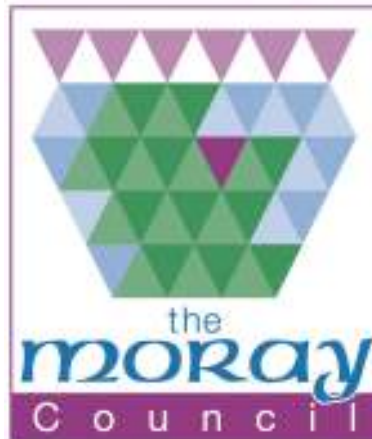


APPENDIX I



Customer-care policy

Revision I - Authorised by Corporate Management Team 11th July 2005
Revision II – Reviewed July 2008



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We have revised our customer-care standards to make sure that we meet the requirements of the Modernising Government Agenda. This includes developing a corporate customer-care policy for all our staff.
- 1.2 The revised customer-care policy will help us to continuously improve our services by setting corporate standards for all staff while also setting a baseline of standards which we can use in the future when we are developing the Easy Access Project.
- 1.3 We need to make sure that we treat all our customers politely and helpfully. All forms of direct contact (written, phone, face-to-face) with customers are equally important. This is why we must follow the customer-care guidelines wherever possible.

2.0 Rationale – why we have produced this policy

- 2.1 We need to maintain a positive image so that the public and other agencies feel confident about approaching us for help.
- 2.2 Customer care is about treating other people the same way you would like to be treated. People want accessible and efficient services, and we must all aim to meet these demands.
- 2.3 This policy concentrates on the three main methods of communication - phone services, face-to-face contact and written correspondence.

3.0 Aims and outcomes

3.1 Phone services

The Government has highlighted that over 70% of contact with councils is by phone, so it is vital that we can manage the number of calls we receive.

This policy applies to any phone we issue or agree that we can use for work purposes, including phones on extensions, mobile phones and phones used when we are working from home. It also applies to both internal and external callers.

- We will answer all calls within three rings. (If you are unable to take your calls, use call divert procedures to ensure your call transfers to someone else, or gives

your voicemail message.) Your phone should also transfer to someone else if you are already on a call.

- All extensions will be attached to a group pick-up system where available (this allows people in an office to pick up each other's ringing phones) or a group-hunt system where available (this is where a call finds an available extension).
- When answering the phone, we will use our standard greeting, which is:
 - ; The Moray Council;
 - ; your name; and
 - . how can I help you?
- We will return calls by the end of the next working day.
- If transferring a call, take the details of the person calling in case the call is lost.
- We will answer calls to our out-of-hours phone service in line with the above guidelines.

3.2 Face-to-face contact

Customers make face-to-face contact with us for a variety of reasons. The two main reasons are brief contact with the service they need or while receiving an ongoing service. These include routine visits to our offices, appointments with officers and asking for advice or help. It is important that we deal with all our customers, whatever their reason for contacting us, in the same professional and polite manner.

- We will wear identification badges at all times, will be polite when greeting customers and will be helpful when dealing with enquiries.
- If a customer has an appointment we will aim to see them at the agreed time.
- We will tell customers about the services that are available to them and, if possible, which officer will be available.
- We will make sure that everyone has equal access to our services by making sure that customers are fully aware of all facilities we have to help customers for example, hearing loops, information in Braille, on audio tape or in other languages and so on.
- If a customer needs a home visit, we will follow the customer-care guidelines.
- We will provide a private meeting room for customers if they ask.

3.3 Written correspondence

Written correspondence comes in a variety of formats including letters, memos, e-mails and text messages. We will need to reply to most of the written correspondence we receive.

It is also important that we reply quickly, whatever written communication method we use.

- When dealing with written correspondence, we will follow the customer-care guidelines for staff. These are available to staff of the Moray Council and you can access them through the intranet.
- We will choose the most appropriate way of communicating depending on the topic or situation.
- Whenever possible, we will acknowledge or respond to written correspondence within 10 working days of receiving it. If this is not possible an acknowledgement to the customers letter will be sent in 2 working days advising, where possible, when a response will be sent.
- We will develop suitable systems for managing documents. These systems will support the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) which will help to improve the effectiveness of Contact Central. (See note¹ below)

4.0 Procedures for introducing the policy 4.1 Under the Easy Access Project, we will develop Contact Central and CRM to help staff who have direct contact with customers to deal with enquiries in the three main methods of communication (written correspondence, face-to-face contact and phone calls).

4.2 In the future, Contact Central will provide the first point of contact for phone callers who want information or advice. We aim to provide information, advice and support to help us to deal with as much business as possible at this point.

4.3 Every year we will carry out a campaign to make sure we are aware of our standards for answering the phone.

4.4 Where necessary, we will go on training courses for example, disability awareness, dealing with difficult customers, and so on.

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

5.1 We are all responsible for customer care. They must make sure that they are polite and helpful to all our customers.

5.2 A representative from each department will be responsible for gathering and reporting performance information every three months (see section 8).

6.0 Resources

6.1 At this time, we do not need extra staff or resources. However, the Easy Access Project will change the way we deliver our front-line services (for example, longer opening hours, changes in technology) and this will affect the need for extra staff.

Note¹ Contact Central is a phone system for managing communication channels into the phone or PC point for staff who have direct contact with customers. CRM is a computer-based system that holds customers' details, for example, previous contact with us.

7.0 Legal requirements

7.1 This policy is in line with the Modernising Government Agenda, Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and Efficient Government Agenda.

7.2 This policy is linked to the Local Government Act Scotland 2003.

8.0 Quality improvement, monitoring and evaluation

8.1 We will record and monitor all compliments and complaints, and prepare reports on these.

8.2 We will review this policy, and amend it if necessary, following any changes in legislation. We will bear in mind practical experience and any projects we are developing when carrying out these reviews.

8.3 We will develop systems to help us monitor the following information every three months.

- How many calls we have missed.
- How many calls we answered with the standard greeting.
- How many letters we replied to within 10 working days.
- How well we performed in keeping to appointment times.

8.4 CRM will help us to understand our customers' needs. We will review this service regularly, and make changes where appropriate.

9.0 Staff development

9.1 We are committed to valuing you and providing any support and training you need to do your job and develop.

9.2 We will provide training on customer-care topics such as handling complaints, translation services, dealing with racial incidents, dealing with disabled customers and so on.

9.2 In the future, Contact Central will provide the first point of contact for phone callers who want information or advice. We aim to provide information, advice and support to help us to deal with as much business as possible at this point.

9.3 Every year we will re-issue posters and stickers to make sure we are aware of our standards for answering the phone.

9.4 Where necessary, we will go on training courses to further enhance our customer care skills, for example, disability awareness, dealing with difficult customers, and so on.

10.0 Consultations

10.1 We will carry out consultations with the Corporate Management Team (CMT), the trade unions and staff members.

11.0 Authorisation and review

11.1 This policy update was authorised by the Corporate Management Team on 7 July 2008.

11.2 We may need to amend this policy in response to changes in legislation, practical experience or developing projects as set out in section 8.2.

12.0 Performance Monitoring

- 12.1 We will record and monitor all compliments and complaints, and prepare reports on these.
- 12.2 We will review this policy, and amend it if necessary, following any changes in legislation. We will bear in mind practical experience and any projects we are developing when carrying out these reviews
- 12.3 We will ensure the quality of our customer care policy by monitoring our performance against the outcomes set in this policy on a regular basis. By carrying out these checks we can ensure that we are meeting the needs of our customers. To maintain our standards we will:
- Measure how many calls we have missed against a target of 85% of all calls to be answered within 3 rings or 7 seconds and publish performance results.
 - We will track incoming correspondence and publish performance by service department.
 - We will undertake on-going and annual customer service surveys to measure and evaluate customer opinion
- 12.4 We will expand the use of market research to provide spot checks to ensure standards are being met.
- 12.5 CRM will help us to understand our customers' needs. We will review this service regularly, and make changes where appropriate.