

Putting the Customer First: A customer care strategy for Lancashire County Council

Prepared for
Cabinet working group on customer access

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Prepared by Mike Walker and Nicola Pemberton
Corporate Research and Intelligence Team



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1 Executive summary

The draft customer care charter is titled “Putting the Customer First” and intends to be an overarching approach across the whole county council to customer service. This consultation exercise sought the views of partners, employees and the public on the draft charter asking for their views on its content and if anything needs to be changed or added to it.

The questionnaire was available for completion electronically: members of the public could access it from the council’s internet site; members of the Life in Lancashire panel and organisations in the voluntary community, and faith sector (VCFS) were sent an email with a link to the questionnaire; and it was promoted on the intranet and by lead officers in each directorate for members of staff. The fieldwork ran from 27 April to 25 May. A total of 185 members of the public and the VCFS completed the public questionnaire and 260 employees completed the staff questionnaire, giving a response of 445.

The draft customer care charter was received positively and appears to be very welcome from all of the groups consulted. It has raised some important points however. In terms of the charter itself, there is broad agreement with the principles set out. But it could be seen as idealistic and, particularly with some elements, as unworkable in practice. It was felt that:

- delivering the service was more important than how it is delivered;
- being dealt with in a human, understanding and professional way is more important than the appropriateness of staff’s dress;
- staff should be able to deal with queries and be empowered enough to take decisions to improve resolution speed and lessen the instances of customers being passed between various employees and sections;
- some of the timeframes proposed in the charter need to be revised to take account of factors such as weekends and traffic problems;
- the way the charter was written needed improving because it includes jargon and some of the points weren’t clear; and
- the performance monitors were good, but care should be taken on the number of performance indicators and the balance between performance management and service delivery.

Moving on to the organisation’s infrastructure, the comments made, particularly by employees, demonstrate that as things stand the county council will not be able to deliver some elements of the charter without considerable investment. This could be either one-off capital investment in factors such as reception areas for all public-facing offices, or long-term investment in increased staffing levels. It was suggested that mechanisms are introduced to share the feedback the organisation receives to enable learning and celebration of success. There is also the opportunity to make the feedback channels available more transparent.

The following are recommendations for the future development of the charter.

- Test out the practical application across the organisation of achieving the charter before it is launched so that it is achievable (eg those offices where postal mail takes up to a week to arrive).
- Assess what investments need to be made to achieve the charter and budget for these before launching.
- Make sure there is the correct balance between customer service and service delivery from the customers' viewpoint.
- Those elements of the charter that are unclear or incorrect should be revisited and revised in light of the consultation, for example the:
 - ten-minute waiting time when customers visit us;
 - 24-hour turnaround of acknowledgements for letters and emails; and
 - ten-day response time for letters and emails.
- Consider if the item on appropriateness of dress is needed as it has little support in the consultation and can be subjective.
- Concentrate on a small number of key performance indicators.
- Enable the public to take part in mystery shopping exercises.
- Undertake ring-backs of customers to ascertain their satisfaction with customer care and service.
- The charter should be rewritten to plain English standards.
- The document produced uses the terms strategy and charter. It should be made clear whether it is a charter or strategy and then consistently applied throughout the document.

The recommendations listed below are for organisational processes.

- Revisit the comments, complaints and compliments system to ensure it is obvious to those who would want to use it.
- Assess how sharing customer comments, complaints and compliments can be improved within the organisation.
- Make sure there is consistency in customer feedback handling across the organisation.
- Make sure performance information is used to improve customer care and communicate the changes to service users and the public.
- Consider how staff can be more empowered. This could include business process reengineering or training for both service managers and frontline employees.
- Develop call handling processes that mean customer queries can be resolved at their first point of contact more frequently.
- Assess the learning and development impacts on the organisation for customer service training and specialist training to deal with customers with specific individual needs.

Finally, thought should be given as to how the findings and the recommendations that are taken forward are communicated to those who have taken part and the wider service users, public and employees.

2 Introduction

The draft customer care strategy is titled “Putting the Customer First” and intends to be an overarching approach across the whole county council to customer service. It forms part of the wider customer access strategy covering the four main activity streams of:

- putting the customer first;
- face-to-face contact;
- telephone contact; and
- self-service facilities.

The draft customer care strategy was developed from a piece of work with the county council’s senior leadership group. It was approved by the cabinet working group on customer access that the draft strategy should go out to consultation with a number of groups including the public and the county council’s employees. The outcomes of the consultation will be considered by the cabinet working group.

The customer care charter is divided into the following sections:

- what our customers can expect;
- our commitment to respond to you;
- providing us with feedback;
- how we will monitor and report on our standards; and
- what you can expect of our staff.

The consultation questionnaire covered each of these topics individually. Respondents were asked for their thoughts and views on the contents of the strategy, and any areas where they felt that changes were needed.

3 Consultation objectives

The main objectives of the consultation were to find out:

- the views of partners, employees and the public on the draft charter;
- the areas of the draft charter that should be changed; and
- any additions that should be made to the draft charter.

A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

4 Methodology

The consultation was sent out to members of the Life in Lancashire residents' panel who can be contacted electronically (526 members). The questionnaire was also sent to key organisations from the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) with the aim of this being cascaded out electronically amongst the sector. The consultation was also made available on the consultation page of the county council's website.

Additionally, a slightly amended questionnaire was made available for Lancashire County Council employees to complete via the intranet. The survey was promoted through the news section of the intranet and by lead officers in each of the directorates.

The fieldwork ran from 27 April to 25 May.

A total of 185 members of the public and the VCFS completed the public questionnaire and 260 employees completed the staff questionnaire giving a response of 445.

5 Limitations

As this is a piece of consultation the findings can not be taken as statistically representative of the wider population who could have completed the questions. However, it does provide the views of a sizeable sample on the customer care strategy and the responses in this report should be seen as indicative.

There were only a small number of VCFS responses. For this reason their views and those of the public have been combined within the analysis.

Overall, there were a wide range of views and responses. The report tries to encapsulate the responses, but because of this they may not be representative of their respective populations as a whole.

6 Main Research Findings

The questionnaire was structured around the customer care charter sections: what our customers can expect, the commitment to respond to customers, providing feedback, monitoring and reporting, and the expectations placed on staff.

6.1 What our customers can expect

The draft customer care charter states that:

We will

Ensure a customer service ethos characterises the contact with the public by any county council employee so that

- Every person who contacts an employee of the county council enjoys a positive and helpful response which continues if they are referred on
- All people who contact the county council experience an efficient, joined-up organisation that delivers excellence in customer service

Those being consulted were asked what they thought of the customer service ethos. Generally there was support from both the public/VCFS and employees for the customer service ethos. However, both groups felt that it was possibly idealistic and unrealistic in terms of working in practice.

The public and VCFS made comments that it was what they expected the organisation to deliver anyway and they also raised questions about how the characteristics would be measured. They were also critical of the English used, eg “joined-up”, saying that it should be written in plain English and free from jargon. The final set of comments from some respondents were around the infrastructure that should be put in place to deliver this ethos, for instance by empowering staff to take decisions to avoid customers being passed around.

Employees share many of the public’s/VCFS’s concerns and criticisms. They say that there should be some form of measurement for the characteristics and that customers should not be referred on, but queries resolved at the first point of contact. Again the way the ethos was written was questioned and also commented that there should be adequate resources put in place to deliver the customer service in the charter.

There were also some comments from employees that customers sometimes make unrealistic demands on employees, which means that staff cannot deliver. Some staff felt that delivering action was far more important than the way customer service was delivered.

6.2 Our commitment to respond to you

The draft customer care charter states that:

When you contact us you can expect us to provide you with a prompt service to the following standards:

When you visit us:

- We will ensure that our public buildings are accessible to all members of the community
- We will provide welcoming reception areas including distinct areas where if appropriate your enquiry can be dealt with in a discreet or confidential manner
- We will ensure that our staff are dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- We will ensure that you are dealt with promptly and kept waiting a maximum of 10 minutes

Respondents were asked what they would change in the county councils commitment when they are visited. The public/VCFS respondents were again generally happy with the standards outlined within the charter. Some people suggested that the final bullet point was not clear and should be reworded to say that people should be “kept waiting no more than 10 minutes”. The way that people were dressed was not seen as important by some and also a matter of opinion by some as to what was appropriate. It was stressed by respondents that it was important to be put in contact with the right person and that this was more important than the way they looked.

Employees’ comments included that some reception areas are not welcoming currently or did not have private or confidential rooms where the public could be taken. It was felt that factors such as this were setting-up the customer service charter to fail because expectations were raised above what could actually be delivered. It was also suggested that as a large proportion of face-to-face contact happens in libraries that funding should also be made available to improve their reception areas. The 10-minute waiting time was mentioned by a few employees who said that it could be seen as too long for some, whilst for others it may not be long enough if staff are not available to deal with customers – particularly if they

haven't made an appointment. A few employees also said that it creates an expectation that they will be kept waiting.

The item about appropriate dress was commented on by a few staff respondents who felt that it was more important to have someone who could do the job, rather than how they were dressed. Comments were also made about having customer service staff who can deal with people's different communication needs, eg signing or translation. Having local offices available to the public was also mentioned by employees.

The next section within the commitments to respond to you outlines the standards for an employee of the county council visiting someone. It states that:

When we visit you:

- We will ensure that our staff are dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- If we have an appointment to visit you we will ensure that we are prompt and will arrive within 10 minutes of the agreed time of the appointment
- On arrival our staff will show you their LCC identity card, which includes their photograph.
- If you have a query about the identity of a person from LCC you should contact the Customer Services Centre on 0845 0530000 for verification.

In this section the public/VCFS respondents echoed comments made elsewhere in that it was most important to have employees who have the ability to do the job and that their manner is friendly and approachable. This may be implicit in the way Lancashire County Council delivers services, but it is obviously a concern to people. The promptness of visiting time was felt by some respondents to be unrealistic as factors like traffic jams may delay arrival. It was felt essential that if an employee was going to be late that they let the customer know, and if they have to cancel that as much notice as possible is given.

Some people made the comment that employees should make a pre-visit telephone call to introduce themselves. For those people who are sight-impaired they should be given the visiting employee's name for security reasons rather than relying on their identity card.

Employees' comments supported many of those made by the public/VCFS. They mentioned that if an employee is going to be late making an appointment then they should call the customer to let them know. Dress code was again raised as being a lot less important than the ability to do the job. The 10-minute window for appointments was seen as unrealistic, and examples of traffic problems were given. Others thought that specifying a 10-minute window was giving employees an excuse to be late.

It was suggested by employees that they should confirm visits by telephone the day before, which supports the comments made by the public. Employees also raised the problem that not all staff who visit customers have identity cards.

The draft customer care charter next outlines the standards when a customer contacts the county council by telephone. It says:

When you contact us by telephone

- During office hours we will aim to answer your telephone call within five rings
- When we answer your call we will tell you who you are speaking to
- During office hours we will minimise the use of voicemail and answer phones to receive your call
- Where the appropriate officer is not available when you call, we will respond to your enquiry within 24 hours

Public/VCFS respondents said that it was positive that officers would identify themselves when answering the telephone. There was a call for staff to be understanding of people's problems and to have a human touch. Again the timing measures placed within the charter drew comments. Some people felt that 24 hours could be too long to wait in some situations. Others said that 24 hours may not be long enough if the officers were away from their desk for a longer period of time. It was felt that it would be useful to provide alternative contact information or alternative contacts if an officer was going to be unavailable. It was also mentioned that there should be the ability to make contact outside normal office hours.

The charter says that the telephone should be answered within five rings. The comments made said that when the telephone is answered it should be by a person and not an automated system. Automated call-handling systems that use telephone key operated menus and being put on hold were also criticised.

The responses from employees show that they are concerned about how they would deliver this standard, as they felt there is not enough staff to answer phones in some sections and that if they were already dealing with a customer they should not answer the phone. They agreed with the public/VCFS that 24 hours could be too long in some situations and not long enough in others. It was suggested that the timing is changed to one working day rather than 24 hours.

Employees were concerned that customers should not be passed around and if they did have to be transferred they should not have to repeat themselves. Automated call handling systems were also flagged up as a potential problem by employees. It was suggested by some that training is given to some staff on how to answer the telephone. Linked to this it was felt that employees should also tell the caller which department they have contacted. A number of employees also pointed out that they already have a standardised response they have to give on the telephone that doesn't include giving their name.

The final section under our commitments to respond to customers is on fax, email and written communication to the county council. The charter says:

When you fax, e-mail or write to us

- We will acknowledge all letters and emails we receive within 24 hours
- We will respond to your enquiry within 10 working days or provide you with an update of progress and a date for our response
- We will ensure that our replies are clear and wherever possible make use of plain language requirements
- We will make response available in large print, Braille, and community languages where you request it

The public/VCFS responses showed that some felt the acknowledgement of all letters and emails in 24 hours is unrealistic and that the county council should instead concentrate on responding to the content of the email or letter. Ten days was felt to be too long. It was suggested that five or seven days should be the maximum turnaround time for all responses. Providing responses in plain language was also stressed – not wherever possible, but in all responses. There was also a query by some as to the cost and necessity of translating into community languages.

Some employee respondents thought that there was too much leeway with the ten day commitment and that we should aim to provide a definite response to queries in that time, not just a potential holding response. The translation point was criticised by a small number of respondents, saying that the infrastructure did not exist within the organisation to deliver on this promise. Audio cassette/CD and British Sign Language format should also be included.

There were a number of employees who were critical of the 24-hour response time to acknowledge receipt of emails and letters. Some thought the time should be one working day whilst others thought it was unrealistic and should be removed, eg some employees from outlying offices said that it took up to a week for their mail to arrive through the internal postal system, and some employees from libraries said that not all libraries are open every day. Some felt it was much better to respond with a solution rather than an acknowledgement.

Other comments highlighted a potential inconsistency between the ten days in the charter and the 15-day response time in the formal complaints procedure.

6.3 Providing us with feedback

The draft customer care charter states that:

We welcome your feedback on the services that you receive from us. You can provide us with feedback on our services in the following ways:

- By completing one of the feedback leaflets available in one of our reception areas or public access points
- By telephoning our Customer Service Centre on 0845 0530000
- By completing the feedback form available on our website at www.lancashire.gov.uk

If you wish to make a complaint about the service you have received you should write to us (letter, fax or e-mail) using the address in section 1 above.

Our Complaints Procedure available in our reception areas or on our website at www.lancashire.gov.uk sets out the standards by which we will deal with your complaint, and your rights should you remain unsatisfied with the response to your complaint.

Respondents were invited to comment on how they could provide the county council with feedback on its services. Most of the public/VCFS respondents were happy with the proposals. However some were unsure of the process of the formal complaints procedure, for example was an acknowledgement letter given, what are the timescales.

Others thought that only being able to make a written complaint stopped people complaining and there should be the facility to make a verbal complaint. There should also be a system to feedback comments and compliments. There were queries around what feedback systems are provided for disabled people or those people who can not read or write.

Employees thought there should be mechanisms put in place to share the feedback information in order to either make service improvements or compliment those delivering the services. Some felt that consistency was needed in how complaints and feedback are dealt with within the organisation. They also felt the channels through which to complain should be made clearer.

Some employees said that there should be more of a balance between complaints and compliments and at the moment the charter was too

negative. It was suggested that the first line in this section is changed to “We welcome and value your feedback...”

6.4 How we will monitor and report our standards

The draft customer care charter states that:

We will set and publish targets and monitor and report on our performance against the standards we have set through this charter. Our performance we will be reported to our cabinet and will be available on our website at www.lancashire.gov.uk. Our report to you will include the following elements:

Comments, complaints and compliments

We will provide information about the number of complaints and compliments received about our services, and the stage in the complaints procedure at which the complaint was resolved.

Life in Lancashire

We will ask the members of the Life in Lancashire residents’ panel for their views about our customer care on an annual basis

Mystery Shopping

On a regular basis we will conduct a mystery shopping exercise to provide us with qualitative information about the way in which we respond to customer enquiries.

There were two consultation questions in this section. The first asked how else the county council should report on its performance against the standards. The public/VCFS respondents were keen that key performance indicators were published. Vision and the council tax leaflet were given as examples of where they could be published.

It was felt that random phone calls to customers or sample surveys should be used. Mystery shopping was also supported, but should include members of the public amongst the mystery shoppers. The point was also made that mystery shopping can provide quantitative data in addition to qualitative.

However, comments were also made that there should be less emphasis on performance indicators and more place on resolving the public’s problems. Others said that the number of indicators should be kept to a minimum and benchmarking should take place with other councils.

Employees agreed that performance indicators should be published in Vision and to make performance information easy to find on the website. Employees supported the suggestion made by the public/VCFS that ring-backs should be made to customers. They also thought there should be some form of evaluation of the feedback and research comments made to assess what the organisation should be, and is, doing differently.

The second question asked what other standards of performance should be set. Most people are either happy with the standards proposed or unsure of what else could be added. There should be a clear indication of how the council is going to use the information to improve performance. Again the public/VCFS mentioned that not too many performance targets should be set.

Employees again did not have much to add on any other performance standards that should be added. There were a small number of suggestions that mentioned saying what has happened as a result of the complaints or performance information, having information about the quality of the contact made (eg politeness), and benchmarking performance against other public or private sector organisations.

6.5 What you can expect from our staff

The draft customer care charter states that:

We will ensure that our staff have received appropriate training in customer care and are aware of the standards and expectations of them. In this we will ensure that they are:

- Polite and welcoming in their contact with you
- Responsible and accountable for dealing with your enquiry in an efficient and effective manner
- Confidential and impartial in the advice they provide you with in response to your enquiry
- Dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- Able to show you their Lancashire County Council identity card, which includes their photograph

Those completing the consultation were asked what else they thought they could expect from the county council's staff. Many of the comments centred on the human skills our employees have. The public/VCFS respondents mentioned honesty, empathy and being professional. They thought that employees should have the expertise in their area of work, be knowledgeable about other parts of the organisation, and have the support from their managers to make decisions and resolve queries.

Employees themselves agreed that the personal, human skills were important. They felt that training was important, both to do the job and to be given customer care skills. Training was also requested to enable staff to deal with a range of customers and their needs, for example those with a disability. Staff again queried why the dress code needed to be mentioned. Finally some employees said that staff should not feel, or be, abused at work by their customers.

6.6 Other comments

The final question asked respondents if they would like to make any further comments. Most comments made by the public/VCFS just summarised those that had been made earlier. There was an underlying message that the words in the charter are generally acceptable, but it is the actions that are more important, showing how the county council can deliver on its customer service charter. A small number commented that if staff were happy in their work then they would deliver good customer service.

Again the employees' responses supported the comments they made earlier. The main comment made was that resources would need to be put in place to deliver good customer service. The charter would need to be published amongst staff and training would be needed to support delivery. It was also reemphasised that the public should respect county council employees. Finally a point was made that customers should feel welcomed, valued and respected and this should form part of the charter.

7 Conclusions

The draft customer care charter has received some positive responses in the consultation. It appears to be very welcome from the public, voluntary community and faith sector, and Lancashire County Council's employees.

The consultation has raised some important points however. Some of these centre around the content of the charter itself, whilst others are more relevant to the process and infrastructure within the organisation of dealing with its customers. Both of these are important areas to take into consideration when producing the final customer care strategy and charter.

Firstly thinking about the charter itself, there is broad agreement with the principles set out in the document. But it could be seen as idealistic and, particularly with some of the elements, as unworkable in practice. A number of comments point to the importance of delivering the service, rather than how it is delivered. Being dealt with in a human, understanding and professional way is seen as more important than the appropriateness of staff's dress.

Staff training will be key to delivering the charter. This includes basic customer care skills training and more specialist support to advise employees how to deal with customers with particular needs. It was also stressed that staff should be able to deal with queries and be empowered enough to take decisions to improve resolution speed. This would lessen the instances of customer being passed between various employees and sections. Some of the timeframes proposed in the charter need to be revised to take account of factors such as weekends and traffic problems.

Moving on to the organisation's infrastructure, the comments made, particularly by employees, demonstrate that as things stand the county council will not be able to deliver some elements of the charter without considerable investment. This could be either one-off capital investment in factors such as reception areas for all public-facing offices, or long-term investment in increased staffing levels. It was suggested that mechanisms are introduced to share the feedback the organisation receives to enable learning and celebration of success. There is also the opportunity to make the feedback channels available more transparent.

The charter received criticism for the way it is written because it includes jargon and some of the points are not clear. The ways that performance can be monitored were agreed with, but care should be taken on the number of performance indicators and the balance between performance management and service delivery.

8 Recommendations

The findings in the report highlight a number of key recommendations for the future development of the charter and the organisations infrastructure to deliver improved customer service. In terms of the future development of the charter it is recommended that:

- Test out the practical application across the organisation of achieving the charter before it is launched. The charter should be achievable otherwise the charter will be designed to fail, eg those offices where postal mail takes up to a week to arrive.
- Assess what investments need to be made to achieve the charter and budget for these before launching.
- Make sure there is the correct balance between customer service and service delivery from the customers' viewpoint.
- Those elements of the charter that are unclear or incorrect should be revisited and revised in light of the consultation, for example:
 - the ten-minute waiting time when customers visit us;
 - the 24-hour turnaround of acknowledgements for letters and emails; and
 - the ten-day response time for letters and emails.
- Consider if the item on appropriateness of dress is needed as it has little support in the consultation and can be subjective.
- Concentrate on a small number of key performance indicators.
- Enable the public to take part in mystery shopping exercises.
- Undertake ring-backs of customers to ascertain their satisfaction with customer care and service.
- The charter should be rewritten to plain English standards.
- The document produced uses the terms strategy and charter. It should be made clear whether it is a charter or strategy and then consistently applied throughout the document.

There are a number of recommendations about organisational processes, which are:

- Revisit the comments, complaints and compliments system to ensure it is obvious to those who would want to use it.
- Assess how sharing customer comments, complaints and compliments can be improved within the organisation.
- Make sure there is consistency in customer feedback handling across the organisation.
- Make sure performance information is used to improve customer care and communicate the outcomes of what has changed to service users and the public.

- Consider how staff can be more empowered. This could include business process reengineering or training for both service managers and frontline employees.
- Develop call handling processes that mean customer queries can be resolved at their first point of contact more frequently.
- Assess the learning and development impacts on the organisation for customer service training and specialist training to deal with customers with specific individual needs.

Finally, thought should be given as to how the findings and the recommendations that are taken forward are communicated to those who have taken part and the wider service users, public and employees.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Questionnaire

PUTTING THE CUSTOMER FIRST A CUSTOMER CARE STRATEGY FOR LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

This consultation document is seeking your views, comments and ideas as part of the formal consultation process for the Customer Care Strategy for Lancashire County Council. We welcome your opinions on the draft charter.

How to Give Us Your Views

You can answer these questions whether you are an individual, an organisation or a group. We will take everyone's views into account before we produce a final version of the charter. All answers you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used for this consultation.

If you have any questions or difficulties completing the questionnaire please contact Mike Walker, corporate research and intelligence manager, 01772 533445, mike.walker@css.lancscc.gov.uk. The closing date for all questionnaires is the 25 May 2007.

It would help us enormously if you could complete the questionnaire via the web site at www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/consultation. However, if it is easier for you to print off the questionnaire please do so or telephone one of the above numbers and we will post you the questionnaire.

Please send your completed questionnaires to:

Mike Walker
Corporate Research and Intelligence Manager
Policy Unit
Lancashire County Council
PO Box 78
County Hall
Preston
PR1 8XJ

1. What our customers can expect

We will

Ensure a Customer Service ethos characterises the contact with the public by any county council employee so that

- Every person who contacts an employee of the county council enjoys a positive and helpful response which continues if they are referred on
- All people who contact the county council experience an efficient, joined-up organisation that delivers excellence in customer service

Q1	Generally, what you think of our customer service ethos?
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How you can contact us?

In Person: You can visit one of our offices. Our main offices will be open to the public between 9:00 and 17:00 on Monday to Friday (excluding Public Holidays), unless different arrangements have been advertised locally

By Telephone: You can contact our Customer Services Centre on 0845 053 0000. The CSC will be available to take your calls between 08:00 and 18:00 on Monday to Friday.

In Writing: You can write to us at Lancashire County Council, County Hall, PO Box 78, Fishergate, Preston, Lancashire PR1 8XJ

By Fax: You can fax your enquiry to us on 01772 533015

By E-mail: You can e-mail us with your queries on enquiries@css.lancscc.gov.uk

Scope – The commitments in this charter apply to all services provided by the county council other than where statutory requirements for the particular service dictate that higher standards should apply.

2. Our Commitment to respond to you

When you contact us you can expect us to provide you with a prompt service to the following standards:

When you visit us:

- We will ensure that our public buildings are accessible to all members of the community
- We will provide welcoming reception areas including distinct areas where if appropriate your enquiry can be dealt with in a discreet or confidential manner
- We will ensure that our staff are dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- We will ensure that you are dealt with promptly and kept waiting maximum of 10 minutes

Q2 What would you change in our commitment to you when you visit us?

When we visit you:

- We will ensure that our staff are dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- If we have an appointment to visit you we will ensure that we are prompt and will arrive within 10 minutes of the agreed time of the appointment
- On arrival our staff will show you their LCC Identity card, which includes their photograph.
- If you have a query about the identity of a person from LCC you should contact the Customer Services Centre on xxxxx for verification.

Q3 What would you change in our commitment to you when we visit you?

When you contact us by telephone

- During offices hours we will aim to answer your telephone call within 5 Rings
- When we answer your call we will tell you who you are speaking to
- During office hours we will minimise the use of voicemail and answerphones to receive your call
- Where the appropriate officer is not available when you call, we will respond to your enquiry within 24 hours

Q4 What would you change in our commitment to you when you contact us by telephone?

When you fax, e-mail or write to us

- We will acknowledge all letters and e-mails we receive within 24 hours
- We will respond to your enquiry within 10 working days or provide you with an update of progress and a date for our response
- We will ensure that our replies are clear and wherever possible make use of plain language requirements
- We will make response available in large print, Braille, and community languages where you request it

Q5 What would you change in our commitment to you when you fax, email or write to us?

3. Providing us with feedback

We welcome your feedback on the services that you receive from us. You can provide us with feedback on our services in the following ways:

- By completing one of the feedback leaflets available in one of our reception areas or public access points
- By telephoning our Customer Service Centre on xxxxxxx
- By completing the feedback form available on our website at xxxxxx

If you wish to make a complaint about the service you have received you should write to us (letter, fax or e-mail) using the address in section 1 above.

Our Complaints Procedure available in our reception areas or on our website at xxxxx sets out the standards by which we will deal with your complaint, and your rights should you remain unsatisfied with the response to your complaint.

Q6 What comments would you like to make on how you can provide us with feedback?

4. How we will monitor & report on our standards

We will set and publish targets and monitor and report on our performance against the standards we have set through this charter. Our performance will be reported to our Cabinet and will be available on our website at xxxxxxx. Our report to you will include the following elements:

- **Comments, Complaints & Compliments**
We will provide information about the number of complaints and compliments received about our services, and the stage in the complaints procedure at which the complaint was resolved.
- **Life in Lancashire**
We will ask the Life in Lancashire for their views about our customer care on an annual basis
- **Mystery Shopping**
On a regular basis we will conduct a mystery shopping exercise to provide us with qualitative information about the way in which we respond to customer enquiries.

Q7	How else should we monitor and report on our performance against the standards?
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Q8	What other standards of performance should we set?
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5. What you can expect of our Staff

We will ensure that our staff have received appropriate training in customer care and are aware of the standards and expectations of them. In this we will ensure that they are:

- Polite, and welcoming in their contact with you
- Responsible & Accountable for dealing with your enquiry in an efficient and effective manner

Putting the Customer First consultation report

- Confidential & Impartial in the advice they provide you with in response to your enquiry
- Dressed in a style that is appropriate to their role
- Able to show you their LCC Identity card, which includes their photograph

Q9 What else do you expect from our staff?

Q10 And finally what other comments would you like to make?

We would like to know who you are to help us understand your responses to this questionnaire. Your details will be kept confidential and only used in this consultation.

Q11 Which of the following organisation or group, if any, are you representing in your response?
PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY

Public sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	→ GO TO Q12
Voluntary, community and faith sector organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	→ GO TO Q12
Any other organisation or group	<input type="checkbox"/>	→ GO TO Q12
None of these	<input type="checkbox"/>	→ GO TO Q13

Q12 What is the name of your organisation or group for which you are responding?

Q13 What is your name?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation.