



**Mid Devon District
Council**

Customer Care Policy

September 2010

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1 Corporate plan and pledges

The council's Corporate Plan sets out the priorities for Mid Devon District Council for the next five years. Pledge 10 of the corporate plan is to:

"Ensure that our services are accessible and meet the needs of our community"

To help us fulfil this pledge we have a range of equality and diversity policies and a customer care policy that sets out what customers can expect from us when they contact us for any service.

2. Customer Service promise

We will:

Have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service, and that meet the diverse needs of our customers.

Have staff that are polite & friendly to customers, and have an understanding of customer needs.

Advise our customers and potential customers about our standards and what they can expect from our services in terms of timeliness and quality. (See Appendix 1)

Respond to the initial enquiry promptly and where there are known delays let the customer know why and what action is being taken and whenever possible provide details of the likely overall time to achieve the outcome required.

3. Customer Care Charter

We would like our customers to know the standards and behaviours they can expect from us. A Customer Care Charter has been agreed and sets out how staff will behave when dealing with customers. This is displayed in all of our offices and on the website.

The Charter includes details on how customers can help us to give them the best service possible. (See Appendix 2).

A customer care guide is provided for staff to ensure they understand the importance of providing a good customer service for all customers regardless of how they contact us.

4. Customer Service standards

We will:

Set challenging standards and stretching targets for customer satisfaction.

Ensure the standards for our main services are challenging and take into account our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets.

Set appropriate standards for the timeliness of responses across all access channels.
(See appendix 1)

Respond to any failure in performance and take appropriate action to bring standards back to the agreed level.

In addition individual services may have standards specific to their particular areas of work (e.g. housing benefit applications, planning applications, grass cutting).

5 Provision of information

We will:

Protect customers' privacy both in face to face discussions and in the transfer and storage of information.

All staff complete data protection training at induction and have regular updates on their responsibility in relation to the protection of personal information.

Where customers are expected to provide documentation to support applications or for personal identification, we will make it clear what is required and only retain as much data as is required for that purpose.

6. Access and communication

We will:

Make our services easily accessible to all our customers through the provision of a range of access channels, these include:-

- offices that are open for 40 hours a week,
- a central customer service call centre that is open for 42 hours a week with extended hours provided in partnership with the Devon County Council call centre,
- interactive website with a range of on-line services,
- outreach events at rural community locations
- Provide visiting officers where appropriate.
- Provide an out of hours service for 24 hour emergency contact.

Ensure that where customers visit our premises our facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible, and have access for the disabled, provide hearing loops in our interview rooms and at the service desks and provide signage that is in the most appropriate format for customers with sight impairment.

Where customer's require application forms or information about our services, we will provide the information they need in ways that meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.

Details of how to do this for customers are available in a staff guide.

7. When it goes wrong

We will:

Have an easy to use complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully, solve them within agreed timescales and in all cases let the customer know the outcome of the investigation.

For more information please see the complaints policy.

8. Staff training

All staff will receive information at induction on the council's Customer Service Standards and Charter, as well as any service standards that have been set for their own individual service.

Additional training should be provided by their line manager on responding to customers to ensure every member of staff is aware of their own responsibility for providing excellent customers service.

A staff guide on customer service standards is available on sharepoint

9. Review

A review of the policy will be carried out every three years.

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Consultation **This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**

Management Team

Senior officer Forum

Admin Support Team leaders

Citizens Panel – consulted on service standards (2009)

**Appendix 1
Customer Service standards**

Access Channel	Agreed Standard	Monitoring arrangements
Telephone – direct dials (calls made to individual officers extensions).	95% answered within 6 rings (20 seconds)	Telephone call log available from IT. Monitored by Customer First Manager. Exceptions reported to line managers
Telephone to call centre	95% answered within 2 minutes	Telephone call log available. Monitored by CF. Reported quarterly on Spar and monthly notices posted in our receptions and on the website.
Correspondence received in the post	95% responded to within 10 days	Scanned items can be monitored on the DMS. Items not scanned will be monitored by exception and mystery shopping carried out by Customer First.
Email	95% responded to within 5 days	Monitored by exception and mystery shopping.
Visitors to reception	95% seen within 15 minutes of arrival.	Queue management reports available and monitored by the Customer First Manager
Visitors with appointments	100% within 10 minutes where the customer has arrived on time.	Monitored by exception.
Complaints	90% Resolved within 10 days or notified of additional time and resolved within a maximum of 12 weeks.	Reports from the CRM, monitored by Customer First manager.

Each service may also have individual service specific targets and PI's, these are monitored on Sparnet.

Customer Care Charter

Mid Devon District Council is committed to providing the best customer service we can. We aim to do this by following the standards laid out below, ensuring fair treatment of all in accordance with the diverse needs of our customers.

The Charter outlines our commitment to you.

We will:

- Always be courteous and polite
- Respond to the diverse needs of our customers, adapting our approach as required
- Provide a range of different contact methods to suit your needs, you can call in to our offices, phone, email or write to us, or use our on line services
- Use plain English in all our written correspondence and information
- Apologise if things go wrong and do our best to put things right (please see our complaints procedure)
- Listen to your feedback, act on it and respond

How you can help us to help you:

- By treating us with respect - we will not be able to help you if you are aggressive, threatening, violent or use bad language
- By providing any documentation relating to your enquiry, as required
- By bringing a friend or asking for a translator if needed – we may need to make an appointment to provide this service
- By keeping to your appointment time, or letting us know if you cannot make a pre-arranged appointment

We will have:

- Easily accessible offices, with private interview rooms, wherever possible - please discuss your needs with our staff
- Literature that is easy to understand and widely available and provided in other languages or formats if required
- Regular reviews of our working practices to ensure we are always offering the best service

These promises are about meeting the needs and expectations of you, our customers, and above all creating a service we can be proud of.

August 2010