



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

*Customer Care at*  
**Ashford Borough Council**

January 2019



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## *introduction*

Customer Service is the act of taking care of customer needs by providing and delivering professional, helpful, high quality service and assistance before, during and after the customer's requirements are met. In order to deliver effective and efficient services, joined with a culture of continuous improvement, the Council puts its customers at the centre of all business planning, providing responsible and accessible high quality services and focus on developing highly trained and knowledgeable staff.

This document provides policy guidance to support the delivery of customer care throughout the Council.

The content identifies corporate practices and procedures that will enable staff to deliver a consistent and high quality service to the members of the public.



# customer care charter

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

We strive to provide an excellent quality service in an efficient and helpful way.

Each time you contact us we aim to:

- Be efficient and reliable
- Be courteous and listen to what you tell us
- Deal with any issues promptly, when they arise
- Offer you choices where possible
- Aim to resolve your issue enquiry at first point of contact

You can trust us with your information as we are always mindful to:

- Only collect the information we need from you
- Keep only the information we need to, and only for as long as we need to
- Keep your information secure
- Let you see the information we hold about you if you ask

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We aim to treat everyone in a polite, friendly and fair way. We are committed to equality when delivering all of our services, regardless of a person's –

- gender/sex
- age
- disability
- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- marital/civil partnership status
- pregnancy/maternity
- race/ethnicity
- religion or belief

In all our dealings with you, we are committed to protecting your human rights as defined in the Human Rights Act 1998. The council also complies with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and will do all we can to ensure that disabled people enjoy the same human rights as people who are not disabled. We also comply with GDPR regulations.

If you have special needs in communicating with us, we will do all we reasonably can to help.

## GDPR

Ashford Borough Council is registered as a Data Controller and as such all Council Employees, Partners, Contractors, Agents and Elected Members have a responsibility for data protection. In order to comply with

the General Data Protection Regulation and its domestic implementation legislation the Data Protection Act 2018 we are always mindful to:

- Only process personal data lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner.
- Only collect personal data for a specified, explicit and legitimate purpose and not further process in a manner that is incompatible with that purpose.
- Only collect relevant and limited personal data necessary in relation to the purpose for its collection.
- Ensure any records that contain personal data are accurate and where necessary kept up to date.
- Only keep personal information for as long as necessary in relation to the purpose for which that personal data was collected.
- Only process personal data in a manner that ensures there is appropriate security protecting that personal data.

For further details including information on an individual's data protection rights please see the data protection pages on the Intranet.

## WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

We ask you to treat our team the same way you would like to be treated.

Please do not raise your voice at staff, abuse them, physically or verbally or threaten in any way. Should our staff feel intimidated or threatened, we reserve the right to ask you to leave or terminate the call.

*tell us more*

### **Complaints:**

We recognise that we don't always get things right so if you are dissatisfied with the service you receive please let us know. When things go wrong we need to know so we can put things right and learn from them for the future.

### **Comments:**

We appreciate your comments and suggestions on how we can improve our services or if you've had a good experience so we can share this with our team. There are a number of ways in which you can give us your feedback, simply speak to any member of our team.

# service delivery

In recent years we have seen a significant change in how residents interact with the Council, with a substantial number of residents choosing to communicate with us via e-mail and internet at a time convenient to them. For this reason along with a constant improvement of our website, apps and automated telephone system we introduced the customer service strategy which demonstrates a new model of how we deliver face-to-face services.

An appointments only system was introduced 4 days a week. Customers visiting the Civic Centre will be greeted by a Host who will establish the nature of the visit and will signpost the customer to:

**Fast Track:** for verification of documents.

**Assisted Self-Help:** staff will be on hand to help residents, providing guidance and support with online transactions,

encouraging confidence and motivation to self-help in the future, either from home or the Civic Centre.

**Appointments:** where the Host identifies that the customer has a complex enquiry or requires staff intervention they can schedule an appointment at a time convenient for the customer or, if urgent, endeavour to carry out that appointment that same day.

Our strategic intent is to provide a consistent and accurate level of service across all channels and to direct customers to the most effective and appropriate channel for the service they require.



# consultation and monitoring

Meeting the needs and expectations of customers is of the highest importance to the Council. If we do not know what customers want, we cannot meet their expectation. For this reason it is important to:

- Understand the needs and behaviours of customers.
- Involve them in decision making.
- Monitor achievements against corporate objectives.
- Use feedback to shape services.
- Focus resources to be effective in delivering quality services.
- Measure satisfaction.
- Identify service failings.
- Capture and record customer information.

Through ongoing consultation on service standards and service delivery we are able to keep in touch with our customers and establish our customers 'quality expectation'

Regular consultations with customers and constant monitoring enable us to ascertain the service standards set for our customers and to highlight areas that need improvement.

We always remember that when consulting with people, it is vital that the feedback loop is completed to demonstrate to customers that we have taken account of the outcome of the consultation exercise and that we have acted upon the results to improve the service. This reassures people that it is worth participating in consultation activities.

There are a wide variety of tools, which are used to consult with people. These tools vary depending on the topic for consultation and the type of information that needs to be gathered. Surveys, for example, are a useful way of understanding citizens' views in a quantitative way, while focus groups are a more qualitative form of consultation that can provide a better insight of the issue as well as a rich source of information and examples to support statistical information.

The main consultation methods which the Council uses are:

- Internal customer interviews
- Survey Monkey
- Mystery Shopping

In addition to the proactive consultation methods listed above, we will also use

reactive tools to collect customers' views and comments, including complaints, letters and emails.

It is also vital to consult with all parties involved in the provision of the service as the different communities that we serve may require services to be delivered in different ways and through different access channels. For this reason, particular attention needs to be given to consulting with 'hard to reach' groups to ensure that we are socially inclusive.

We are responsible for the personal information we hold about our customers and do not hold sensitive data about a customer on the customer's personal file if the data is not relevant to the customers' enquiry. This will be in breach of the Data Protection Act 1998.

For this reason, we are always mindful to:

- Only collect information needed to deliver each service.
- Keep only the information we need to, and only for as long as we need to.
- Keep information secure.
- Make sure information is relevant and up-to-date.
- Let people see the information we hold about them if they ask.





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