



Forestry Service

Service Standards and Performance
Indicators

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1 Introduction

The Forestry Service has overall responsibility for maintaining trees in public ownership on its land within the city. However, these trees are the responsibility of the respective departments and service areas within the Council. The Forestry Service can carry out works to trees growing in areas, such as Council housing gardens, school grounds, libraries, where the managing department agrees to cover the costs associated with managing the risks associated with trees and associated works to maintain them.

As the Forestry Service has moved into Neighbourhood Environmental Services, there is a desire to move away from Service Level Agreements for most service areas and develop appropriate service standards and performance measures to cover all work for internal stakeholders.



2 Service Standards

Introduction

The Forestry Service can provide all services in relation to trees for the Council, from planting to felling, development, maintenance, and succession planning, and dealing with arboreal pandemics to ensuring trees are kept healthy and safe and do not pose a risk to people or property.

The Forestry Service adopts a risk-based approach to tree management and therefore any tree work of lower or no significant risk is likely to be given less priority than issues that pose a significant risk to people and property and allocates its resources accordingly.

The same risk-based approach will be adopted by other internal stakeholders to ensure that all Council departments with responsibility for trees on their property are managed by the Forestry Service to the same service standards. Some flexibility may be allowed, for example, to expedite additional works to be undertaken where it is deemed appropriate, including formative pruning, branch removal, or felling, as well as occasionally carrying out work that would not ordinarily be carried out under our tree management policies contained within Trees in the City where it is instructed by the service and paid for by the client.

A service standard helps to define what a customer can expect from a service and how it should be delivered by the service provider, e.g., in terms of timeliness,

accuracy and suitability. Every service standard specifies requirements that should be fulfilled to establish its fitness for purpose. The standard may provide definitions, indicators of service quality and their levels.

Service Standards

Service Standards are a set of statements that set out what the Forestry Service will provide by way of service. As part of measuring and accounting for performance of the service against the standards, key performance indicators will be used.

The Forestry Service aims to deliver a range of arboricultural services that meet best industry practice and offer guidance on the management of established trees in Council-ownership. Service standards are outlined in Appendix A1.

Use of service standards are open ended, i.e., they remain in operation indefinitely unless withdrawn or superseded through the development of Council strategies and policies covering tree risk management.

Service standards are generated from the current Trees in the City tree management policy document that sets out what the Forestry Service will carry out in terms of work to trees in public areas of the city.

A modification of the service standards shall be mainly, but not exclusively, motivated by the following:



- A need to update the service standards due to significant changes to the service offered or as a function of organisational changes or review or when there are material changes in tree risk management.
- To adjust target key performance indicators when current indicators turn out to be inadequate or unsatisfactory.
- To add new service standards or key performance indicators.



3 Key Performance Indicators

It is important to ensure that the Forestry Service is delivering its services to the appropriate service standards across the Council. To measure the extent to which service standards are being met, performance standards of arboricultural work will be measured. Similarly, to measure the ongoing performance of the service a set of performance measures can provide a useful insight into how well the service is meeting objectives associated with relevant tree management policies within Trees in the City.

A suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) has been identified (see Appendix A2).



4 Determining workforce and resource needs

As the service develops, it will need to meet the increasing needs of the Council to manage its trees and woodlands. Service areas and departments are also being encouraged to support Edinburgh Million Tree City, which will see in excess of 250,000 trees planted by 2030.

The Forestry Service will need its workforce and resource requirements to be reviewed regularly when providing services, so that the service remains agile and adaptive to changing tree numbers, tree growth, changes in environmental conditions, and impacts of climate change on tree pathogens, pests, and diseases, and a changing tree age profile.

Future operational needs

Future operational needs have been identified within the Forestry Service Workforce and Resources Plan. The Forestry Service should have direct responsibility to manage trees on Council-owned property and in Council house gardens managed under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), as well as schools, and Health and Social Care property, parks and open spaces, etc.

In addition to agreeing appropriate service standards and performance measures,

there will be a need to record, inspect, and assess trees for Housing and other areas of Place, plus Children and Families, and Health and Social Care properties.

Ash Dieback requires resources to actively manage the risks associated with the disease and the integrity of infected Ash trees. Ash trees may be growing in areas where the Forestry Service carry out services against Service Standards. To address the increased workload that will result from the enhanced inspection programme and ensure that risks are addressed timeously.

Tree planting projects by other sections and departments will add to the future maintenance liabilities that need to be covered by the service standards. Newly planted standard trees require routine maintenance to give them the best chance of establishing. The tree management policies within Trees in the City suggest a solid and serious commitment made to not only tree planting, but to proper aftercare as young trees establish.



Work programming

Annual work programmes shall be created that should clearly set out priorities around meeting the required service standards.

Work programmes should also consider the volume and types of work to be carried out internally, as well as externally by framework contractors.

Work programmes should be assessed and reviewed to consider whether what tree work is planned is actually delivered, reasons for performance issues, etc., to identify any changes in workforce and resource demands.

Work programming should consider any backlog of work as well as current and future work requirements.

Resource management can be explored as part of the deployment of Confirm, which will assist with work programming, for example, by allowing jobs to be allocated to arborist crews, the time taken, resources required to complete jobs, provide detail about the volume of work, and highlight current outstanding jobs.

Tree Risk Management Framework

A Tree Risk Management Framework should be developed to incorporate a reasonable and balanced risk-based approach to tree management that ensures the Forestry Service complies with legal and regulatory requirements and best practice. Service standards may need to be updated and reviewed once the Tree Risk Management Framework has been developed and implemented where it

changes resources required to meet inspection regimes or other outcomes linked to tree management policies within Trees in the City.



5 Monitoring and evaluating standards

Introduction

As service standards are implemented and works are delivered, the process should be regularly followed up by senior management through monitoring and evaluation to ensure that arboricultural services are meeting the desired standards.

Monitoring standards

Following approval of the service standards, the related performance indicators should be monitored regularly to make sure the objectives are met. Monitoring regularly should also ensure that any service issues or failures are being addressed. Regular monitoring should also involve the appropriate representatives of the service or department.

Progress against each performance indicator will be regularly monitored by the Trees and Woodlands Manager and regular updates should be provided to the Head of Neighbourhood Environmental Services and the Head of Housing or other appropriate service or departmental representative.

Annual review

There should be an annual review prepared for senior management and for the appropriate service or departmental representative to share progress; provide information; report on ongoing, current, or

new risks; and enable scrutiny to take place. Where changes to resources, including increases in costs, are required, this can also be highlighted for the purposes of budget management and resource allocation.

Regular service review meetings should be held within the Forestry Service to identify where there are difficulties in maintaining service standards or key performance indicators and suggest and implement appropriate corrective actions.



A1 Service Standards

The Forestry Service aims to provide a quality arboricultural service adhering to all industry guidelines and best practice for amenity, recreation, biodiversity, climate change mitigation, and other benefits.

The Forestry Service's team of arboricultural specialists and operatives will strive to:

- Provide a response either by telephone or in writing to all enquiries within the timescales set out in the Council's Customer Care Standards (<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/say/customer-care-standards/1>) and ensure that all contact with customers will be dealt in a fair and consistent way.
- Provide quality arboricultural services to our customers making most efficient use of the resources available. To help us do this, the Forestry Service values and welcomes any feedback on its services, including receiving any comments, complaints, or suggestions that customers may have to improve its services.
- Adhere to the standards set out in the 'Trees in the City' tree management policies.
- Manage Council-owned trees and woodland for the benefit of public amenity and recreation, biodiversity, climate change mitigation.
- Ensure that harvesting of timber and other forest products is done sustainably and any funds obtained are invested in future tree and woodland management in the city.
- Undertake all non-emergency tree work in line with the Council's risk management approach to tree management. This will include an inspection to identify defects and any tree work required being added to a prioritised work schedule.
- Wherever possible tree work will be carried out at a mutually convenient time and recognising the importance placed on hours of operation of the premises or availability of the tenant or occupier.
- Complete all tree work to the highest applicable standards of arboricultural best practice and tree care and leave the site in an acceptable condition.
- Provide appropriate tree health advice and guidance on the management and establishment of Council-owned trees that is concise, easy to understand, and informative.
- Be as helpful as possible and explain why a particular course of action will not be taken (e.g., where it is contrary to Council policy on the care and management of trees).
- Support the planting of more trees than are removed, e.g., due to tree disease or death, to sustain and enhance the city's green environment.



- Promote community and voluntary participation in tree and woodland management and work in partnership with other stakeholders, landowners, and departments where appropriate.

A) Scope of Service Standards.

- 1) Service standards cover the implementation of routine and reactive maintenance of trees on premises and land managed by Council departments to ensure that trees are maintained in a safe manner to the satisfaction, safety, and standards.
- 2) The Forestry Service shall endeavour to undertake all arboricultural operations in an expeditious and timely manner to ensure that the works are completed within the appropriate timescales or as may be defined within the Works Order.

B) Protection of wildlife.

- 1) The discovery of any form of protected species, such as a bat or bat habitat, or active bird's nest will delay tree works and shall be considered a valid reason to suspend works and not meet service standard timescales. Under no circumstances should any wildlife species protected by statutory legislation be disturbed in order to deliver tree works.
- 2) Routine tree maintenance will not be carried out during the months of March to August inclusive. When tree or vegetation clearance work has to be undertaken during the bird nesting season, a pre-work survey will be carried out by a suitably competent

person to ensure actively nesting birds are not disturbed.

- 3) Additional care and controls will be taken by the Forestry Service for access and egress to the work site for ground-nesting birds to avoid disturbance or damage to a nesting site. This is also true for retained trees on site as the removal of adjacent trees or remedial works on a tree may lead to the established nest being abandoned, exposed to the elements or predation, as it could lead to prosecution.

C) Disruption to tree works due to specific events or circumstances.

- 1) The Forestry Service aims to prioritise tasks, or to defer or prohibit tree-related works on certain sites at certain times by reason of specific events or circumstances, for example, other contractors are working on site, public events are scheduled, or habitat issues associated with protected species that are discovered during the course of any works.

D) Standard of Work

- 1) The Forestry Service shall perform the whole of the works in a professional manner, to at least the minimum level of qualification required to carry out works in accordance with the principles of current arboricultural best practice BS3998 and as disseminated from time to time by organisations such as and including but not limited to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Arboricultural Association (AA), the Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service (AAIS), the British Standards

Institute (BSI) publications relating to the works operations being carried out, and/or others as may be related and relevant.

E) Services hours / Service availability

- 1) Work requests can be logged at any time by sending an email to forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk. Alternatively, tree works can be logged by telephone 0131 311 7074, Monday to Friday [9am to 4pm]. Future plans are to move to electronic logging of work requests.
- 2) The majority of routine maintenance will be carried out during core working hours, which are Monday to Friday between 8.00am and 4.00pm, but work is sometimes planned outside these hours to reduce disruption or shorten timescales or due to dealing with weather emergencies.
- 3) Emergency requests can be logged 24 hours per day throughout the year by telephoning 0131 311 7074. During periods of storm weather emergency, Forestry Service resources may not be immediately available, but all works will be triaged so that priority can be appropriately assigned.
- 4) Attend to emergency tree work within 24 hours of the request reaching the Forestry Service. This may include use of standby or an out of hours service.

F) Calculation of Annual Service Fee

- 1) Any Annual Service Fee should cover the full (or pro-rata if appropriate) annual and associated on-costs of:

i) Salary, working time payments, overtime, stand-by, etc., for human resources, e.g., Tree & Woodlands Officer; an Arborist squad comprising one lead arborist and two arborists to adequately manage the tree stock.

- 2) And the following operational elements, including but not limited to, costs associated with the provision, use, regular servicing, repairs, fair wear and tear of appropriate fleet vehicles and operational equipment (e.g., chainsaws, PPE, etc.).
- 3) Salary costs should be increased annually to account for any agreed pay rise or increments for local government employees.
- 4) Vehicle costs should be reviewed annually to cover increased costs.

G) Services Provided

- 1) The Forestry Service will carry out a visual tree inspection of all trees within the operational estate and maintain appropriate records on its tree management database. Each tree will be surveyed in line with the Tree Risk Management approach. Following inspection, the Forestry Service will make recommendations in line with the Council's adopted tree "Trees in the City" policy document and Tree Risk Management approach.
- 2) The Forestry Service will provide professional advice to departmental contacts with regards to ad-hoc enquiries and requests for service generated by the public and or elected members etc.

3) The Forestry Service will arrange for agreed works to be carried out either in-house or by its approved framework contractor. The cost of tree works will be recharged.

4) Works carried out by framework contractor may incur an additional management charge payable to the Forestry Service to cover costs associated with procurement, supervision, and inspection of the works.

H) Trees covered by the Service Standards

1) The principal purpose of this agreement is to survey all trees over 20cm diameter at breast height (DBH) on the operational estate to identify defects that require remedial action and to carry out any essential health and safety works where necessary.

2) The Forestry Service will provide professional tree advice when requested about trees that are owned by the Council.

3) Each department will endeavour to provide the Forestry Service a full list of the facilities or areas of land that have trees to be managed and maintained. It will be the responsibility of each department to ensure all information provided is up-to-date and inform the Forestry Service of any amendments, i.e., additional facilities or land added to the list or facilities or land to be removed.

4) Where a facility or premises has a site contact or facilities manager, then

appropriate contact details must also be provided to the Forestry Service.

5) The Forestry Service will cross reference the list provided with the sites currently held on its tree management database system. Any sites that are not already on the database will be added, and any trees within those facilities or land with a DBH of 20cm that require work to be undertaken will have a condition survey carried out and recorded.

6) All sites will then be surveyed on a cycle from the date of last inspection as identified under the Tree Risk Management approach.

7) Where site boundaries are not obvious to the arborist surveyor on site, the departmental contact will be responsible for confirming the extent.

8) During inspection, the Forestry Service will make recommendations in line with the Council's adopted tree policy document - Trees in the City.

I) Categorisation of tree inspections.

1) Following an inspection by a competent officer from the Forestry Service, all recommendations will generally fall into one of the following categories:

i) Category 1 - Emergency - Any tree that poses a health and safety risk to persons or property that needs to be dealt with immediately. For any trees in this category, once notified by the inspector, the [Client] will make necessary arrangements for cordoning off an exclusion zone

around the tree if necessary, until resources are able to attend. The Forestry Service will attend to make safe any unforeseen circumstance (such as tree, stem, limb, or branch failure in the event of an unpredictable event, following high winds or storm, vandalism, or road traffic accident).

- ii) Category 2 - Health and Safety - Any tree that has been identified to have a defect that requires some sort of remedial action to remove a perceived risk of failure or damage to property. The timeframe for health and safety works will be determined by the inspection of the tree by the Forestry Service or dependant on severity of defect and targets.
 - iii) Category 3 - Desirable - (also considered ad-hoc works) comprise non-safety related works that may promote better long-term health of the tree or other proactive management options.
 - iv) Category 4 - No works are recommended at this time.
- 2) For Category 1 trees, the works will be carried out as soon as possible and a recharge will be made to the [Client] on completion.
 - 3) For Category 2 trees it will be generally anticipated that the works will be authorised by the site responsible person in advance of any works taking place. If the [Client] does not authorise the works for any reason, full liability for those trees falls back on the [Client] until authorised.
 - 4) Work to Category 3 trees will be authorised at the discretion of the [Client].
 - 5) In addition to routine surveying, the Forestry Service will advise on general tree-related enquiries generated by themselves, the public, or elected members, etc. As with routine surveying, the Forestry Service will make recommendations in line with the Council's adopted Trees in the City policy document. Where disputes arise with a service user, for example, a neighbour request for a tree to be pruned for reasons of blocking light, or a tree to be removed due to being deemed too big, the Forestry Service will not routinely carry out this type of work. The service user will be asked to escalate their request to department representative for a decision, as the budget holder. The departmental representative will decide how to proceed, then instruct, and fund any works required.
 - 6) If objections or complaints from the public, etc., are received about how the Forestry Service manages trees in line with the adopted Trees in the City tree management policies or other Council policy, the Forestry Service will answer them. For any objections or complaints relating to works carried out outside of the adopted Trees in the City tree management policies or other Council policy at the request of departmental representative, then this will be included in the response by the Forestry Service.
 - 7) Tree works will be carried out on a risk priority basis, considering existing

health and safety tree work orders and or emergency work pending across the whole of the Council's estate.

- 8) The cost of any additional non-standard re-instatement or facilitation works would be met by the relevant department (i.e., fence removal for access, unavoidable damage to ground due to tree work operations, or wet ground conditions). A separate arrangement or another contractor may need to be instructed to carry out these works, and associated costs will be recharged to the relevant department. Once authorised, the departmental contact or appointed representative will provide the Forestry Service with the relevant cost codes to recharge against and the works will be ordered. Recharges will be made by the Forestry Service on completion of the works.
- 9) Where a facility or premises intends to carry out any construction works in proximity to any trees, particularly works that require excavation, the nominated Project Manager will first contact the Forestry Service to establish if those works could potentially undermine the trees and their safety. If works are carried out without consulting the Forestry Service first, or if works are carried out against the advice of the Forestry Service, then all liability for the trees will fall on the relevant department. If any trees need to be resurveyed as a result of any construction works an additional charge will be made.
- 10) If there is a request for a facility's whole tree stock to be re-surveyed before its next scheduled inspection, then an

additional charge will be made to the facility.

J) Customer Service levels

- 1) For work managed by the Forestry Service that requires a response to a reactive issue or to a customer following a service request, the customer's satisfaction is often related to the speed of which a response is given and the period of time that lapses before the tree works are completed. The Forestry Service will aim to deal with these issues within specified target response times and terms used will be as follows:
 - i) "Response Time" means the time from receipt of the request by the Forestry Service until an initial inspection has been undertaken, and where appropriate, a works order has been raised. In some instances, an "initial inspection" will be completed either with or without discussion in person by the Forestry Service with the customer.
 - ii) "Completion Time" means the time from receipt of the service request by the Forestry Service until the tree works have been inspected, instructed, carried out, and confirmed as complete by the Forestry Service.
- 5) General enquiries and communication with the Forestry Service will be in line with the Council's customer contact standards.
- 6) An enquiry from a departmental representative, for example, that relates to technical information,

progress of a works order, or is policy-related, should be responded to in a timely manner and within the agreed timescales. Where a response has not been received, an escalation request can be made by emailing forestry.service@edinburgh.gov.uk quoting the appropriate reference number allocated to the initial enquiry.

- consider fulfilment of the responsibilities and any issues arising.
- consider other relevant topics, including emerging tree risk management issues (e.g., pests and diseases), and future requirements for improving tree risk management.

K) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- 1) Key performance indicators form part of demonstrating how effectively the Forestry Service is meeting its service standards. A list of key performance indicators is given in Appendix A2.
- 2) The performance of each key performance indicator will be monitored and reviewed annually.
- 3) Any future performance data will be used as a management tool to identify areas of strong and weak performance of the Forestry Service and to provide information and guidance on tree inspection, tree health, and overall tree management, and support planning for future service improvements and to reduce overall risk associated with trees.
- 4) Performance review meetings will be held annually, or at another frequency agreed between the Forestry Service and the departmental contact, to provide an opportunity to:
 - discuss actual performance versus target.
 - consider corrective action where service is considered below the expected level.
 - consider any matters requiring escalation.

L) Change control

- 1) The service standards that apply will have version control and will be updated by Forestry Service. It will include the date of the agreed amendment, a description of the change, the author.

A2 Key Performance Indicators

| KPI ref | Performance indicator | Current baseline | Target | Commentary |
|---------|---|------------------|--------|---|
| F01 | Proactive tree inspection regime - percentage number of trees surveyed per year. | | >20% | Based on reaching a survey of 100% over 5-year period. Target would be adjusted if period is greater or lesser than 5 years pro-rata. |
| F02 | Overall percentage of tree works carried out within 80 days. | | >80% | |
| F03 | Emergency - Percentage of Category 1 dangerous trees reported, inspected, and made temporarily safe within 24 hours by Forestry Service. | | >95% | |
| F04 | Health and Safety - Percentage of Category 2 trees reported, inspected, and made safe, requiring permanent rectification within 5 working days of notification to the Forestry Service. | | >95% | |
| F05 | Desirable/ad-hoc - Percentage of Category 3 tree works carried out that are non-safety related but promote better long-term health of the tree (e.g., crown lifting, pruning, etc.,) within 6 months of notification to the Forestry Service. | | >70% | |
| F06 | Percentage of Category 4 trees within operational management achieving a follow up inspection within 12 months. | | <10% | |

| KPI ref | Performance indicator | Current baseline | Target | Commentary |
|---------|--|------------------|--------|---|
| F07 | Percentage of outstanding enquiries or complaints logged that have not been responded to within 10 days. | | <10% | |
| F08 | Customer satisfaction rate with service provided. | | >80% | Percentage satisfied or very satisfied. |
| F09 | Percentage of trees with outstanding jobs or work tickets. | | <10% | Based on individual tree numbers with outstanding tasks rather than based on numbers of outstanding tasks on trees. |
| F10 | Percentage of working days without a safety incident (requiring reporting on SHE Portal). | | >98% | Based on 260 standard working days per year. |
| F11 | Percentage of recall or repeat visits to same tree derived from the same customer enquiry or complaint. | | <5% | Focus on right first time. A recall visit is where an inspector has been called back to inspect a tree due to customer dissatisfaction with service received. |

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