



Customer Experience Framework – Calderdale Council

Getting it right the first time, every time

Introduction

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About Calderdale

Calderdale is a beautiful area in West Yorkshire, between Leeds and Manchester, with unique natural landscapes, vibrant towns, a thriving cultural and arts scene and diverse and resilient communities. It is part of the Leeds City Region. Although one of the smallest metropolitan boroughs in terms of its population of 206,600 (2021 Census), it is one of the largest by area size (140 square miles), with over 80% being rural. We are rich in diversity of cultures, with communities from the Asian sub-continent and eastern Europe. Three quarters of the population live in urban areas.

Working with our partners and communities, and a team of nearly 3000 employees, the Council provides over 600 services for people at every stage of their lives, including residents, businesses, schools, and visitors.

Context

Why do we need a Customer Experience Framework? Because our Vision is for a place defined by our innate kindness and how our people care for each other.

Whether your voice has been heard or unheard in the past, we are committed to ensuring that all our customers, whatever their needs, have a good experience when they interact with Calderdale Council. The way we deliver customer service is core to providing public services efficiently and effectively. This is relevant to all staff, not just those whose role involves answering phone calls, or seeing customers face to face. Whilst we strive to provide high quality services, customers might experience varied levels of satisfaction with the range of services delivered by the council.

This framework has been created to:

- Ensure a shared understanding of what a good customer experience feels like
- Outline what is needed to achieve good customer experience, learning from best practice both internally and externally.
- Embed a consistently good standard of service delivery with resilience and efficiency, in a fair and inclusive way.

This framework will be adopted from April 2023 and reviewed annually to ensure it is fit for purpose.

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As Cabinet Member for Public Services and Communities, I am delighted to present this Customer Experience Framework for Calderdale, which sets out our commitment to giving the best possible service to you, our customer. We believe it embodies our Calderdale values of kindness and care for each other.

We hope you will enjoy reading it, and join with us in trying to make Calderdale an even better place to live work and visit.

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Cllr Lynn

Our Key Challenges and Opportunities

- **Cost of Living**

The rising costs of fuel, food and other essentials are combining with existing disadvantage and vulnerability within our communities to put many households at greater risk of both immediate hardship and reduced opportunity and wellbeing. Calderdale Council is committed to ensuring support and help is easily accessible for those who need it.

- **Rising customer expectations and Council resources**

Customers expect to be able to access services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using the council's website and social media for relevant services. They expect flexible and more personalised services. Managing this demand in a way that makes the best use of limited resources is essential to continuing to improve the customer experience. We need to develop more cost-effective ways for our customers to contact us and encourage and support our customers to use them.

- **Digital exclusion**

There are people who don't have access to the internet at home, or they have specific accessibility needs, and that could mean that they can't find our information and services online. We need to find ways to help these customers by providing equipment and support in our public facing buildings across the borough.

- **Equality of Access**

Our communities are diverse so we need to work hard to understand the barriers to access and support needs people may have. This will enable us to better anticipate customers' needs and respond respectfully, appropriately, and efficiently.

- **Listening to our customers**

We need to be able to capture customer comments and feedback and use it to improve services.

- **Using customer intelligence to shape service delivery**

Customers contact us through a variety of channels. We need to continue to make the best use of the information about this contact, in a timely way, to better understand what our customers need and to inform our service delivery



Our Customers 2021/2022

By customer we mean, any user of council services, active or passive. This includes residents, visitors to the borough, businesses, students, service users and their representative.



206,600

Population according to 2021 census



36,746

Children attending school



215,196

Phone calls received by
Contact Centre



3,642

Social Media Enquiries answered by
Customer First



96,095

Council Tax Payers



47,500

Refuse collections per week



56,536

Emails received by Contact Centre



Almost 7 million

Website visits



9554

Business Rate Payers



95,000

Recycling collections per week



1,942

Customer First Face to Face Support



402,111

Electronic forms completed on our website

Our Customer Promise



Our vision of ‘Getting it right first time, every time’ is the driver behind our customer promise. It sets out the standards and principles of how we deliver services to our customers and ensures that the services we deliver continue to be aligned to the needs of our customers.

Our promise was developed following engagement with customers through online and paper surveys and face to face interviews conducted in our libraries. Customers were asked to tell us what they value most when they interact with council services.

The standards and principles within the promise not only apply to staff who work directly with customers, but all staff who work for the council, including those in support services such as Human Resources, IT & Digital, Finance, Health & Safety. This will ensure a consistent approach to deliver the best customer experience.

Help us to keep our promise

Treat us, and other customers, with respect

Tell us if you have any specific needs

Provide us with all the information we require to help us meet your needs

Give us feedback on our service so we can learn and improve

Calderdale Council's Customer Promise

- **We will be clear how you can contact us and access our services**

- Communicating with you online (email/ website/social media) where possible and appropriate. This means you will receive responses quickly and conveniently
- Find the best way to help you if you have specific access needs
- Ensure our services are inclusive and responsive



- **We will get things done**

- Aim to answer your query when you first contact us. If we can't do this, we will tell you clearly what will happen next
- Ensure our staff have the tools, skills, and behaviours to deliver the service you need
- Keep you informed with up-to-date information about the services you use



- **Continuously review our performance**

- Customer satisfaction and ease of access
- Compliments, complaints, and feedback
- information about how our customers contact us
- surveys and engagement with results published on our website.



- **We will listen to you and treat you with respect**

- Be clear and easy to understand in all our communication with you
- Give you confidence your data is secure
- Work together with other services internally and across the borough to make it easier for you to get the help you need



- **Please tell us how we are doing**

- We welcome all feedback especially when things don't go right. We will ensure this information is used to improve our services
- If you would like to provide a detailed compliment or complaint please contact the Complaints and Compliments Team



Ways to Contact Us - Our Standards



Website

We will:

- aim to have the council website available for 24 hours a day all year round
- continually review and improve our online services to meet your needs
- make sure our online services are accessible and simple to use



Written communication

We will:

- ensure all service email addresses have an 'automatic reply' which clearly explains what will happen next
- aim to keep average response times within 10 working days. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait



Telephones

We will:

- aim to keep the average time you wait to be answered under 10 minutes. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- update telephone messages regularly to provide you with accurate information
- aim to respond to voicemails within one working day



Face to face

We will:

- make sure our public facing buildings are welcoming, safe, accessible, and designed to make it easy to get the help you need
- ensure our staff wear a name badge so they can be easily identified.
- if we are busy, we will aim to let you know how long you might have to wait to be assisted.



Social media

We will:

- respond to queries as quickly as possible
- protect your privacy

We will let you know about other ways of contacting us if there is a problem with any of these methods.

What actions are we taking?

Improving our communication with customers

- **Communication**

We will continue to review and improve the ways that we communicate with residents and key stakeholders by putting people at the heart of our communications. We will actively listen and keep the customer at the forefront of our minds when we are replying to enable a genuinely two-way relationship based on trust.

- **Improving complaint response quality**

We have started to conduct quality assurance on our responses to formal complaints, to ensure they are meeting the agreed standards. The aim is to improve the quality of responses received by customers as well as reducing the number of complaints that are escalated to the next stage or to the Ombudsman which can be frustrating for customers, and costly for the organisation. Several officers across the council have attended training delivered by the Ombudsman and facilitated by the Complaints and Compliments Team to improve their investigation skills. This will result in improved quality of complaint responses to customers, as well as a reduction in the need for customers to escalate their complaints.

- **Customer Focus Training**

Developed by our Workforce Development Team, a mandatory training course has been introduced to help staff within the organisation understand and learn what customer service excellence looks and feels like.

Understanding the needs and experiences of our customers

- **Customer journey mapping**

Customer journey mapping is a method of getting a better understanding of what a customer's experience of interacting with an organisation is like. The process is being embedded by front line service managers, to ensure we are continually checking how the customer experience could be improved. We will then map what the ideal 'journey' looks like for each transaction by putting ourselves in the customers shoes and seeing our services from our customers perspective.

- **Corporate Leadership Team Update**

The Corporate Leadership Team meet regularly to discuss matters affecting the organisation. Issues affecting the customer are given a high priority allowing swift action and decision making at a strategic level.

- **Ensuring no one is left behind**

We are mindful of the need to ensure all residents have access to council services, no matter their needs or capabilities. We provide customers with a choice of how they access our services making sure they are available at times and locations to suit them.

Making services fit for the future

- **Re-design of our Website**

Work is ongoing to improve the council's website in line with the principles established by the Government Digital Service. This will ensure the site is easy to use for people to do the things they need to do. We will ensure user needs come first, data insight is used to shape content and user journeys and content will be kept simple. Any content we create will be accessible to it meets set standards and works with a wide range of assistive technology.

- **Self-service**

As customers increasingly expect to be able to transact with organisations digitally, we have introduced a range of online facilities and contact methods. We can offer customers support in accessing these services online in our libraries and Customer First offices so that in future, customers will know how to transact with the service at a time and in a place which suits them, rather than travelling and queuing to hand in forms or documents.



What will we do next?

Delivering excellent customer service is a continual process of culture change. We will be constantly reviewing, redesigning, monitoring, training, learning, and listening. We will continue to embed and reinforce the good practices that are already in place across the organisation and will keep improving the way that services are delivered. Here are some examples of the actions already planned:

Work with customers to identify what excellent service looks like to them

We want our customers to be satisfied with the way that the council delivers services but need to be sure that we know what our customers value, and what excellent customer service means to them. Through engagement in a range of ways, we will seek views from a variety of customers who represent the diversity of Calderdale.

Develop and promote digital by design communications and transactions

We continue to invest in and promote the use of simple and intuitive online services so that customers can self-serve. This will enable us to deliver services in ways which are convenient for customers and to create capacity for the council to help those who need more intensive support or have more complex queries.

Some service areas have developed their technological capability to ensure their whole process is digital, eliminating delays for customers. This functionality is currently live for some Highways and Environmental Health transactions, and we are investigating other customer-facing processes and systems that

are suitable for integration into a single digital customer experience.

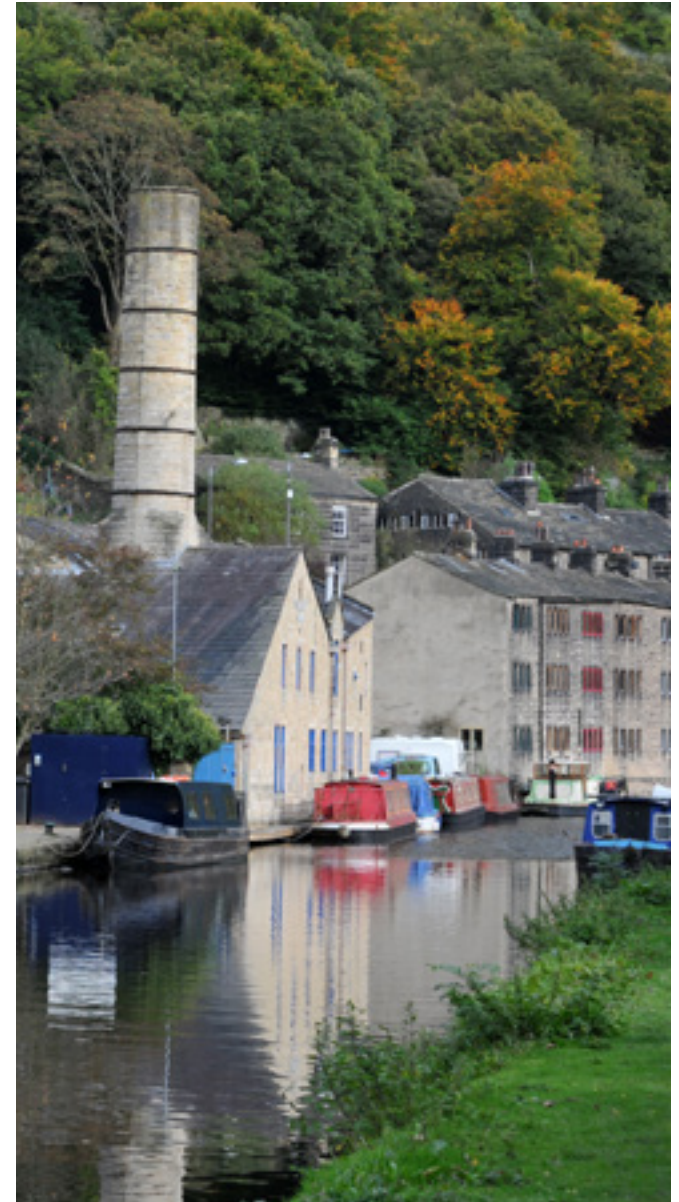
In order to make most efficient use of the investment in technology, it is vital that we understand our customer's needs as well as the detail of the transactions and interactions that they have with the council; it isn't always most effective or efficient to use digital channels of communication, and so we will look in detail at which interactions are suitable, and ensure that any digitisation of service is also supported by digital inclusion work, ensuring accessibility for all, particularly the most vulnerable.

Improving face-to-face support

We have developed some inexpensive, yet important changes which should make it easier for customers to access the help they need at our Customer First Office in Halifax. These changes will also make the free digital access facilities easier for customers to locate and access, providing better support for customers who may not have other ways of getting online.

Face to face support is also available in libraries across the borough.

We will continue to examine and review the council's customer access points carefully balancing meeting customer needs, versus efficient use of council assets and resources. We understand that there is a strong need for an empathetic and considered approach to dealing with those living through difficult circumstances and will ensure they receive and necessary support and guidance for the foreseeable future.



How will we know that we are getting things right?



To track our progress against this framework, we will use multiple sources of data and information, to assess whether things or not we are getting things right.

Listening to our customers

The most important way for us to know that the work we are doing is making things better for customers, is to listen to the customers themselves. We will ask for, analyse, and make recommendations from various sources of customer feedback, including:

- Results from the annual survey, which measures resident satisfaction levels, these can be benchmarked against national results, through the Local Government Association's Resident survey
- Service specific satisfaction surveys
- Using information collected and evaluated by the Complaints and Compliments Team.

Listening to our councillors

Calderdale's elected Councillors are the eyes and ears of local people and know what problems and issues exist in their ward. We will work closely with Councillors to identify areas of improvement and ensure effective delivery of services.

Listening to our staff

Our staff are often best placed to understand customer preferences, so their feedback is an important part of measuring our improvements. We will regularly collect staff feedback formally and informally through employee surveys, regular team meetings and by encouraging a culture of open communication.

Making good use of our data

We gather a lot of data about our customer transactions and contact. To make best use of this data we will regularly measure and evaluate metrics which relate to customer contact. These will include:

- Complaints and compliments received and the root causes, trends, and themes.
- Complaint response times.
- Volumes and demand by channel of communication adapting to peaks and troughs if necessary.
- Customer journey mapping (both ideal states and current experiences)