

Customer Service strategy

and service standards



**Consolidating
Excellence**

**Culture
change**

Collaboration

**Confident and
competent
workforce**

CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

2016/17 – 2018/19



CONTENTS

Item	
1	INTRODUCTION
2	BACKGROUND
2.1	What is customer service excellence?
2.2	Why is “external” customer service important?
2.3	Why is “internal” customer service important?
2.4	What does customer service mean for me?
3	FRAMEWORK
4	INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS
4.1	External Drivers
4.2	Internal Drivers
5	VISION FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE
6	STRATEGIC THEMES
6.1	Customer Insight
6.2	Culture
6.3	Information and Access
6.4	Delivery
6.5	Quality
7	RISKS
8	IMPLEMENTATION/METHOD OF DELIVERY
9	MONITORING AND REPORTING
10	IMPACT ON RESOURCES
11	BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE WHO USE SERVICES AND THEIR CARERS
12	EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

The Care Inspectorate's role is to regulate and inspect care and support services, carry out scrutiny and improvement of social care and social work services and to conduct joint inspections with scrutiny partners of services for adults and children.

We have a significant role in providing assurance and protection for people who use services, their families and carers and the wider public as well as supporting delivery partners to improve the quality of care for people in Scotland.

We drive up standards of care through our scrutiny activities as well as through supporting improvements across local authorities and their partners and care service providers. We have a key role in informing national policy based on our evidence and providing intelligence on care issues to reduce health and social inequalities.

This strategy links to other organisational strategies, supporting our principles; aims and objectives; values; and our employee engagement work and other corporate work streams.

2. BACKGROUND

We have been operating in the above context for over 5 years and have made significant improvements in the way we deliver customer service. There are many examples of good practice including the creation of a Contact Centre, changing methodologies and better and improved communication channels for interacting and engaging with our customers and stakeholders. The issue is that until now we have not gathered information in relation to "how well are we doing?" and "what do our customers think?". This means that there is no recognition for innovative approaches to customer service and although we all contribute in some way our ideas and successes are not recorded centrally and outcomes that have improved our services are not widely known.

The strategies that we have in place, including the involving people and communication strategies show strong links to customer service excellence as do our people policies but more needs to be done to capture customers' views prior to implementing processes. This will allow us to involve and engage with all of our customer groups before embarking on a project, a new way of working, revising our processes or a new initiative.

The Customer Service strategy has been developed by outlining a framework which sets out how we will progress the work that needs to be done to demonstrate our commitment to customer service excellence. This framework along with the strategic themes of the strategy have been mapped out across five large projects which are detailed in the associated programme plan (Appendix 1).

All of the actions outlined in the programme plan will have a positive impact on our continuous drive to work collaboratively, build a competent and confident workforce, progress cultural change and consolidate excellence in everything we do.

This strategy and in fact all of our strategies, vision, behaviours and values must all combine if we are to create a workforce that puts customers and stakeholders first and the Chief Executive and Executive Team have given a clear commitment to organisational change and different ways of working which empower staff and recognise their vital role in shaping the work we do. The Customer Service strategy will support this.

2.1 What is customer service excellence?

Customer service excellence (CSE) means many things to many people and is often noticed more by its absence than its presence.

If we want to be an organisation that is built on values, has a high reputation, meets deadlines and provides quality services we need to be able to demonstrate that we:

- Have easy to understand processes
- Can respond to criticism and learn valuable lessons from feedback
- Encourage complaints and improve the handling of them where required
- Demonstrate that we are committed to customer service

All of this is in the context of respecting people; having well trained staff; being contactable and accessible; and being seen as fair, trusted and consistent.

There is no short definition for customer service excellence, but when people experience it we should know and when they don't we should be able to respond to them and thereafter improve and learn from our failings.

The Care Inspectorate already has an understanding of the importance of customer service in the delivery of services to all of its customers both internal and external and this is evident in the Corporate Plan and Transformational Plan.

We are clear about being committed to creating and developing a positive approach to customer service in which we strive to meet and exceed customer expectations. We also aim to create a culture and environment within which customer service is seen as essential in terms of good practice within our staff group and crucial to successful management and delivery of our regulatory and improvement functions.

2.2 Why is external customer service important?

In the private sector, customer satisfaction and loyalty are often seen as a measure of success and ultimately the survival of the company. Public sector organisations now also realise that looking after their customers and taking the opportunity to learn from them is key to improving service delivery and reputation.

Getting customer service right first time means that less time needs to be spent on learning lessons from mistakes or worse, repeating the processes which were incorrect in the first place.

Feedback from our customers is immensely valuable and learning from this feedback can be of particular use in developing new policies and developing the services we provide.

2.3 Why is internal customer service important?

Our staff teams are not just employees of the Care Inspectorate – we are all ambassadors for the organisation and for standards in regulation and for care. This means that our staff need to be empowered and included within the development of the organisation. Getting this right would improve culture, sense of belonging, purpose and most importantly form a foundation for creating positive relationships. Including staff in the development and ongoing growth of our organisation ensures that we are treating people with respect and dignity and in doing so we can reduce tensions and foster a sense of well being amongst our workforce.

2.4 What does customer service mean for me?

Customer service is not the responsibility of any one individual or department. It is everyone's responsibility, at all levels and grades within the organisation. This means that all members of staff should be able to identify with the objectives of the customer service strategy and contribute to these as and when appropriate.

3. THE FRAMEWORK

The framework concentrates on creating conditions and outlining the elements under which excellent customer service can be achieved:

- Internal and external drivers
- Defining our customers
- Defining customer service
- Allocating responsibilities
- Planning implementation
- Consulting and engaging with people
- Raising staff awareness/training
- Developing effective processes
- Better use of technology
- Managing cultural change
- Measuring effectiveness

This framework document outlines the high level strategic themes of the strategy. The accompanying programme plan details what we need to do to achieve our goal.

4. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DRIVERS

4.1 External Drivers

Scottish Government has encouraged public sector to reform and put people at the heart of their services. In addition, Government's Best Value initiatives and adoption of more extensive consultation processes when forming strategy have driven public sector services closer to a market orientated approach.

There are also continuing budget pressures to reduce costs and work collaboratively and we need to be innovative in our approaches so that we can limit the impact that these pressures potentially have on the service our customer groups receive.

4.2 Internal Drivers

The internal drivers for the strategy are inherent in the Care Inspectorate's Corporate Plan, values and mission statement and these focus on ensuring that we as an organisation:

- Work towards putting customer focus at the heart of what we do
- Effectively engage and work collaboratively at all levels within the organisation
- Have mechanisms and decision making structures in place to empower people to deliver excellent customer service.
- Have appropriate skills, understanding and competency in the area of customer service
- Communicate effectively
- Continually improve our service to both internal and external customers throughout effective measuring and monitoring of our performance in this area

We also need to continue to explore ways in which we can start to have different conversations with staff about internal support services that have a direct impact on them such as handling ICT issues, reviewing our operating systems, complaints against the Care Inspectorate and the tools we have to do our work.

Our complaints information both about the Care Inspectorate and regulated services is detailed and complex; we should consider ways to use this is a meaningful way to make improvements to our customer service and organisational development where possible.

5. VISION FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

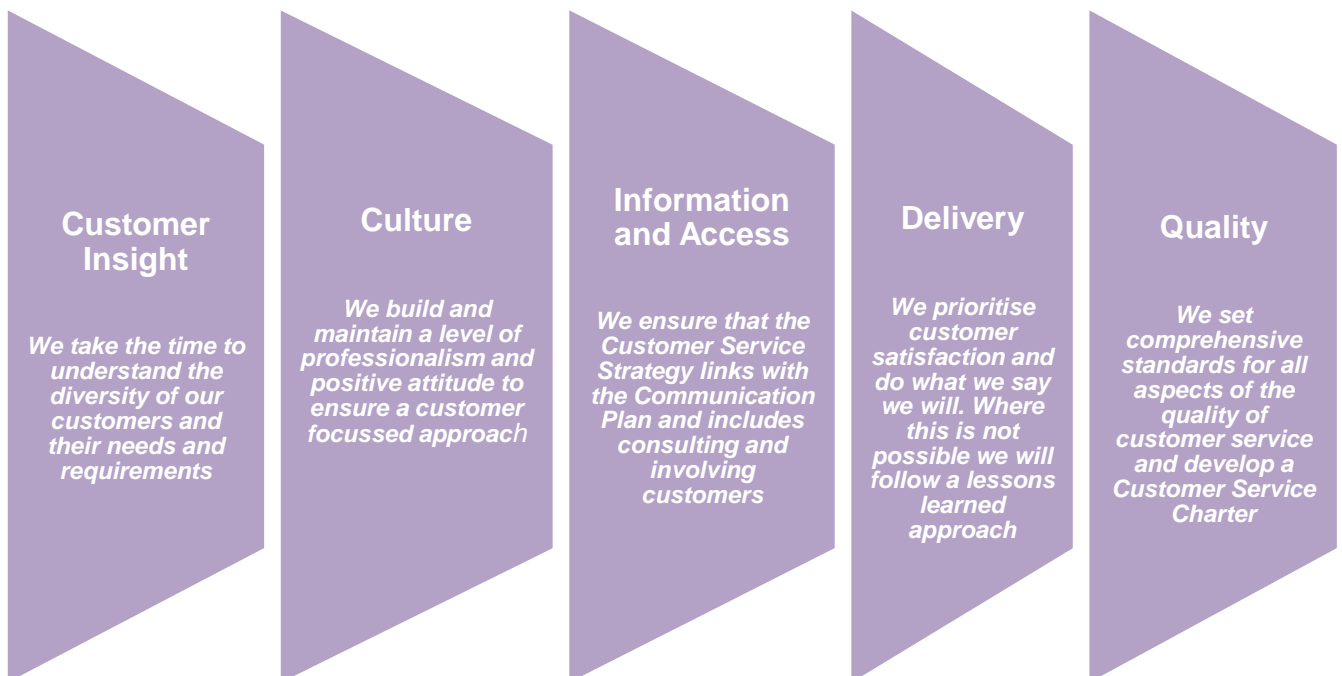
The Transformational Plan outlines the need to develop a new customer service strategy to show how we will embed a customer focus across all of our work, including redesigning the way in which people contact us and developing and publishing Customer Service Standards. The Standards show our commitment to the way we will engage with both internal and external customers and stakeholders and sets out expectations for all staff. (Appendices 2 and 3).

To assist with this work and to ensure the programme plan is effective the Customer Service Excellence Standard® has been used to identify key areas of development.

The Standard was developed to offer a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within an organisation. It tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, quality, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

It is proposed that the Care Inspectorate will work towards assessment for the CSE Standard by delivering the objectives of the Customer Service Strategy.

6. STRATEGIC THEMES



6.1 STRATEGIC THEME 1 – CUSTOMER INSIGHT

Objectives:	To identify our customer groups and involve them, where appropriate, in the design of our processes and services from concept through to delivery and support.
	To take the time to understand the diversity of our customers and their needs and requirements.
	Outcome focus 1.1 – 1.3 in Programme plan (Appendix 1)

Eric Almquist, John Senior and Nicolas Bloch (*Harvard Business Review: Sept 2016*) suggest that “when customers evaluate a product or service, they weigh its perceived value against the asking price”. In our case the asking price may be the perceived expectation in terms of service. They add that “What consumers truly value, however, can be difficult to pin down and psychologically complicated. The challenge therefore is for leadership teams to actively manage value or devise ways to deliver more.

The authors go on to suggest that developing “elements of value” and attributing these to each of our customer groups provides a “hierarchy of needs” thus allowing us to focus on elements which are important to each particular customer or consumer.

We therefore need to focus on the importance of developing an in-depth understanding of our customers and their needs and this will be done through consultation, gathering information and monitoring outcomes of our services and whether customers are satisfied with them.

This is essential so that we can raise standards where appropriate and build on success that has been achieved. The first step is to identify our customers through a variety of mediums and consult with our stakeholders again to understand what people want us to do. We need to do all of this in a meaningful way to be able to effectively measure outcomes as part of the approach. We also need to consider how well our operations and procedures contribute to meeting the needs and expectations of our customer groups.

This way, the Care Inspectorate can use information to develop a culture that values customer service and an understanding of what it means in practice.

6.2 STRATEGIC THEME 2 – CULTURE

Objectives:	To work together and collaboratively both internally and externally to ensure our desire to deliver excellent customer service is led from the top and delivered consistently throughout the organisation.
	To support and respect people and ensure that we are all empowered to deliver excellent customer service
	To recognise, reward and promote activities of staff and teams who deliver customer service excellence.
	Outcome focus 2.1 – 2.2 in Programme plan

This strategy supports the objectives in the Corporate Plan and will therefore help us in our efforts to become a customer focused organisation. However, to build on this we need to look at how our employees demonstrate the necessary values and understanding of customer service by ensuring awareness and commitment through effective coaching discussions and personal development reviews.

For excellent service to be delivered to all of our customers there needs to be a customer focused approach and buy in to ensure that the customer service strategy is key to collaborative working with our partners, stakeholders and customers. Professionalism and positive attitude are at the heart of this approach and the need for these behaviours to be reinforced will be fully supported by the executive and senior managers of the Care Inspectorate. This reinforcement is key to building relationships and developing a customer focused culture which in turn supports improved service delivery.

6.3 STRATEGIC THEME 3 – INFORMATION AND ACCESS

Objectives:	To ensure best efforts are made to be an accessible organisation and information provided to customers is made available in as many formats as possible.
	To continue to develop the range of information we provide and ensure that it is accurate
	Outcome focus 3.1 – 3.4 in Programme plan

We understand that the way we communicate and interact with our customers is important and that they particularly value accurate and detailed information. For this to work in practice the Customer Service strategy needs to link with our Communication and Engagement strategies. The principles and themes of good internal communication have a strong focus on “People like Us” and the importance of being ambassadors for good practice, being accountable and taking responsibility.

By acknowledging strategies already in place whilst working towards the outcomes of this customer service strategic theme will ensure that we are all empowered to do our best when engaging with people.

This will ensure that we are consulting and involving customers and stakeholders rather than considering the way we communicate as an independent exercise.

6.4 STRATEGIC THEME 4 – DELIVERY

Objectives:	To measure, monitor and publish our performance in relation to customer service.
	To proactively manage change in order to identify and eliminate specific problems and take preventative action to limit the recurrence of any poor performance.
	Outcome focus 4.1 – 4.3 in Programme plan

This objective relates to how we carry out our main activities/business, the outcomes for the customer and how we manage and resolve any issues that arise. In terms of handling issues and problems that arise we need to be able to deliver what we say we will. This will involve an increased level of listening to, and asking for, comments, feedback and complaints about our service. Although this relates to reporting on our national and statutory targets, it is also about using feedback that we receive to manage any issues or problems that arise in the area of customer service.

This objective relies on our customers' views about the outcomes of our services rather than just focusing on key performance measures. It would be beneficial, however, to engage with customers when setting performance measures to that they reflect customer service excellence.

Comments and complaints we receive about ourselves and the service we regulate are the most powerful form of feedback and this information needs to be used to help us identify gaps in our performance and ways in which delivery of services can be improved.

6.5 STRATEGIC THEME 5 – QUALITY

Objectives:	To develop, implement, publish, monitor and review a clear set of Care Inspectorate Customer Service Standards.
	To map the customer journey for all of our services to maximise the potential for delivering an excellent service.
	Outcome focus 5.1 – 5.3 in Programme plan

Being able to demonstrate the outcomes of this objective will rely heavily on whether we are able to develop the customer focused culture outlined earlier and develop, implement and delivery on a Customer Service Charter.

Separating customer services standards need to be monitored and reported on before this project can be progressed in any depth but development of our key performance measures should reflect our drive towards quality.

7. RISKS

The risks associated with the Customer Service Strategy need to be developed. It is intended to hold a risk session with relevant members of the Senior Management Team to determine and prioritise the risks.

8. IMPLEMENTATION/METHOD OF DELIVERY

Allocating and delivering each project within the Programme Plan should be discussed in more detail. It is evident that each project will require input from various departments and individuals across the Care Inspectorate and working towards the outcomes will require a whole organisation approach. The actions outlined in the Programme Plan will also need to be cross referenced against other work streams and development plans to ensure interdependencies are identified at an early stage to minimise duplication of work.

The pragmatic approach would be to carry out each project in order from 1 – 5. One or two could dovetail and be worked on jointly but work in relation to “customer insight” needs to be progressed as a priority to baseline information about our customer groups and stakeholders.

It is proposed that the Head of Customer Service will lead the Programme and detail further options for implementation following consideration of the Strategy and the approach to delivering it.

9. MONITORING AND REPORTING

Monitoring, review and evaluation of progress towards outcomes will be carried out using a project managed approach.

In terms of project management, it is proposed to use the current project management tools and software to report on progress.

Reporting, evaluation and ongoing consultation should also be carried out through the Executive and Senior Management Teams and Resources Committee meetings as necessary.

The Senior Management Team will be responsible for the monitoring of progress and highlighting material changes to the risk profile which may impact on the implementation of the Strategy during 2016-19.

10. IMPACT ON RESOURCES

The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that all functions can contribute to providing a quality service to our internal and external customers and the success/performance measures are widely accepted. The Strategy has been produced with a view to the Care Inspectorate achieving the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

The impact on resources will therefore need to be assessed on the basis of balancing achievement against cost and the importance we place on being a customer focused organisation.

11. BENEFITS FOR PEOPLE WHO USE CARE SERVICES AND THEIR CARERS

The benefits are numerous to all groups of customers and are clear all of the outcomes detailed within the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan.

12. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The work needed to deliver the objectives of the Customer Service strategy will be approached, designed and delivered in a way that takes into account equality and diversity. An Equality Impact Assessment will be produced following full consultation which will take the form of a survey detailing each of the protected characteristics.