



A Charter for Customers

Your guide to the Valuation Tribunal Service

Chairman's Introduction

Our Vision

The Valuation Tribunal Service seeks to provide an effective and efficient service for users in support of the hearing of their appeals by an independent valuation tribunal, by providing appropriate administrative back up, hearing facilities, clerking support and training.

Our Strategic Aim is:

'To secure the effective and independent operation of valuation tribunals in England and to improve customer service through the spread of best practice.'

To fulfil this aim, we will continue to build on the improvements already in place to further enhance the service provided to tribunal users. We will do this for example by:

- becoming more efficient in our processes
- providing a more responsive, customer-focussed service, and
- considering and pursuing value for money in delivering our objectives.

Your opinion matters to us, and we will take every opportunity to improve the quality of our service to you. If you are happy or unhappy with our standards of service, we would like to hear from you.

Anne Galbraith OBE
VTS Chairman

Our Promises to Customers

The VTS is committed to providing a high quality service to our customers:

- We will be friendly, approachable and professional.
- We will respond quickly and efficiently to requests for service.
- We will answer any telephone calls quickly.
- We will respond promptly to all enquiries about our services.
- We will provide straightforward information about our services.
- We will correct things promptly when they are wrong, and learn from complaints that are made about us.
- We will consult with customers and take account of their comments.
- We will promote equality and fair treatment.
- We will seek continuously to improve our services.

If we fail to meet your expectations, please let us know.

Our standards

The VTS is committed to meeting the needs of our customers in a professional manner. You should expect the following standards from us:

Service for all

We aim to provide services and premises that are accessible to every customer. We also aim to treat everyone fairly. No-one making an appeal should receive less favourable treatment because of their race, colour, nationality, age, religion, ethnic origin, sex, sexuality, marital status or disability.

Clear and concise information

We will inform the public about our services and facilities and let them know how to use them effectively. We will also aim to ensure that our printed information is easy to read and informative.

Information will be made available, on request, in large print, Braille and audio formats. When requested, we will make arrangements to translate our guidance leaflets and decisions into any of the following languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Urdu or Vietnamese

Courteous service

We will provide a polite and welcoming service. Staff dealing with the public will provide you with their name and deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible. Reception areas will be clean, comfortable and smoke free, with sign-posts to facilities for the public.

VTS staff will receive regular customer care training to ensure that they are friendly and helpful.

Answering the telephone

We aim to answer all calls within 5 rings. If this is not possible you will be transferred to an answer phone where you will be asked to leave a message. All messages will be returned within two working days of receipt.

All staff answering calls will state their name, and the name of the valuation tribunal office you have contacted.

Dealing with queries

We aim to respond to all queries, written correspondence and emails within 10 working days of receipt. If the subject matter is more complex and requires greater attention, we will contact you to explain the reason for the delay and, where possible, say when a response should be available. If prolonged investigations are needed, we will inform you of progress every 15 working days.

Valuation Tribunal Hearings

If we are advised beforehand:

- We will provide an interpreter at valuation tribunal hearings if you have problems understanding English.
- We will provide someone to communicate with you, for example in sign language.
- We will ensure that we cater for any extra needs related, for example, to your sight, hearing or mobility.

Decisions of Valuation Tribunals

We will issue all reasoned decisions within 21 working days of the valuation tribunal hearing having taken place. Where this is not possible, we will contact you to explain the reason and say when the reasoned decision will be available.

Complaints Policy

We aim to provide a service that is efficient, effective and courteous. If you are less than satisfied with the service that we have provided to you please write to us.

Please be aware that we can act only on complaints about the administration carried out by our offices. If you are unhappy with the way a valuation tribunal hearing has been conducted, or a valuation tribunal decision, your right of appeal is to a superior court. We will be happy to provide you details on how to do this.

Publications

Leaflets will accompany our statutory notices. All our guidance leaflets will be written in plain English and carry the Plain English Campaign crystal mark. We will aim to use plain English in all our correspondence and in our notices.

Website

We will maintain a clear, informative website to help our customers, at www.valuation-tribunals.gov.uk

Measuring our performance

In keeping with the aims of continuous improvement, we will measure our achievement against our business plan key performance indicators.

We will commission annual, independent customer surveys and monitor complaints. We will publish summaries of our achievements in our Annual Report.