

Customer Experience



Services and customers working together

Our approach to becoming a more in-touch organisation



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INTRODUCTION

This Customer Experience Strategy focuses on delivering the part of the Corporate Plan which refers to Sheffield City Council being an 'in-touch organisation'. More specifically it looks at how we should design our services in the future, working with our customers and our partners, to make sure that all services meet the diverse needs of individuals in Sheffield.

The Customer Experience Strategy does not aim to set out all the ways the Council engages with our customers although, as stated in the Corporate Plan, we will continue our commitment to make sure that local people are informed of and able to influence decisions that affect them and their families.

We want to make sure that we are 'in-touch' with our customers and that we design our services around their needs, and manage our customer relationships successfully.

The Customer Experience Strategy has been developed in line with several key corporate objectives:

- To be an in-touch organisation - to listen and be responsive, so services are designed to meet the increasingly diverse needs of individuals in Sheffield
- To make well informed decisions and changes through business intelligence
- Making changes to the right things in the right way
- To ensure that public services meet people's needs

As part of this, over the next three years we are committed to making services:

- **Intelligent** – we need to make full use of existing information as well as find new sources of information both within the organisation and externally, to inform decision making and to drive service improvement
- **Efficient** – we need to continually strive to provide the best value for money, improving or maintaining quality and outcomes, and being as cost effective as possible
- **Agile** – we need to respond quickly to changing circumstances, to take advantage of new opportunities and avoid threats
- **Innovative** – we need to find new approaches, new delivery models and business models – not necessarily 'invented from scratch' but different to what has gone before in Sheffield

Local government has suffered significant cuts to its budgets in recent years. At the same time, demand on local services has increased as a result of the recession, population changes and other pressures.

As a local authority, we need a new approach that allows us to work in partnership with the people of Sheffield to design our services around their changing needs, taking advantage of new technologies whilst also making sure we manage our resources more effectively.

“In summary, the Customer Experience Strategy outlines our approach to a new way of working, in partnership with the people of Sheffield and with other public services.”

What does 'Customer Experience' mean?

'Customer Experience' is used to describe the relationship a customer has with a business or organisation. In our case it refers to the sum of all experiences our customers have with us, and our focus is specifically around how customers access our services, information, advice or guidance.

At the moment, we know that our customers can contact us in a variety of ways, and the service they receive will vary depending on what service they have accessed, how they have accessed it and the complexity of their enquiry.

This strategy therefore sets out our intentions and direction. It enables us to focus on offering **consistent, flexible and responsive services** that our customers really want, because we have designed each service around the real needs of the customers who are using them. If a customer would prefer to access a service online, then a service should be able to offer that.

As more people want to access services online, we not only need to look at how we improve our online service offer, but also how we help and support people to be more digitally engaged.

Because our customers' needs are constantly changing, it's important that we work with them to design our services around their changing needs on an ongoing basis.



OUR VISION

Making the customer experience consistent, flexible and responsive

We will deliver excellent customer service first time, every time - by providing effective advice and information, and smooth and efficient access to all Council services through the most appropriate channels.

The way we deliver services to customers affects everyone in Sheffield. Our vision is that **customers are able to interact with us at a time and in a way that suits them**. Customers will access the services or help that they need in an easy and efficient way because the Council and partners are **working better together**.

We want to make sure that **we help customers to get what they need at that first point of contact or in as few as possible**, and that we keep them regularly updated along the way.

We also want to help and encourage more customers to do more general tasks online to free up our customer facing staff and to reduce costs. We will become a connected, listening, responsive and relevant organisation by designing every service around the needs of the customers who use them and **enabling more customers to help themselves**.

Our knowledge of customers' needs is used to deliver **what customers want in the way they want it** and as a result, **the cost of delivering services reduces** as we make better use of technology and on-line services.

The experience for customers feels consistent irrespective of which service they need to contact, and the staff involved in delivering customer service are equipped to do their jobs effectively.

Employees are skilled and trained to help customers and to listen and treat customers with respect and empathy.

Customers feel like the **Council is 'an in-touch organisation'** and the Council is able to focus its finite resources on **those who need it most**.



OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

What do we know about our customers?

Across the organisation, we currently offer a variety of ways for customers to access our services. Customers can contact us by phone, in person, by letter or e-mail or by logging onto our website. However, service provision can be inconsistent across service areas, expensive, inefficient and not always designed around our customers' needs.

So, we need to understand more about our customers – who they are, where they are, what they want and how they want to access our services - whether they are looking for information, applying for something, reporting something or accessing a more personalised form of support.

Using Experian Mosaic customer insight data and through our own customer research, we have been able to examine more detail about who our main customer groups are and find out more about them.

Segmenting our customers into groups is a helpful way for us to get to know our customers and find out how they like to use and access services. This allows us to look at what support they might require

that suits their specific needs. Behind every customer is an individual, and having customer insight data means we can use that information to tailor our services so that we treat people as individuals and recognise that one size does not fit all.

We know:

- **Who** our top five customer groups are (i.e. the people who access our services the most at the moment)
- **Where** these top customers live in the city
- **What** their preferred ways to access services are – and we know **what services** they are accessing
- Most importantly, we know that their preferred methods **do not always match** how we offer the services they want to use
- 80 – 85% of Sheffield residents use the Internet nearly every day
- 60% of residents who are using the Internet are using Facebook
- 25% of residents using the Internet are also using Twitter

“Experian Mosaic is a powerful cross-channel consumer classification system built for today’s multi-channel world. It has evolved to help us understand our customers in extraordinary depth and detail, and communicate with them in the most relevant ways.”¹



Our Top Five Customer Groups

Mosaic tells us that we have five main customer groups (these are the top five groups of people who are accessing and using our services now). These groups are given category names according to their shared characteristics. Mosaic describes these top five customer groups as follows:

“**Rental Hubs:** This group contains predominantly young, single people in their 20s and 30s who live in urban locations and rent their homes from private landlords while in the early stages of their careers, or pursuing studies.

Transient Renters: Transient Renters are single people who pay modest rents for low cost homes. Mainly younger people, they are highly transient, often living in a property for only a short length of time before moving on.

Family Basics: This group is made up of families with children who have limited budgets and can struggle to make ends meet. Their homes are low cost and are often found in areas with fewer employment options.

Vintage Value: This group consists of elderly people who mostly live alone, either in social or private housing, often built with the elderly in mind. Levels of independence vary, but with health needs growing and incomes declining, many require an increasing amount of support.

Municipal Challenge: This group are long-term social renters living in low-value multi-storey flats in urban locations, or small terraces on outlying estates. These are challenged neighbourhoods with limited employment options and correspondingly low household incomes.”

Our Research

To make sure the Mosaic data was a true reflection of what our Sheffield customers really want we ran some customer research. We asked customers from across the city what they thought about accessing our services now and how they wanted to access our services in the future.

The survey also asked customers for their views on using social media, what they thought about our online offer and how satisfactorily their enquiries were dealt with. Our sample gave us a good idea of all of our customer segments and importantly matched the customer insight data from Experian Mosaic.

All of this research has meant we have been able to build a richer picture of the future needs of Sheffield customers into our strategy. However, that doesn't mean that we've finished talking to customers.

Conversations with our customers need to happen on an on-going basis so that services are truly planning with their customers in mind and considering how their needs may change over time.



What are our customers telling us?

Customers who responded to our survey were from a variety of locations across the city and from all customer segments meaning that the sample

was representative (in particular there was good representation from our top five customer segments).

The way that our customers access our services now does not match their preferences.

How Customers Access our Services Now

What do customers feel about accessing our services now?

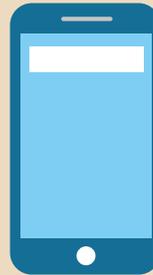
Poor • slow • difficult
clunky • frustrating
untrusting • broken
unresponsive • missed
unavailable • refused
uncaring • lost
tedious



TELEPHONE
43%



ONLINE
22%



EMAIL
25%



FACE TO
FACE
1%

POST
10%



Our customer research shows that the two most preferred methods of contacting us are online and by telephone. At the moment, the majority of customer enquiries are made by telephone. Email, face to face and post are less popular channels as customers want to be able to apply for services and look at

information online quickly and conveniently using a device of their choice.

These responses reinforce the need for a quality website where customers are able to conduct their transactions from start to finish online.

How do Customers Want to Access our Services in the Future

How do customers want to feel about accessing our services in the future?

Better • improved • slick
 accurate • clearer • easier
 • available • friendly
 responsive • smarter
 correct • accessible
 updated • faster
 efficient



THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

We want every service to be designed around the needs of their customers. Customer insight information is available that will allow every service to look at the offer they are providing, how this fits for their customers and what improvements can be made.

The design of services is also vital to ensure that customers get what they need in an efficient and effective way. Providing easy access isn't enough on its own.

To deliver an improved customer experience

Right first time problem resolution

Consistent experience

Reducing avoidable contact

Proactive offer of services

Intelligence-led design

Single view of the customer

Self-serve first

Our objectives

Deliver an **excellent customer experience** first time, every time

To use customer insight to deliver services based on customer needs

To provide effective advice and information, and smooth and efficient access to all Council services, through the most appropriate channels

To ensure Sheffield City Council and our partners are **joined up in service delivery**

To ensure service delivery is **providing value for money**

To enable **customers to help themselves** more

To provide **more of our services online**

To ensure our customers...

Have a **consistent, positive experience** when they access our services or contact us

Understand what the Council **can and can't do**

Are informed and understand our role, our service provision and our procedures for accessing services

Are able to **choose how they access our services** at a time, and in a way that suits them

Trust us and can rely on good information, advice and signposting

Feel valued and are treated fairly, equally and responsibly

Feel empowered to use our services when they need to, but are also helped through early intervention measures

Feel informed on the outcome of their customer queries, or outstanding/ ongoing customer requests

Are able to get involved in how services are offered and feel that their feedback can make a difference

Rate Sheffield City Council highly and talk positively about our services





**We will be guided
by what our customers tell us they
want and the following
principles...**

Right First Time Problem Resolution

The overall customer experience we offer has to focus on understanding the customer's requirements and delivering the outcomes that customers want to see, at the first point of contact. Our aim is to be right first time and for customers to benefit from a quick, efficient and responsive service.

Consistent Experience

We understand that we are a large organisation and that a lack of consistency can be very confusing for customers who are trying to access our services. In future all services will assess their offer against customer expectations and operate to a consistent standard. Our partners will also be expected to provide a consistent experience to customers where it makes sense to do so.

Reducing Avoidable Contact

We will ensure that customers are given the information they need so that they don't have to follow up enquiries unnecessarily. Information needs to be available in a way and at a time that suits customers so they can help themselves, without having to contact us because they can't find what they are looking for.

Proactive Offer of Services

As part of being a modern and efficient organisation our services should all be available in a way that allows customers to access information, advice, guidance and requests for service themselves. Using our knowledge of customers, we need to be able to proactively identify other services that individuals might need. This will allow us to reduce unnecessary demand and to provide support at a time and in a way that will prevent a situation escalating.

Intelligence-Led Design

All services can access customer insight data and engage with their customers to design their services around their true needs. We should always design and offer services based on evidence that this is what customers want and what works for them.

Single View of the Customer

Where it adds value to improving the customer experience, we will identify the information we need to be able to proactively anticipate a customer's needs. We will gather information at an appropriate time and use this to form a picture of our overall relationship with that customer. This should help to reduce the customer's need to repeat information about themselves.

Self-Serve First

In line with customer expectations, we will enable customers to help themselves by offering more services that are relevant for self-service. The digital option should be our access channel of choice for the majority of services.

We do, however, recognise that there are customers who are not comfortable with this method of communicating so we will support them to make this shift or provide the option to access services in other ways.

OUR APPROACH

There are five strategic themes included in our approach to get us to where we want to be:

Channel Management

The Channel Management theme looks at which channels are right for delivering our services by identifying how customers want to access our services. We need to understand the increasingly diverse needs of customers in Sheffield so the services that we and our partners provide are designed to meet customer needs.

Understanding our customers' channel preferences is fundamental to how we structure our organisation and plan our service delivery.

Self-Service

Our customers want to be able to contact us at a time that suits them. They want to have the convenience of being able to contact us from a mobile phone or tablet. They expect simple, easy to use online services for the things that they contact us about the most.

We need to pro-actively reduce avoidable contact by providing information and services in the right way. Helping customers to help themselves will support us to improve service and reduce costs. All of this needs to be balanced with the cost of providing specific channels for specific customer segments.

Customer Identification Management

To enable self-service and ensure that the single view of a customer can be supported, customers need to be identifiable when they contact us – this is called Identity Management. For some services which provide personal or financial information, there needs

to be a secure means of managing their personal information. Our approach to Identity Management will define which services and transactions require customer identification and how this can support self-service.

A Single View of the Customer

This means being able to see all of a customer's interactions, across all channels, in one place – knowing what stage their request is at, so we can be responsive and informed.

The approach to having a 'single view' of the customer will allow us to understand the needs and values of our customers regardless of how they contact us or interact with our services.

The way we currently collect information about our customers is fragmented and individual services may hold information about a customer that is never shared.

We therefore need to define a minimum standard for capturing customer data and look at how we enable services, including our partners, to access or share that information to give us a true single view of every customer.

Our People

We need to define a set of standards for how we want all customer-facing staff across the entire organisation to operate and behave. We also need a customer / citizen charter which states our commitment to improving the customer experience and reflects the values in our Corporate Plan.

We want to create an ethos where employees are supported to be innovative and to continuously strive to improve service delivery to customers.