

# Customer Services

## Customer Service and Access Strategy to 2020

Version 2

March 2018

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Audience	Employees of Sunderland City Council and partner organisations
Purpose	To describe the Customer Service and Access Strategy relating to customer access channels.
Project	Customer Service and Access Strategy Refresh
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Prepared By	Liz St Louis
Governance and Review	Delivery of this strategy is the responsibility of the Head of Customer Service and Development. Progress will be monitored by Customer Service Network Senior Management Team.

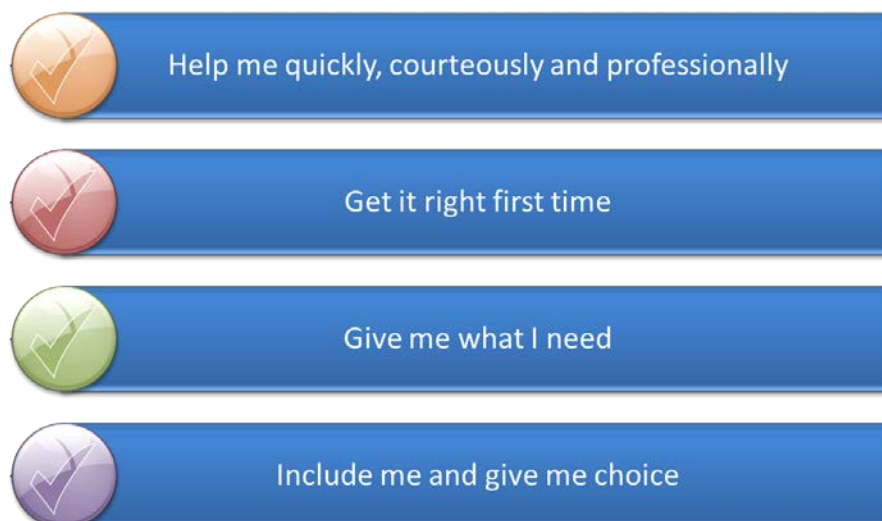
Version	Name	Comment	Date
0.1	Helen Hunter	First draft	06/05/2015
0.2	Liz St Louis / SMT	Second draft	03/06/2015
0.3	Liz St Louis / SMT	Third draft	23/09/2015
0.4	Liz St Louis/Portfolio Holder	Final Draft	16/11/2015
1.0	Liz St Louis / Sue Stanhope	Final for Release	23/11/2015
2.0	Liz St Louis	Review by CSN Management Team	28/02/2018

# Section 1: The Strategy

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## 1.1 Introduction

The Customer Service and Access Strategy places the customer at the heart of all of the Council's service delivery processes to ensure we provide accessible, responsive, high quality and cost effective services from the customers viewpoint of:



The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Maintain the high levels of customer satisfaction across the Council;
- Continue to reduce non-value demand (excess, failure, preventable, co-dependent) and increase first contact resolution;
- Migrate customers to self-service access channels which provide both convenience and value for money;
- Join up service delivery information and knowledge to enable us to respond at the right time and meet the needs of our diverse communities, ensuring equality of opportunity for all residents;
- Achieve efficiencies through continual improvement by making better use of resources, redesigning processes and better managing demand; and
- Ensure customer access remains fit for purpose, is future proofed and continually improves.

## 1.2 Timeframe for the Strategy

This Strategy will ensure Customer Service and Access Principles are aligned with the direction of travel for the Council and the wider city to 2020 and beyond. The Customer Service Network will continue to aim to be a provider of choice, serving the future Council, alternative service delivery models and partner organisations.

### 1.3 Customer Access Options

The Council and its partners across the City provide a diverse range of services and virtually all initial customer contact is via the Customer Service Network.

Customers have a choice of channels to access services:

- Via the Council's website- [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk);
- Using Social Media;
- Using Web Chat;
- Using Interactive Voice Recognition services;
- By telephoning the Contact Centre via the 5 published numbers that group services thematically together open 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday with urgent services available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week;
- By visiting a Customer Service Centre - 3 face to face centres in different parts of the City with various opening times between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday;
- By email to general or service specific email accounts; and
- By post

### 1.4 Overarching Customer Access Principles



To deliver excellent customer service our response to all contracts is based on the following customer access principles:

- **Accessibility**

Rarely if ever will there be a one size fits all approach - we will continue to provide and develop a wide range of access channels to allow choice and convenience to customers ensuring that we don't exclude or unfairly disadvantage anybody. We use available insight to understand why customers do, or do not, use particular channels and continue to develop those channels to improve accessibility based upon this insight.

- **Consistency**

Regardless of how, when and where a customer contacts us, the experience should always be the same – whether that be in person, by telephone, or when using automated channels.

- **High Quality**

Every service promise should be fulfilled - the way each contact is handled should be efficient but courteous. Wherever possible, the customer's needs should be fulfilled at the first point of contact. All requests for service should be delivered on time and to expectation.

- **Value For Money**

Every contact and every customer experience should provide value for money.

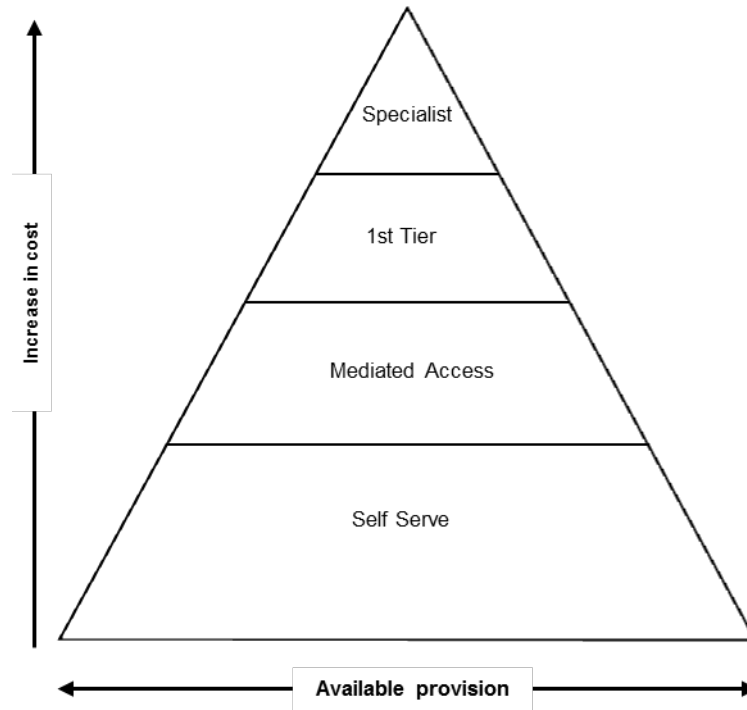
## 1.5 Design Standards for all Channels

Design standards are applied across all channels and all contacts to ensure that the Customer Access Principles are met;

- All staff handle all contacts, by all channels, in a consistent and professional manner;
- Customers will be strongly encouraged to self-serve independently;
- Customer insight will be fully exploited in designing access channels;
- All access channels will be managed consistently and will be strongly, and identically, branded;
- Services will be consistently grouped, and presented, in intuitive thematic groupings;
- Processes will be designed to avoid failure demand; and
- Processes will be designed to maximise first contact resolution.

## 1.6 Order of Preference for Channels

The approach has been designed so that the widest range of services possible is delivered via the least expensive means, and the most expensive are only used where absolutely necessary. We seek to deliver as many services through self-service, mediated self-service and first tier support as possible and minimise contacts which require real-time handling by council staff (e.g. telephony or Face to Face).



## 1.7 Measurement of Performance

We continuously monitor and measure the service delivered to our customers via a Balanced Scorecard approach which considers the 4 different components of excellent customer service:

- **Customers:**
  - Use of the different access channels;
  - Accuracy of our forecasting of service demand;
  - Value demand compared to non-value demand; and
  - Customer satisfaction with our service.
- **Quality:**
  - Service level;
  - Average speed of answer;
  - Average wait times;
  - Average handling times;

- First contact resolution;
- Fulfilment of service requests;
- Average contact quality score; and
- Number of compliments.
- **Processes and systems:**
  - Amount of contacts transferred out;
  - Utilisation;
  - ICT reliability;
  - Fulfilment of service requests within the service level expectations; and
  - Percentage of service requested delivered.
- **Learning and development:**
  - Complaints generating improvements;
  - Number of hours staff training;
  - Percentage of staff performing to expectation;
  - Percentage of contacts evaluated;
  - Number of days lost due to sickness absence; and
  - Number of staff leaving.

These performance measures will be adapted to ensure they fit with how services are delivered as customer needs change over time.

## Section 2. Delivering the Strategy

### 2.1 Improvement actions

To deliver the strategy and high quality customer service we have identified a number of improvement actions which meet the needs of our customers. The action plan will continue to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and will fall under the governance of the Senior Management Team within the Customer Service Network.

Priority Action	Key milestones and results 18/19	Due Date
<b>Digital</b> Enable all citizens to participate and to access digital services and products Introduce new digital offerings to better manage demand and/or provide greater choice and convenience for customers	Home and Money; 6 new on-line forms IEG4 e-change in circumstances product Open Access Benefits Portal	Q1
	Health & Wellbeing; On-line self-assessment form On-line Blue Car Badge application	Q1/Q2
	City & Neighbourhood; Enhanced mapping technology On-line Trade Waste Service On-line events programme including Big Bike Ride, Penshaw Bowl, Illuminations, Tall Ships Verify for Parking Services On-line Property Reporting Service	Q1/Q4
	Life, Family & Learning; Funeral Directors online portal improvements Enhanced Copy Certificates on-line service	Q1/Q2
	Development of Artificial Intelligence to support channel	Q2



	shift	
<b>Campaign Management</b> Encourage take-up of on-line services and proactively manage demand for services	Develop an annual calendar of campaigns and utilise social media and traditional channels to proactively manage demand for services and encourage the use of on-line channels	Q1/Q4
<b>Telephony</b> Implement new contact centre telephony to introduce new functionality and blend access channels including voice, web-chat and e-mail	Replace the current telephony platform to provide an Omni-channel experience for customers and deliver productivity and efficiency improvements	Q1/Q2
<b>Face to Face</b> Review facilities to facilitate mediated self-access and reduce demand	Continually review existing face to face processes and facilities to identify opportunities for channel shift and assisted digital services	Q2/Q3
<b>Customer Satisfaction</b> Continue to develop capability to adequately and regularly measure customer satisfaction across all access channels	Develop ICT systems and processes and systematically review feedback received via requests for services and surveys	Q1/Q2
<b>Customer Insight</b> Develop the customer insight framework to better understand customer needs and preferences and appropriately tailor and target service delivery	Review customer journeys across all access channels and undertake specific user research to meet changing customer expectations and respond to changes to service delivery.	Q1/Q4
<b>Data Protection</b> Comply with GDPR	Identify and deliver all actions resulting from the self-assessment processes.	May 2018