Who are our customers?

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

“By 2020, all KCC services will have a greater customer focus with services organised around the needs of service users and residents”. Facing the Challenge also sets out the direction of travel for our changing relationship with the customer in a commissioning authority. A clear shift of focus is described, from improving our services through our historic understanding of customer experience to a more fundamental understanding of service user needs, and actively engaging customers in design and delivery of services.

KCC provides a wide range of essential public services to a diverse range of people and is committed to ensuring that our Public Sector Equality Duty described in the Equality Act 2010 is met. The relationship we have with customers varies greatly depending on a number of factors, and individuals will very often have different relationships with different services. Often there are varying levels of need, complexity, risk, and need for personalisation, alongside varying levels of contact with KCC and its service providers.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Residents &amp; Business”</th>
<th>“Service User”</th>
<th>“Client”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All tax payers</td>
<td>Customer by choice Ad hoc users of transactional services</td>
<td>Customer by need multiple, complex, intensive and/or statutory services and interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Users of universal services</td>
<td>e.g infrequent contact, occasional requirement to enquire regarding services</td>
<td>e.g high levels of contact, often face-to-face, locally provided, high levels of support required</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e.g moderate contact, requirement to transact, support sometimes required</td>
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The term ‘customer’ is used as a generic description for all, however it is recognised that delivery strategies for each of these customer groups may by necessity differ and will require differing commissioning approaches. People may also move between these groups at different points in their lives, depending on a range of factors and influences.

The customer service policy describes KCC’s overarching commitment to customers, and is underpinned by three core principles which should be applied across the board when delivering services to customers. Commissioners must ensure that this policy and its embedded principles are adopted throughout the supply chain and across the differing customer groups described. This Policy will be facilitated through the Commissioning Framework, enabling KCC to hold to account all service providers for meeting customer service expectations whilst acting as a guarantor of standards for customers and acting on their behalf where customer service principles and standards are not met.
Principle 1: Delivering Quality

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

A set of minimum operational service standards will be developed for each service in line with the customer groupings described and the principles within this policy.

Customer service expectations and mechanisms by which these will be monitored and upheld must be ‘front and centre’ in all commissioning activity.

Commissioners will be required to ensure adherence to the customer service policy throughout the supply chain.

Principle 2: Customer Focused Services

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

Services will be ‘digital by design’

Service provision will be inclusive and responsive to customer need.

Commissioners and providers will be expected to demonstrate how digital delivery is incorporated into service design, and how other channels will be used in support of the service and in line with this policy.

Principle 3: Intelligent Commissioning

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

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

Commissioners and service providers will be required to collect a range of qualitative and quantitative information about our customers and use this intelligently to improve services.

Customers must be involved in service design and operation. We will require all commissioners and providers to demonstrate how this is being achieved.
KCC’s Commitment to Customers

1. We will always be welcoming and deal with customers politely and professionally in accordance with the customer service policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. We will always strive to communicate clearly with our customers (and will provide alternative formats if required) to ensure clarity and understanding

   We will achieve this through involving customers in the design and production of communications material and publications
## Principle 1: Delivering Quality

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

### We will

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Customers know what to expect from KCC services irrespective of provider or contact channel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customers can be confident that KCC is putting them first</td>
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<tr>
<td>KCC can take an informed view of how services are aligned to customer needs and requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Customers have a clear escalation path for any comments or complaints that cannot be easily resolved by service providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>All comments and complaints are captured and used to improve services</td>
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Principle 2: Customer Focused Services

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

**We will**

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

**So that**

- Services provided by KCC are flexible and responsive to customers, and can be accessed in a range of ways according to need
- The majority of customers can self-serve via responsive and reliable digital platforms at times that suit them
- Customers can be assured that KCC is commissioning effective and efficient services on their behalf
- Those that require extra help or who have multiple or complex needs will be provided with the help they require
Principle 3: Intelligent Commissioning

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

We will

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

So that

| Customer information and intelligence is designed in from the outset and on an ongoing basis |
| Customers are involved and engaged in shaping services that best meet their needs |
| Customers can have confidence that their needs are placed at the heart of everything we do (or others do on our behalf) |
| Customers do not have to chase or remind us |
Glossary of Terms used in the Customer Service Policy

Contact channels by this we mean the mechanism or device which customers will use to access Council services, examples include telephone, email, online, social media, mobile phone, face to face, post/letter.

Digital by Design means that the organisation will design or redesign services so that they can be delivered online. This means that the digital element will not be a bolt on to existing service delivery. It means that services must use customer research and evidence to design/redesign services in a way that promotes self-service through digital platforms. This activity must include design of supporting contact channels for those who are not able to access digitally. Importantly this does not mean that we will force digital services upon customers who are unable to access in this way.

Residents & Business by this we mean all taxpayers and users of universal services such as roads and street lighting. This group has infrequent contact with KCC regarding services.

Service User by this we mean Customer by choice, moderate contact for support, for example someone who uses the Library, attends Adult Education classes, goes to Country Parks. This group is often able to ‘self-serve’ with limited need for support.

Client by this we mean a customer who receives a statutory service and interventions for example home care or a customer with multiple and complex needs for example a child with a disability. This group has high levels of contact, often face-to-face, locally provided with high levels of support required.

Customer Intelligence/data by this we mean data, information and analysis about our customers, their needs, wants, views, preferences and ultimately behaviours in relation to KCC and their wider interactions. This includes using information about the customers protected characteristics to improve services.

Strategic Commissioning Authority
As a strategic commissioning authority we will find the best, most effective and value for money services for Kent and ensure that these are providing the strategic outcomes we have defined. This is likely to include a range of provision, including in-house service delivery alongside better use of voluntary/community sector and private sector expertise. Importantly this does not mean that every service will be ‘outsourced’ or provided by a third party.
Customer Service Policy

2015-2018

This document can be made available in alternative formats.
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