- If you would like to talk to us in the language you prefer to use, we can arrange for a translator

4. Other standards of service

Collecting rates

We will offer you different ways to pay your rates. You can pay your rates by direct debit and by standing order, in instalments or by making a one-off payment. Although local rates offices no longer have facilities for accepting cash payments, you can still pay by cash, cheque, debit card or postal order at a local post office or at a bank or building society. You can pay by cash or debit card (either by instalments or by making a one-off payment) in any store that displays the Payzone network logo. There are more than 800 of these in Northern Ireland. If we find, or you tell us, that you have paid too much, we will give you a refund within 14 working days.

Dealing with applications for help with paying your rates

If you own your house and you receive benefits, you may be entitled to help with paying your rates through Housing Benefit or Rate Relief.

We will process 98% of Housing Benefit applications and other applications for Rate Relief (as long as there aren't any mistakes in the forms), and process applications where we don't need any further information from you, within 14 working days.

We will explain how we have assessed your Housing Benefit within 10 working days of you asking.

If you are not happy with how we have dealt with your application and want to appeal against our decision, there is a separate process for this. You can find more details in our leaflet HBA1, which you can get on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk. You can also get one from any of our offices or by contacting our Housing Benefit Central Unit on Freephone 0800 5877477.

Note, if you rent your property and want to claim Housing Benefit, you should contact your local Northern Ireland Housing Executive office.

Inspecting vacant properties

We aim to inspect all vacant properties twice every year.

We will update our records in line with these inspections and issue a rates demand (where this applies) within 10 days of the inspection.

Rating valuations

We need to carry out a new valuation when

- A property (whether domestic or non domestic) is built
- An existing property is changed, or used for a different purpose

We will carry out a valuation when asked to do so by the local building control authority, any other public organisation, the owner of the property, the tenant, the person responsible for paying the rates, or a member of the public.

If you ask for a valuation, we aim to carry out the valuation within three months of your request. However, if this is not possible, we will write to you explaining the delay and that we will carry out the valuation within another three months.

When we have carried out an assessment, we issue a certificate of revision which provides details of the valuation. We send a copy to the owner or whoever uses the building, and give a copy to our Rating Service so they can issue a rates demand. We will process all certificates of revision within six weeks of receiving them.

If you are not satisfied with how we have dealt with your application and want to appeal against our decision, there is a separate process for this. You can get details on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk, or contact any local Land & Property Services valuation office.

Inspecting your property

If we need to inspect your property for valuation or mapping purposes, experienced staff will carry out the inspection.

If we need to inspect the inside of your property, we will make an appointment that's convenient for you, and carry and show you our official identity card.

When we have finished, we will send you or the owner a certificate which sets out the valuation and the reasons for any changes, along with information on how you can get an explanation of the valuation and how you can appeal against it.

We will then issue a new rates bill if necessary. We aim to do this within 10 working days of receiving the valuation certificate.

Registration

The purpose of the Registration Service is to maintain the three registers of land interests in Northern Ireland. These are the Land Registry, Registry of Deeds and Statutory Charges Registry.

By maintaining these three registers, we

- Guarantee the accuracy of the title to the property
- Will register documents on the order that they are presented to the Land Registry
- Provide fast, accurate, reliable and cost effective information about ownership and other rights affecting land
- Provide a procedure for settling disputes relating to registered land

We aim to achieve the following average processing times for registering legal documents, which deal with the whole legal interest in land and Compulsory First Registrations (CFR).

- Land Registry20 working days
- Registry of Deeds6 working days
- Statutory Charges Registry.....15 working days
- Compulsory First Registration60 working days
- Land Information Services.....4 working days

If LPS require further information from the person applying for registration, or where they need to serve notice on any person who may be affected by the registration, then the timescales will be varied.

The information held in land registers is very important for the conveyancing and property market in Northern Ireland and provides an accurate and up to date record of all legal interests in land.

Mapping

The purpose of the Mapping Service is to supply mapping and geographical services for Northern Ireland and to provide records and information about places and locations. This provides a unique record of our landscape.

Our work helps the Government to provide services that people and communities need.

We provide licensed information to many customers and organisations to support their work, commercial or otherwise.

Our customers include government departments, the public and private sector, emergency services, tourists and solicitors.

We aim to

- Complete map update requests of 10 survey units or more within six months of receiving them
- Maintain a high level of surveyed residential properties within our database
- Complete agreements and contracts within 20 working days

Licensing complaints (mapping only)

If your complaint relates to a licensing decision and you have gone through all our internal processes outlined earlier in this document, you can contact the Office of Public Sector Information using the following details.

By letter Office of Public Sector Information
Standards Division
Room I.35
Admiralty Arch
North Side
London
SW1A 2WH

By phone 020 7276 5217

By fax 020 7276 5207

Email: opsistandards@opsi.x.gsi.gov.uk

Working together

You can help us to provide a good service in a number of ways.

- When we ask you for any information we need to deal with your affairs, please give us that information on time
- Make sure the information you give us is accurate
- Tell us as soon as possible about any changes to your circumstances
- If we make a mistake, tell us quickly so that we can sort it out

5. Our performance

We publish details of how we have performed against our main targets in our annual report. You can get a copy of this by

- Asking at any of our offices
- Going to our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk

You can also buy copies from The Stationery Office.

6. If things go wrong

If you are not satisfied with the standard of service we give you, there is a separate procedure you can go through to make a complaint. You can find details on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk, or in any of our offices.

7. Consulting you

We believe it is important to ask you about the standard of service we provide, and the kind of changes we can make to improve our service to you.

- We carry out regular customer service surveys and we look at and act on the information we receive
- If you visit our offices and we ask you to fill in a comment card, please take this opportunity to give us your views on how we have treated you
- We also contact customers by phone to ask for their comments about our service
- You can give us feedback through our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk
- We publish the results of our customer service surveys in our annual report. You can see this at any of our offices if you ask us, or on our website at www.lpsni.gov.uk

8. Data protection

Occasionally we may pass your personal information to other organisations. However, we will only do this when we have to by law, or when doing so meets the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

9. Improving our service

We want to provide a high quality, effective and efficient service to meet the needs of all our customers. If you have any suggestions on how we could improve our service, please let us know. We will acknowledge all your suggestions.

Write to Patricia Montgomery
Director
Customer and Business Improvement
Land & Property Services
Colby House
Stranmillis Court
MALONE LOWER
Belfast
BT9 5BJ



Land &
Property
Services®



An Agency within the Department of

**Finance and
Personnel**

www.dfpni.gov.uk

© Crown Copyright 2008. Anyone wishing to reproduce Land & Property Services material, or use it as a basis for further publication, must obtain a licence from our copyright branch.