

CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the principles of Quality Customer Service approved by the Government and has adopted this Action Plan which sets out how we will implement these principles. In addition, we will integrate training on customer service issues into general training courses and council procedures and practices. A customer service ethos will be promoted throughout the organisation and customers and staff will be encouraged to comment and improve upon existing practices.

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 imposes a statutory obligation on the Council to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect the human rights of people availing of public services. The Public Sector Duty is a mechanism to ensure a positive contribution to human rights obligations and equality objectives. The Council is committed to building organisational awareness of the Public Sector Duty to safeguard our services and policies to ensure the protection of human rights and the achievement of greater equality.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to providing an efficient and courteous customer service in a safe and secure environment whether by telephone, in person or through written correspondence or leaving a message on our voicemail facilities. The Council will maintain an out of hours contact service which will ensure that members of the public have access to a round-the-clock telephone service for urgent issues.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the following: -

QUALITY SERVICE STANDARDS:

Publish a Customer Charter that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

EQUALITY/DIVERSITY:

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation and accommodate diversity. Kilkenny County Council does not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender, family status, marital status, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the traveller community.

Identify and work to eliminate barriers that may prevent or hinder customers using our services.

PHYSICAL ACCESS:

Provide clean, accessible public buildings that ensure privacy as required, comply with occupational and safety standards and facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

INFORMATION:

Provide information to our customers that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Increase the access to information for our customers through the use of Information Technology and on our website. Seek only information which is relevant to the query or request.

CHOICE:

Provide choice where feasible, in service delivery including payments methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access, choice and quality of delivery.

TIMELINESS & COURTESY:

Deliver services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.

Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

CONSULTATION & EVALUATION:

Kilkenny County Council is committed to consulting with our customers and to evaluating our services. Members of the public can help us by providing comments, suggestions or complaints regarding the service they receive.

COMPLAINT & APPEAL:

There may be occasions when our systems will not function as well as we would wish. Kilkenny County Council has a simple, accessible and transparent Customer Complaint Procedure which maybe used if you are in any way unhappy with the quality of the service provided.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES EQUALITY:

Welcome and accommodate our customers, if they wish to conduct their business through Irish.

BETTER CO-ORDINATION:

Foster a more coordinated an integrated approach to the delivery of public services.

INTERNAL CUSTOMERS:

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

What you can expect from us?

Kilkenny County Council are committed to delivering an efficient courteous and quality service to its customers. We will treat all our customers equally ensuring that there is no discrimination on any grounds. We will be sensitive to our customers' needs and consider their age, their capacity to understand often complex rules and procedures and any disabilities they may have.

When providing service by telephone we will aim to:

- Answer your telephone calls in a timely manner.
- Be helpful and provide you with clear and accurate information.
- Ensure that employees will, when taking your call, give you their name and the name of the department in which they work.
- Request your name and contact information and call you back at an agreed time if your query cannot be dealt with immediately at the time of your call.
- Keep internal telephone directories up-to-date.
- Maintain an out-of-hours contact service which will ensure that you have access to a round-the-clock telephone service for urgent issues.

If you visit our offices we will aim to:

- Keep appointments punctually.
- Respect your privacy and ensure that all matters are dealt with in a confidential manner.
- Provide private interview room where possible and appropriate.
- Identify ourselves and be courteous and fair in all our dealings.

- Deal with your enquiry and provide any relevant information that we have as quickly as possible.
- Ensure our offices are clean, welcoming and accessible.
- Ensure that the reception area is properly staffed during office opening hours.
- Upgrade Customer Service Desk/ Reception Hall to ensure privacy for our customers.

Note: Due to work commitments it may be necessary to make an appointment in advance to meet with some members of staff.

In corresponding with you we will aim to:

- Include a contact name, contact number of the individual dealing with your correspondence in all our correspondence.
- Use clear simple language and to use technical terms only when absolutely necessary.
- Acknowledge all written communications within 5 working days.
- Provide a comprehensive reply within 20 working days.
- Some correspondence requires considerable research before a full reply can issue and when this happens we will send you an interim reply explaining the position.
- Ensure that service departments are allocated an e-mail address.
- Má scríobhann tú chugainn as Gaeilge, freagróimid i nGaeilge.

In producing forms and leaflets we will aim to:

- Ensure that leaflets and forms are freely available, including in electronic format.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Explain exactly what information is required on application forms.
- Request only relevant information on application forms.
- Ensure that data supplied on forms will only be used for the purpose for which it is given.
- Produce all documentation in a range of accessible formats suitable to the needs of people with disabilities.

Information and Communications Technology:

- New technology will be availed of to the greatest possible extent to make services more accessible and improve service delivery.

Social Media:

- Respond as appropriate to queries on our services raised via Social Media by posting on those social media sites hosted directly by Kilkenny County Council, i.e. Facebook and Twitter.
- Posts which appear on sites which are derogatory, defamatory, abusive, threatening or inappropriate will not be responded to and may result in legal proceedings or other actions as the Council deems fit being initiated against the person responsible including referral to An Garda Síochána.

Our Employees:

- Kilkenny County Council will ensure that staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.
- A customer service-training programme for our staff will be provided regularly.

Co-Ordination of Services:

- Kilkenny County Council will foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivering of services.

Choice:

- Kilkenny County Council will provide a range of choices, where feasible, in service delivery.
- Kilkenny County Council will use available emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice and quality of delivery.

Official Language:

- Kilkenny County Council will provide in so far as possible services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Consultation and Evaluation:

- Kilkenny County Council welcomes and encourages you to provide us with your views on our standard of service delivery. Kilkenny County Council welcomes comments from customers who may wish to make suggestions or comments on the services which we provide.

Monitoring and Implementation

- Kilkenny County Council is required to measure performance across a range of services. The local government sector is subject to oversight by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) and Kilkenny County Council's performance across a range of service indicators can be accessed through the reports published by NOAC available here: www.noac.ie.
- Performance Indicators are also incorporated into our Annual Report.
- The monthly Chief Executive's Report also gives more detail on the ongoing delivery of services and projects and is available on our website.

Review of Customer Action Plan:

- Kilkenny County Council will continuously review the Customer Action Plan and will consider feedback from our customers.

Complaints:

- If you are not happy with the quality of service we provide you are entitled to make a complaint to the Line Manager of that service.
- If you are not satisfied with the response received, you should contact the Complaints Officer, Corporate Affairs in writing, who will respond to your complaint in writing within twenty eight days of receipt of complaint and afford you an opportunity of an internal review to our response.
- If you remain unhappy with our response then you can refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is fair, independent, and free to use. The Ombudsman will ask you for details of your complaint and a copy of this letter/email (*our final response to your complaint*). The best way to contact the Ombudsman is by:
 - **Clicking on the 'Make A Complaint' link at www.ombudsman.ie**
 - Writing to: Office of the Ombudsman, 6 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 W773 or
 - Calling the Ombudsman on 01-639 5600 if you have any queries or if you need help making your complaint.
- All complaints will be dealt with properly, fairly and impartially.