

Northern Beaches Council presents

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

2017 - 2023



NORTHERN BEACHES
COUNCIL

northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au

MESSAGE FROM CEO

The Stronger Councils Framework defines a strong council as one that delivers results for their community, builds relationships and partnerships, and has the culture, people and capability to make this happen.

Customer service in government has traditionally been reactive to customers' needs and we know our customers do not have a choice but to use our services. Being sole service providers makes the customer experience all the more critical as customers simply cannot go anywhere else to receive the services we provide. We also recognise our customers have high service expectations of their new Council. They have all had a 'wow' customer experience. The private sector now dictates our customers expectations of service. We are working hard to deliver on these expectations and to achieve our internal vision of *'Delivering the highest quality service, valued and trusted by our community'*.

As a newly formed organisation we have a lot to do to achieve this internal vision and create the 'wow' factor for our customers. We also recognise the huge amount of goodwill our staff have to provide an excellent experience for our customers. The Northern Beaches Council has a great opportunity as we build our new organisation to use this goodwill and create a new Council that is customer focused, responsive and positively transforms the experience of our customers so that we not only deliver on our internal vision but meet and exceed our customers' expectations.

Mark Ferguson
CEO

About this Strategy

This strategy will set Council on the path towards achieving excellence in the customer experience. Customer experience is broader than customer service. It encompasses the customer's perception of their whole journey from their first thought about interacting with Council through to the completion of that interaction. It is an outside-in customer centric approach rather than an inside-out organisation approach to our role.

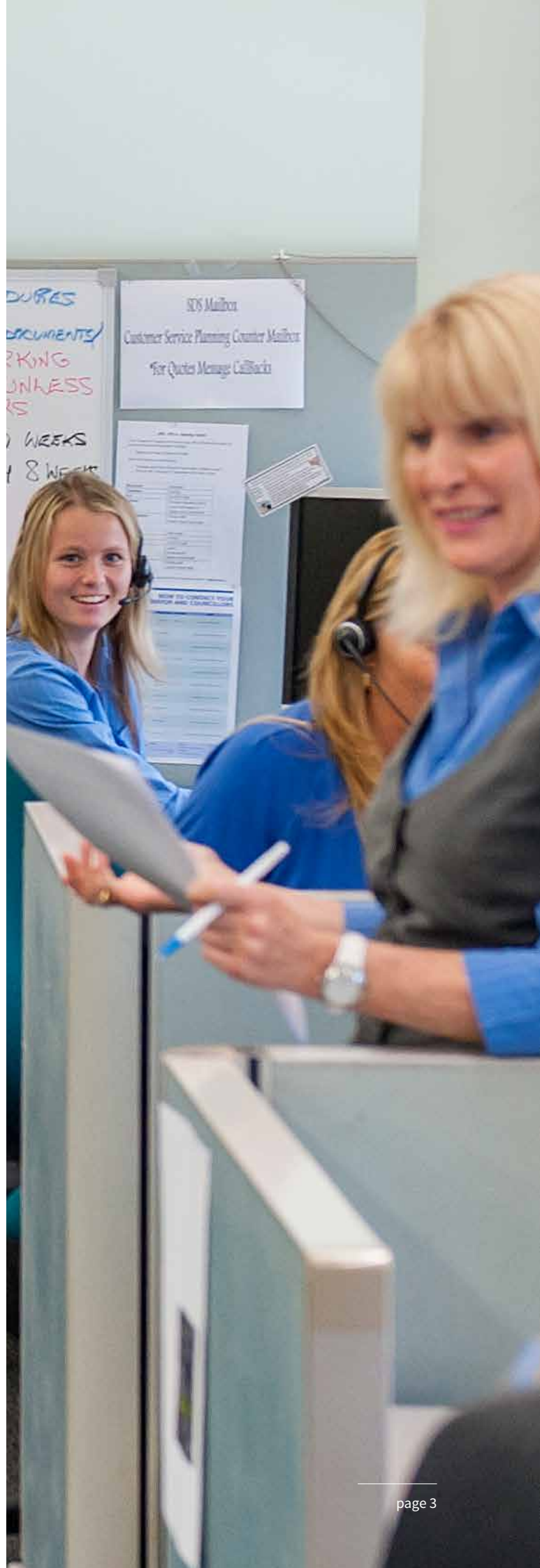
This strategy supports our draft community vision of a safe, inclusive and connected community that values the natural and built environment. It also supports the delivery of our corporate values of trust, teamwork, respect, integrity, service and leadership.

This strategy outlines the key customer experience drivers and actions that meet current and emerging customer needs, and aims to achieve the highest level of experience for our customers in an increasingly digital world. It is based on insights gathered through research, surveys, metrics and engagement with employees and customers.

Our approach

In determining our key customer experience drivers we looked at better practice customer-focused initiatives to ensure these drivers will meet our customers' needs and improve their experience with Northern Beaches Council. We reviewed:

- Community Satisfaction Survey Results 2014, 2015 and 2016
- The Northern Beaches Community Satisfaction Survey conducted by Department of Premier and Cabinet 2016 (600 participants, JWS Research)
- Northern Beaches Council brand identity research 2017
- Staff feedback gathered from online engagement and workshops
- Complaints, compliments and voice of customer feedback data from three previous Councils
- Survey feedback from our community database
- Feedback from community leaders
- Emerging customer trends
- ABS 2011 Census data.





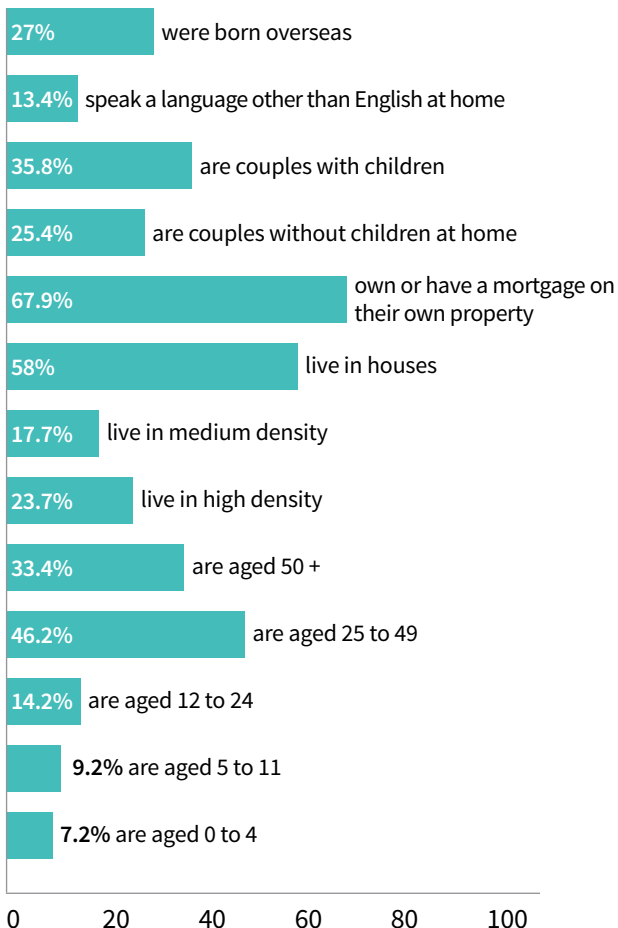
“The customer service rep was extremely pleasant and VERY helpful... she went out of her way to assist me. She was an absolute pleasure to deal with.”

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT OUR CUSTOMERS

During our research we discovered that, while our customers rated their overall customer experience as positive, there was room for improvement. Primarily, customers expect an informed, consistent and proactive service response across all interactions and communication channels, and for information and tools to deliver better experiences. Timely communication is considered critical as customers want to be kept informed of their issue. Looking ahead, customers want more self-service tools to monitor and manage their own access to Council information.

Customers differ

Our customers are a very diverse group. They are as diverse as they are numerous. While there are common needs and service attributes, customers also have specific needs that drive improved customer experience. A one size fits all approach does not work and more and more customers are seeking a personalised experience when they interact with us.



Customers want choice

Effective communication requires a consistent, proactive and seamless service experience across all interactions, with diverse service and communication channels for different customers.

Customers want information

Customers want knowledgeable employees who can either answer their question or direct them to the right person, and who are empowered to resolve issues. They also expect to be kept informed on the progress of their issue and their request to be resolved in a timely manner.

Phone, self-service technologies and mobility

While traditional methods of contact, such as face to face and telephone, remain the preferred method of contact, an increasing number of customers want to find more information themselves and to connect with us when it suits them. Customers expect self-service tools to be efficient, easy-to-use, and available 24/7 across multiple communication channels. They are increasingly expecting integrated portals that bundle all their interactions and information with Council. Integrating our suite of self-service products and optimising the website for mobile access will greatly improve the customer experience and reduce our cost per transaction to serve customers.

Our services

Our community has told us they want us to focus on maintenance of roads and footpaths, managing traffic, managing developments and the development application process, managing waterways and responding to their needs and requests. We must continue efforts in all service areas to meet expectations while also focusing on, consulting, informing and improving our services.

Personal satisfaction

Staff gain a huge amount of personal satisfaction from providing customers with a positive experience. We need to ensure we enable staff to provide this service level by having the right tools, training and support in place. When our people are properly supported and trained they are able and willing to provide an excellent experience to our customers.

MEET THE CUSTOMER

Customer personas assist in the development of customer focused processes and programs by encouraging us to think about specific customers their behaviours, emotions, attributes, motivations and goals. Having a customer focus is about setting customer outcomes at the beginning of a task, process or project, by considering customer needs when developing options, assessing the customer impact of each option and selecting a preferred option based on a balanced analysis of business, operational and customer requirements.

Our customer personas each represent a different type of Council customer. They have been identified through demographic data, voice of customer responses and website analytics for the northern beaches and they reflect typical customers of council.



Sarah

Age: 52

Family status: single

Dependants: 3 - 2 away at University, 1 at home

Lives: Manly Vale, ratepayer

Career: Sales professional

Council services used by Sarah

Waste, roads, parks, beaches, off leash dog exercise areas, building compliance, libraries, Manly Food & Wine fair.

Sarah's last contact with Council

Sarah recently emailed Council with concerns about the ocean pool at Freshwater. She regularly swims there and felt it was not clean.

Sarah's attitude to Council

Sarah wants to be kept up to date about the status of her enquiry and for her issues to be fixed promptly. She believes our recreational areas need to be maintained to a high standard. Sarah regularly downloads talking books for use during her commute. She is concerned about how her children will afford to live in the area.



Steve

Age: 34

Family status: partnered

Dependants: 2 young children

Lives: owns house in Collaroy Plateau, rents and lives in Dee Why

Career: Landscaper

Council services regularly used by Steve

Waste, roads, parks, beaches, planning, childcare, libraries, pools.

Steve's last contact with Council

Steve recently lodged a development application for an extension to his 2 bedroom house that he currently rents out while he and his family live in a rented unit in Dee Why.

Steve's attitude to Council

Steve wants his development application to be processed quickly and to be kept up to date on its status. He wants to have personal contact with his assessing officer. He also wants the beaches and parks to be kept clean and clear of litter and for playgrounds to be improved and well maintained. Steve is tech savvy and wants to connect with council online.



Joan

Age: 76

Family status: partnered

Dependants: Carer to her partner who has a physical disability

Lives: Avalon, ratepayer

Career: retired teacher

Council services used by Joan

Waste, roads, parks, beaches, planning, libraries, bushland, community services.

Joan's last contact with Council

Joan wrote a letter to Council concerned about a fire hazard in her local reserve and has called about an abandoned car in her street.

Joan's attitude to Council

Joan wants up to date information about fire hazards and bush clearing. She also wants bush regeneration in her nearby reserve to be regularly undertaken. Joan is also concerned about increasing population and the impact it's having on density and liveability. Joan pays her rates by cash at the customer service centre.



Alex

Age: 17

Family status: single

Dependants: none

Lives: Frenchs Forest with parents

Career: student

Council services used by Alex

Beaches, roads, natural environment, parking, skating parks and new years celebrations.

Alex's last contact with Council

Alex called Council on a Saturday about purchasing an extra parking permit. He recently attended the Manly office for JP services.

Alex's attitude to Council

Alex wants to purchase his parking permit over the phone or online.



Anne

Age: 29

Family status: partnered

Dependants: none

Lives: Rents at Chatswood, looking to purchase a property in the local area

Career: IT consultant

Council services used by Anne

Beaches, natural environment, parking, roads, waterways, events, night time economy.

Anne's last contact with Council

As a visitor to the area wanting to purchase a property Anne has phoned the call centre enquiring about various properties she has been interested in and has tried visiting Council's website for the same information.

Anne's attitude to Council

As both Anne and her partner work full time in the city she wants to get information efficiently and would ideally like to do this online.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DRIVERS

Our four drivers identified for an excellent customer experience are:

1. Consistency - deliver consistent services with integrity, accountability and common sense
2. Empowered staff - go above and beyond by taking ownership of issues and delivering positive experiences for our customers
3. Responsive - deliver a tailored and responsive service that is inclusive, consistent, and effective and meets the changing and individual needs of our customers.
4. Information - trusted source of reliable and timely advice and information for customers.

Delivering improvements across each of the four customer experience drivers is how we enhance the customer experience and improve customer satisfaction.

Improving one customer service driver can improve customers' perception of another. For example, ensuring information for staff is correct and reliable makes staff feel more empowered and makes customers feel our services are more reliable.

DRIVER 1 - Consistency

We deliver consistent services with integrity, accountability and common sense.

Strategies to support this driver

- Provide consistent, friendly service and processes across Council
- Recognise that individual customers and their needs differ and treat every customer accordingly
- Use every customer interaction as an opportunity to create a positive image of Council.
- Continue to provide a high standard of customer service.
- Consider all types of customers and their needs in the delivery of our services.

How can we do it?

- Provide customer service training to all staff
- Provide platforms for sharing of knowledge among staff
- Encourage staff to take a flexible approach to customer issues
- Provide feedback channels for our customers so we can learn from their experiences
- Develop a Customer Service Charter with clear timeframes that details how customers can provide feedback
- Develop a customer service recognition program for staff displaying excellent customer service skills
- Target customer skills in all levels of recruitment.
- Use customer journey maps

Tools supporting this driver

- Knowledge management database
- Community satisfaction survey
- Request management system with voice of customer feedback surveys
- Random telephone surveys
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
- Customer Service Charter
- Performance management tool with customer service measures.

DRIVER 2 - Empowered staff

We go above and beyond for our customers by taking ownership of issues and delivering positive experiences.

Strategies to support this driver

- Provide the right tools and resources so we can do our jobs and make good decisions
- Recognition that spending time with customers is valuable
- Clear easy to understand delegations.

How can we do it?

- Monitor customer interactions and provide coaching to staff for improvement
- Provide feedback channels and opportunities for improvements for our staff so we can learn from their experiences
- Ensure Customer Service Charter has clear timeframes.
- All staff position descriptions require us to take ownership of any customers enquiry or contact.

Tools supporting this driver

- Quality assurance program
- Knowledge management database
- Staff survey
- Delegations manual
- Customer Service Charter
- Providing a range of interaction platforms.

DRIVER 3 - Responsive

We deliver a tailored and responsive service that is inclusive, consistent, and effective and meets the changing and individual needs of our customers.

Strategies to support this driver

- Provide a range of inclusive and accessible channels including face to face, telephone, digital and print
- Provide robust systems that optimise information transfer between customers and all areas of Council
- Ask customers about our performance
- Proactive service improvement.

How can we do it?

- Ensure the customer's needs are considered in our Digital Transformation Strategy
- Use plain English in all our communications
- Provide tools for staff that give a holistic view of the customer
- Provide access for staff to Council's database of knowledge
- Regularly use voice of customer feedback
- Ensure Council's digital platforms are optimised for mobility
- Offer self-service options where possible
- Act on feedback from customers
- Use customer journey mapping
- Analyse complaint and compliment data
- Annual public reporting on our complaints, compliments and feedback.

Tools supporting this driver

- Council's website
- Customer relationship management (CRM) system
- Knowledge management database
- Complaint and compliment register
- Community satisfaction survey
- Mystery shopping.

DRIVER 4 - Information

We are a trusted source of reliable and timely advice and information for customers.

Strategies to support this driver

- Ask our customers what services they want
- Identify opportunities to improve processes and information and act upon them
- Include customers in building services
- Ask customers about our performance.

How can we do it?

- Ensure our external information is accurate
- Ensure our internal knowledge is up to date
- Use plain English in all our communications
- Ensure processes and procedures are designed around the needs and expectations of our customers
- Value each customer interaction as an opportunity to improve services and processes
- Use customer journey mapping.

Tools supporting this driver

- Council's website
- Staff intranet
- Knowledge management system database
- Request management system with voice of customer feedback surveys
- Customer relationship management (CRM) system
- Online services.



MEET THE STAFF

Our staff are crucial to providing a great customer experience. Their commitment to our corporate value of service is evident on a daily basis. We provide a vast array of services for our customers from child care and youth services, planning, road and infrastructure maintenance, libraries, art galleries and theatres, parks, reserves, beaches, pools and bushland.

We asked a few of our staff to tell us what they do in their jobs and how they help the customer according to our values.

Trust

because

being **open** brings out our **best**

Teamwork

because

working **together** delivers

Respect

because

valuing everyone is how we make a difference

Integrity

because

we are **proud** of doing what we say

Service

because

we **care** as custodians for the community

Leadership

because

everyone has a leading role



Bandana, Early Childhood Teacher

I provide care and education for children aged 0-6 years. I am the room leader in the 2-3 year age room and work with a team of 4 other educators and in partnership with the families within our room. I plan and program for the children's interests and developmental needs, using the family and fellow educators goals and inputs.

I give families of the centre information about their children on a daily basis while caring and educating the children and providing the environment that the children can use to grow to their full potential.

I often assist customers with information relating to other Council services as well as services offered by other community organisations.



Robert, Section 94 Coordinator

I am responsible for implementing, coordinating and managing development contributions plans for Council. These plans allow Council to levy payment of contributions for new development to fund the provision of infrastructure and services that will be required as a consequence of that development.

A large part of my job is helping customers understand the contributions plans and how they apply to their developments. This regularly involves working closely with Council's Land Release Team to effectively communicate all relevant aspects of the contributions plans to customers before, during and after their development process.



Theo, Technology Librarian

As Technology Librarian, I am responsible for managing digital content and improving resources and technology within the library. I do this by ensuring the digital content and technology provided by the library anticipates the educational, recreational and cultural needs of our diverse community. I also support and develop volunteers, staff and patrons to use that technology and work to ensure that our community has free access to high quality digital content. On a day-to-day basis I provide customer and reference services to our patrons.





Craig, Customer Service Officer

I assist customers face to face or over the telephone in our Dee Why Customer Service Centre. Customers may need information relating to Council services or services offered by other community organisations. The range of issues are very diverse and may include waste issues such as broken or missed bins, trees or street cleaning, development applications and planning matters and payments and applications.

The role is one I enjoy and find very rewarding as it provides lots of variety.



Sylwia, IT Support Officer

As an IT Support Officer I am the first point of call for any technology related issues for all council employees. I help by immediately assessing the problem and, when possible, resolving it via phone or remote login. I prioritise and log more complex issues to appropriate IT Officers and update my customers on resolution times.

My role is crucial in enabling staff at Council to do their jobs to assist customers of Council.



Owen, Reserves Supervisor

My role is to coordinate the maintenance and repair of commercial areas. These are high visibility areas for our customers and so require a great attention by Council. This involves liaising with staff and contractors to ensure garden maintenance, pavement restorations, cleansing and street furniture installations are completed. The goal of my team is to keep these areas clean and safe for the community and ensure the issues raised by customers are fully understood and completed in a timely manner.



Josh, Senior Beach Inspector/Professional Lifeguard

My job is ensuring public safety and satisfaction with Council's beaches and beach reserves by monitoring and managing the ocean and beach reserves. My team is a very visible representative of Northern Beaches Council. People come to the beach and we hope to help them have an enjoyable day.

We provide information to customers about a range of issues such as swimming inside the flags, ocean conditions and weather, bus times and routes, accommodation options, equipment rental, food recommendations, local activities, tours and directions.

We also assist in stressful situations by providing first aid, rescuing people in trouble, helping with lost children, assisting with stolen property and lost car keys. Sometimes a local resident just wants a few minutes to ask a few questions or have a chat. From picking up rubbish to helping a school group get the most from their day on the beach, my role is varied and changes with every interaction I have with the public.



MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

Measuring the progress of our customer experience drivers will ensure they provide an evidence base for continuing to drive a customer focus. Voice of the customer and customer journeys provide combined insights from a number of sources including research, surveys, feedback and complaints.

On page 15 are measures to help us make sure we are achieving on each customer experience driver.



Customer Experience Driver	Measures of Success
<p>CONSISTENCY: We deliver consistent services with integrity, accountability and common sense</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff undergo customer service training • Customer service measures are in our performance management tool for all levels of the organisation • Our Customer Service Charter is easily accessible in both hard and soft copy for staff and customers • All staff meet Council's phone and email etiquette standards • Knowledge management database in place and regularly amended • Customer service metrics and mystery shopping identify opportunities for improvement • Customer champions recognition program in place.
<p>EMPOWERED STAFF: We go above and beyond for our customers by taking ownership of issues and delivering positive experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual staff survey to measure staff empowerment • Monthly measurements (where possible) of Customer Service Charter timeframes • Quality assurance program for the call centre is in place • Knowledge management database in place and regularly checked for accuracy • Delegation manual is easily accessible for staff • First contact resolution metrics for the call centre are regularly reviewed and analysed for improvement opportunities.
<p>RESPONSIVE: We deliver a tailored and responsive service that is inclusive, consistent, and effective and meets the changing and individual needs of our customers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better practice formal complaint handling process in place • Regular reporting and root cause analysis of formal complaint metrics • Regular reporting of formal complaint and compliment data to Chief Executive Team, Risk Committee and Leadership Group • Internal and external communication standards, including use of plain English in place • Customer experience monitoring is inclusive and scored across the organisation and reported to Chief Executive Team and Leadership Group.
<p>INFORMATION: We are a trusted source of reliable and timely advice and information for customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff undergo customer service training • Website satisfaction score implemented and used to improve our website • Intranet implemented with increasing usage by staff • Quality assurance program for the customer service team • CRM system delivering on intended benefits • Knowledge management database in place and regularly checked for accuracy • Request management system implemented and measured for satisfaction by customers • Increase in number of services offered online • Annual audit for the use of plain English in line with our internal and external communication standards as per the customer charter.

