

Customer Service Policy

2014-2017

DRAFT 2.9

Version control:

Version	Date	Author(s)	Comment
1	03/07/14 - 10/07/14	Jenny Dixon-Sherreard	Initial draft based on discussion slides (pre CMM and CD Group meetings)
2	29/09/14	Paul Kennedy	Redraft - simplify and refocus around policy principles
2.3	30/10/14	Peter Brook	Addition of corporate standards and minor amends for clarity
2.4	07/11/14	Peter Brook, Jane Kendal	Minor amends for clarity
2.5	10/11/14	Paul Kennedy	Minor amends & formatting
2.7	24/11/14	Paul Kennedy	Re-formatting & suggested recast of standards
2.8	26/11/14	Paul Kennedy / Peter Brook	Further redrafting
2.9	11/12/14	Paul Kennedy	Incorporation of CMT & CMM comments

Who are our customers?

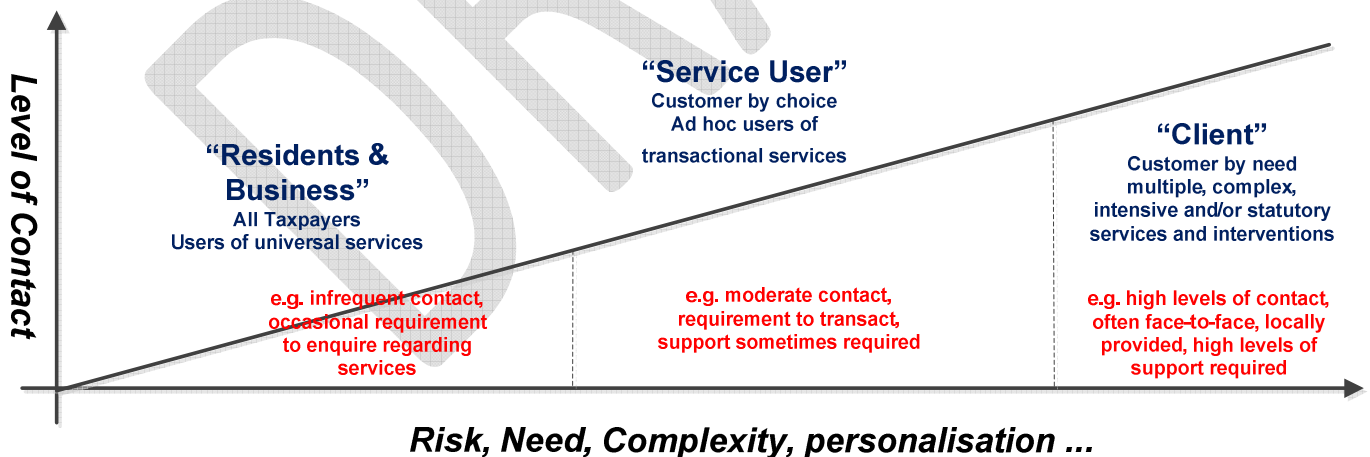
KCC’s holistic transformation plan ‘Facing the Challenge’ places a heavy importance on the role of the customer as we move towards a commissioning authority delivery model: -

“By 2020, all KCC services will have a greater customer focus with services organised around the needs of service users and residents”.

Facing the Challenge also sets out the direction of travel for our changing relationship with the customer in a commissioning authority. A clear shift of focus is described, from improving our services through our historic understanding of customer experience to a more fundamental understanding of service user needs, and actively engaging customers in design and delivery of services.

KCC provides a wide range of essential public services to a diverse range of people. The relationship we have with customers varies greatly depending on a number of factors, and individuals will very often have different relationships with different services. Often there are varying levels of need, complexity, risk, and need for personalisation, alongside varying levels of contact with KCC and its service providers.

Various terms and language are used to describe our customers. One size does not fit all – however it is possible to describe three broad groupings as below



The term ‘customer’ is used as a generic description for all, however it is recognised that delivery strategies for each of these customer groups may by necessity differ and will require differing commissioning approaches. People may also move between these groups at different points in their lives, depending on a range of factors and influences.

DRAFT

The customer service policy describes KCC's overarching commitment to customers, and is underpinned by three core principles which should be applied across the board when delivering services to customers. Commissioners must ensure that this policy and its embedded principles are adopted throughout the supply chain and across the differing customer groups described.

This Policy will be facilitated through the Commissioning Framework, enabling KCC to hold to account all service providers for meeting customer service expectations whilst acting as a guarantor of standards for customers and acting on their behalf where customer service principles and standards are not met.

Principle 1: Delivering Quality

As KCC moves to become a strategic commissioner of services, there will increasingly be a mixed economy of service providers. Providers will be required to meet prescribed levels of service across various channels with consistent quality and standards.

- a set of minimum operational service standards will be developed for each service in line with the customer groupings described and the principles within this policy
- customer service expectations and mechanisms by which these will be monitored and upheld must be 'front and centre' in all commissioning activity
- commissioners will be required to ensure adherence to the customer service policy throughout the supply chain

Principle 2: Customer Focused Services

KCC will ensure that its customers can access its services in the way they require and in the most flexible form so that convenience is maximised and efficiency and best value driven through on behalf of Kent's taxpayers.

- services will be 'digital by design'
- service provision will be inclusive and responsive to customer need
- commissioners and providers will be expected to demonstrate how digital delivery is incorporated into service design, and how other channels will be used in support of the service and in line with this policy

Principle 3: Intelligent Commissioning

KCC requires all services to collect and feed back a range of customer data and intelligence in order to inform its commissioning and to ensure that all services are fully aligned to customer needs.

- we will develop a deep understanding of our customers, their needs and how and why they access our services

DRAFT

DRAFT

- commissioners and service providers will be required to collect qualitative and quantitative information about our customers and use this intelligently to improve services
- customers must be involved in service design and operation. We will require all commissioners and providers to demonstrate how this is being achieved

DRAFT

DRAFT

KCC's Commitment to Customers

1. We will always be welcoming and deal with customers politely and professionally in accordance with our Customer Service Policy.

This will be achieved by ensuring that the customer service policy is continuously reviewed and monitored to ensure commissioners and service providers are adhering to the principles described.

2. We will treat all our customers equally, fairly and respectfully, and do all we can to ensure that you are able to access our services when you need to do so

This will be achieved by listening to customers feedback and ensuring active engagement with customers contact preferences, underpinned by planning in and ensuring adequate capacity across all channels to ensure customer service

3. We will deal openly and honestly with our customers, we will always take time to explain why we are taking a particular course of action and what the timescales are likely to be.

This will be achieved by ensuring we have systems in place to monitor response times and aligning these with customer expectation

4. We will try to get things right first time, and put things right as a matter of priority if they do go wrong

We will actively monitor first time resolution to customer contact and require commissioners to set standards for services to rectify issues should they arise

5. We will listen to your ideas, and use your feedback to improve our services

We will achieve this through a range of techniques including listening to your feedback through workshops and other face to face forums as well as monitoring comments and complaints

6. We will always strive to communicate clearly with our customers (and provide alternative formats where required)

We will achieve this through involving customers in the design and production of communications material and publications

Principle 1: Delivering Quality

KCC values and owns the customer relationship regardless of how services are delivered.

We will

- Ensure consistent quality and experience regardless of provider or channel
- Hold service providers to account for delivery to our customers
- Produce and incorporate a minimum set of operating standards into all commissioning stages, describing customer service expectations and the mechanisms by which these will be monitored and upheld
- Provide a direct route to service commissioners for customer service complaints or comments which cannot be resolved by the provider
- Retain ownership of all customer data related to our services, so that customers can be confident that their information is used to underpin our commissioning and service delivery across the Council and that data is managed safely and securely
- Require customer service intelligence and feedback to be a pre-requisite of all service design and specification



SO THAT

Customers know what to expect from KCC services irrespective of provider or contact channel

Customers can be confident that KCC is putting them first

KCC can take an informed view of how services are aligned to customer needs and requirements

Customers have a clear escalation path for any comments or complaints that cannot be easily resolved by service providers

All comments and complaints are captured and used to improve services

Principle 2: Customer Focused Services

KCC will ensure that customers can access its services in a range of ways, ensuring that value for money and flexibility are prioritised across all services

We will

- Ensure that services are accessible and flexible according to customer needs and driven by best value.
- Ensure KCC services are 'digital by design' and the ability to access services through digital self-service is the default expectation
- Incentivise digital access by improving customer outcomes and experience through this channel, providing a step change in customer experience through speed, convenience and personalisation
- Ensure the full cost of delivering services is understood and factored into commissioning decisions at all times to ensure best value is achieved for customers and to avoid hidden or unintentional cost pressures or performance issues.
- Review and reduce our service offer across more expensive channels as digital service grows and take-up is evidenced, helping to achieve best value for our customers whilst ensuring service access and continuity of support to those customers with complex needs or who cannot access the digital service offer.
- Ensure that services are always designed to be inclusive, with access based on evidence of customer need, ability and circumstance.
- Listen to our customers and continue to develop new ways in which services can be tailored to suit their needs



SO THAT

Services provided by KCC are flexible and responsive to customers, and can be accessed in a range of ways according to need.

The majority of customers can self-serve via responsive and reliable digital platforms at times that suit them

Customers can be assured that KCC is commissioning effective and efficient services on their behalf

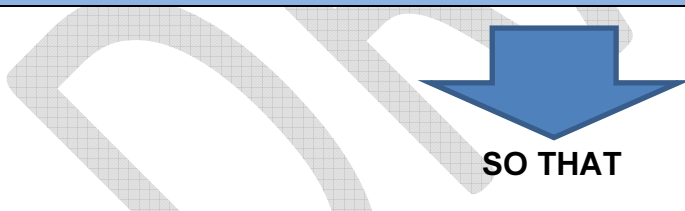
Those that require extra help or who have multiple or complex needs will be provided with the help they require

Principle 3: Intelligent Commissioning

KCC will strive to continuously improve services through engaging and learning from our customers

We will

- Develop a deep understanding of our customers, their needs and how and why they access our services
- Require commissioners and service providers to collect a range of qualitative and quantitative information about our customers and use this intelligently to shape service delivery
- Actively promote the sharing of relevant data (as appropriate) to drive improvement in customer service.
- Require commissioners and service providers to involve customers in service design and delivery
- Meet customer requirements at first contact wherever possible, minimising the need for repeat contact and ensuring that services are designed and delivered with customer contact at the fore
- Ensure contact demand is fully managed and appropriately channelled for all services, including peaks of activity where known.



Customer information and intelligence is designed in from the outset and on an ongoing basis

Customers are involved and engaged in shaping services that best meet their needs

Customers can have confidence that their needs are placed at the heart of everything we do (or others do on our behalf).

Customers do not have to chase or remind us