

Cheshire West and Chester Council

Corporate Customer Care Policy

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Cheshire West and Chester Council are committed to putting the Customer First. Our customers will receive consistently excellent standards of customer service. These standards will ensure that all sections of our diverse community are able to access our services. The Council is committed to ensuring that customer service excellence is an integral part of the planning, resourcing, and delivery of all Council services.

1.0 POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Guiding Principles

As an organisation we will be:

- Courteous, helpful, open and honest in delivering high quality services
- Professional and positive in our approach, taking pride in what we do
- Well informed, so that our customers know what they can expect from us
- Effective in listening to customers when they express dissatisfaction or complain
- Treating all individuals and communities equally and fairly, acknowledging their differing needs

1.2 Who Are Our Customers?

Our customers are all the people we come into contact with in connection with our work. This includes people who live in, work in or visit the area.

Some of our customers will be employees, local businesses and partner organisations.

Finally, many customers of the council receive their service from other providers on behalf of the Council. Where services are procured and funded by us, those commissioning the service must ensure that the provider can deliver a customer care services which is broadly in line with this Customer Care Policy.

1.3 What Do Our Customers Want?

Our customers want accessible, efficient and responsive services and we must strive to meet these demands.

Customers want to have their query answered without being transferred to another department. They would prefer to carry out all their business with the Council at a single point of contact.

Where there are sensitive and personal issues to be discussed, customers prefer face-to-face contact with specialist staff, either in Council offices or in the customer's own home.

1.4 What Is Customer Care and Why Is It Important?

Customer care means:

- Providing a good quality service in a friendly, efficient and helpful way. We should continually strive to improve services by ensuring good communication and a positive attitude towards customers.
- Treating other people how **they** would like to be treated
- Treating each person as an individual. In order to do this we must understand and recognise that we are all different and that we all have diverse needs. These differences and needs can be based on our culture, language, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, literacy, sexual orientation or religion. Good customer care is about having a positive attitude towards and respect for diversity and, in turn having the flexibility to adapt our behaviour and actions in a way that is appropriate for the individual
- Treating people with dignity, respect and courtesy. Generally customers will request a service from the Council. In some instances we may need to be involved with people when they do not particularly want our involvement. In all cases, customers have a right to be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Offering choices where possible
- Giving information about what is available, and providing an explanation if a service is not available.

1.5 Why Do We Need Customer Care Standards?

This statement outlines the council's policy on customer care and related issues. The standards set out in this document are the minimum the Council would expect as a starting point. Individual Directorates or service areas will want to produce additional service specific standards or targets that are more relevant to the services they provide or the customers they serve.

Customer care standards set out the expectations on us as employees in our work, and ensure that we become and remain a customer-

focussed organisation. In particular, these standards define a corporate customer care framework for the achievement of excellent customer service which will:

- Ensure that all customers, whether they are residents or visitors equally receive the same consistent, high standards of customer service
- Ensure that customer care and customer service is an integral part of the planning, resourcing, and delivery of all Council services
- Prevent valuable Council resources from being wasted on delivering poor customer service.
- Enable the Council to achieve its corporate and service goals.

1.6 How Will We Introduce and Maintain Our Customer Care Policy?

The development of our Customer Care Policy is an important part of the Council's Customer First Strategy, which aims to ensure that our workforce can organise and deliver quality services. This aim will be achieved through the key components of the Customer First Strategy: focusing on service priorities; reshaping our organisation; developing our skills and performance; and improving communication. A specific corporate training programme will also be provided to staff to help them carry out the Customer Care Policy.

1.7 How Will We Measure Our Success?

Our Customer Care Policy will be supported by Customer Care Standards. Over time, our customers will be involved in setting and monitoring these standards.

We will monitor our performance through self-assessment, through comparison with other organisations, and sometimes through receiving feedback through external inspections.

As a Council, we are developing ways of getting customer feedback and finding out whether or not our customers are satisfied with the standard of service they have received. Comments, compliments and complaints from our customers are an important part of the continued improvement of key processes that will be needed in order for us to be a customer-focused organisation.