

**KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN**

**2015-2019**

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# **MISSION STATEMENT**

## **Making Kildare the place to Live, Learn, Work, Visit and Do Business**

### **Introduction**

Many aspects of a persons daily life are affected by activities undertaken by local authorities, even where the person has no direct contact with the authority. In their capacity as public representatives, local elected members act as trustees in relation to what services are provided and to what standard. Apart from being democratically elected, members can be distinguished from voluntary, community and interest groups by their mandate to allocate resources, determine priorities and make policy decisions in the common good.

Having served the people of County Kildare for over 100 years, we will continue to put their interests first. Our actions will reflect the views and needs of the wider community and will be underpinned by good information on our actions and clear reasons for our decisions.

Making things possible for individual citizens and local communities is a key objective for us. Coping with the pace of economic and population growth of the county requires us to constantly seek new ways to give effective, courteous and efficient service to the community.

## **Principles of Quality Customer Service**

*In providing a service to our customers we undertake to uphold the following principles*

### **Quality Service Standards**

- Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery and on our website ([www.kildarecountycouncil.ie](http://www.kildarecountycouncil.ie)).

### **Equality/Diversity**

- Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation
- We will ensure that our policies and procedures send a clear equality message by strengthening the principle of diversity and by promoting a culture and ethos that acknowledges and celebrates diversity in the workplace and in our dealings with our customers
- Empower our staff to meet the needs of a more diverse population
- Work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

### **Physical Access**

- Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

### **Information**

- Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by information technology is

fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

### **Timeliness and Courtesy**

- Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.
- Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of all ongoing transactions.

### **Complaints**

- Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple to use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

### **Appeals**

- Maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple to use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with quality of services.

### **Consultation and Evaluation**

- Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

### **Choice**

- Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access to choice of service delivery.

### **Official Languages Equality**

- Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

### **Better Co-ordination**

- Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

### **Internal Customer**

- Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted through the partnership model.

## **Importance of Customer Service**

### ***Kildare County Council is committed to:***

- Responsiveness to customer needs-including the use of information technology to enhance speed of response
- Development of a trained expert body of staff-including customer service training, clarification of policies, management and streamlining of processes and clear identification of responsibilities
- Delivering better quality service to the public-including customers ease of access, choice of payment, formalising appeals and complaints procedures
- Engaging with the public to seek customer feedback.

## **Improving Access to Information**

### ***Kildare County Council is also committed to:***

- Providing advice, information and allowing more time to explain matters of interest to customers
- Making available accurate, timely and relevant information with regard to the services being provided and responding to questions in accordance with Freedom of Information requests
- Provision of a personalised approach in communicating information through identification of contact person including contact details
- Availability of leaflets, promotional material and application forms in public libraries, public offices and where appropriate on the councils web site, based on user friendly formats
- Operation of advice clinics across all services areas, both on a routine basis and as issues of special interest arise.

## **Commitment to Consultation**

### ***Kildare County Council is also committed to:***

- Participation in and undertaking customer surveys to establish baseline satisfaction levels and seeking consensus on priority areas for improvement
- Consultation with customers on broad policy and strategic issues, liaising with representative associations, involvement, support and participation of voluntary and community sectors
- Consultation with staff and ensuring that staff are well trained, informed, resourced and motivated resulting in efficient, progressive and responsive service
- Range of training-including information technology, management development, decision making, health and safety, customer service training, communications training
- Access to communication systems, in particular access through low-rate call numbers, emergency numbers and their general availability and service supports
- Operating a system to monitor, measure and manage telephone traffic and other forms of communication in order to understand and develop adequate responses in areas of greatest need.



# Implementation Through Action

*We deliver on our commitment to quality service by the following actions*

## **Quality Customer Standards**

Seek to continuously improve the level and quality of services to all.

- Assess quality of service in the main service areas
- Citizen Charter published and available at service points and on our website
- Monitor compliance and complete annual review of standards and performance.

## **Timeliness and Courtesy**

Deliver services with courtesy and minimum delay, in a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer, and respect the rights of minorities

- Set targets and minimum periods for actions, processing times, response times for different services
- Explain response where it is not positive, giving full information and explain right of appeal
- Provide for queuing and monitoring of delays
- Support a culture where staff are polite and respectful in offices or peoples homes, considerate, objective and non-discriminatory, fair and consistent.

## **Information**

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely, accurate, available at all points of contact, including our website and meets the needs of people

- Standardise forms and leaflets, test for accuracy, clarity and ease of understanding, assist citizens with literacy and language difficulties
- Provide ongoing training for staff on Freedom of Information
- Document rules and procedures and simplify where possible
- Adopt records management system for ease of access, speed and comprehensive responses
- Promote and encourage the use of Irish in activities and communications
- Promote international languages in relevant areas of activity
- Make reports available on internet site in public libraries and for access on personal computers
- Provide information through local offices and branch libraries
- Supply accurate, up-to-date and comprehensive information using clear and simple language
- Use social media to keep public informed of service issues and especially to provide continuous updates in emergency situations and or in the event of interruption to any service.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

Establish a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided and introduce a formalised system for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions

- Treat complaints fairly and sympathetically, properly, impartially and promptly
- If we make a mistake we will apologise and seek to make amends
- Adopt best practice standards with reference to recommendations of the Ombudsman
- Ensure staff are informed of best practice standards
- Provide information on appeals system, regarding process and access to representation if appropriate.

## **Consultation**

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, people in relation to the development, delivery and review of services

- Complete customer surveys
- Make customer comment cards available
- Establish forum for meeting customer representative groups in order to structure the process of consultation.

## **Choice**

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery, including payment methods, location and contact points, opening hours and delivery times and provide services for citizens who wish to do business through Irish

- Review payment options for relevant services and provide the widest range of options in terms of payment methods and locations consistent with best practice
- Review opening hours for highest volume services and revise in context of costs and convenience
- Expand and improve services through Irish, by having Irish versions of forms available, and ensure staff receive necessary training and support
- Survey customers concerning the various issues surrounding the provision of services through Irish.

## **Co-ordination**

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of services

- Review information distribution and linkages between services procedures
- Simplify and automate where possible procedures for accessing related services
- Identify and implement systems to improve both the integration of internal services and services deliverable by other public bodies
- Take the lead in promotion of a collaborative approach in progressing issues across different public agencies

## **Access**

- Provide clean, accessible public offices which ensure privacy, comply with occupational safety standards and facilitate access for people with disabilities
- Give contact names in all telephone and written communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

## **Standards of Service**

### **Service by Telephone**

We will endeavour to:

- Respond in a courteous and speedy manner and ensure that sufficient staff, appropriately trained, are available for this purpose
- Be helpful and provide as much information as possible
- If we cannot answer queries promptly and with full information we will return call or write within a nominated time
- Monitor, measure and manage telephone traffic for continuous improvement
- Where appropriate make Low-cost Freephone numbers available when new schemes or programmes of special interest are introduced.

### **Callers to Public Offices**

We will endeavour to:

- Be polite, courteous and fair in our dealings and deal with matters in privacy where necessary
- Deal with queries promptly or where necessary re-direct callers to an appropriate member of staff
- Keep public offices clean and safe and improve access to all offices, especially for people with disabilities.

## **Written Correspondence**

We will endeavour to:

- Reply promptly and issue interim replies if delays of more than 10 days are envisaged
- Use clear and simple language in communications
- Ensure correspondence displays contact details and the name of the staff member dealing with the matter.

## **Forms and Leaflets**

We will endeavour to:

- Use clear and simple language in the design of forms, easy to follow and complete, with explanatory notes as appropriate
- Seek only necessary information
- Make available an Irish version of forms.

## **Applications/Claims**

We will endeavour to:

- Make decisions within statutory period or where none exists, within specified times
- Deal with applications fairly and consistently
- Explain the basis of decisions
- Advise regarding appeal procedures.

## **Technology**

We will endeavour to:

- Make full use of new technologies to make information more widely available and to help improve overall delivery of services
- Promote organisation-wide response to correspondence by email.



## **Monitoring and Review**

Throughout the lifetime of this Plan regular internal reviews will take place to assess the effectiveness and level of compliance with the customer responsiveness standards set out in this plan. We are committed to building upon the levels of customer care already in place and to review our performance on an ongoing basis. Customer comments and feedback on the quality of our service will be an essential element of this review.

Where it is considered that service delivery has fallen below satisfactory levels, consideration will be given to the re-allocation of resources and, in the event of an insufficiency of resource, priorities will be re-ordered.

Kildare County Council

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Áras Chill Dara opens to the public:

Monday, Tues, Thursday, Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Wednesday from 9.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. (all departments)

The following Departments are opening times are:

Motor Tax opens from 9.15 a.m. to 3.15 p.m.

Finance Department opens from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Planning Department opens from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Housing Department opens from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Roads and Transport opens from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Environment Department opens from 9.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.

Athy Customer Service Point opens from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.