

Customer Strategy



'A customer focused organisation providing a quality experience which places you at the heart of what we do.'

Contact us: generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk

Address: Somerset County Council,
County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY

Telephone: 0845 345 9166

This document is also available in Braille, large print, tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details. Please contact us.



RNID typetalk



INSIGHT

Understanding

ACCESS

Connecting

FOCUS

Serving

SUPPORT

Helping

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Welcome to the Somerset County Council Customer Strategy.

It is time for Change. Somerset County Council is moving in a new direction. A direction that places the customer – our residents, businesses, communities and visitors – at the heart of what we do. We want to hear your views on what we do and how we do it. We want you to help shape our services the way you want them. We want to provide the highest quality we can and deliver value for money.

That's why we are changing the way we work. We will listen, we will change. We will give you a real voice – we will hear your views, opinions, messages and suggestions and we will take action.

Our priorities as a Council will remain to look after those who can't look after themselves, to bring jobs into the county, and to give Somerset's children the best possible start in life. We will do all this, and we will do more. We will set our sights high but be efficient and effective to keep costs low. We will do this by keeping to our four point promise. We will:

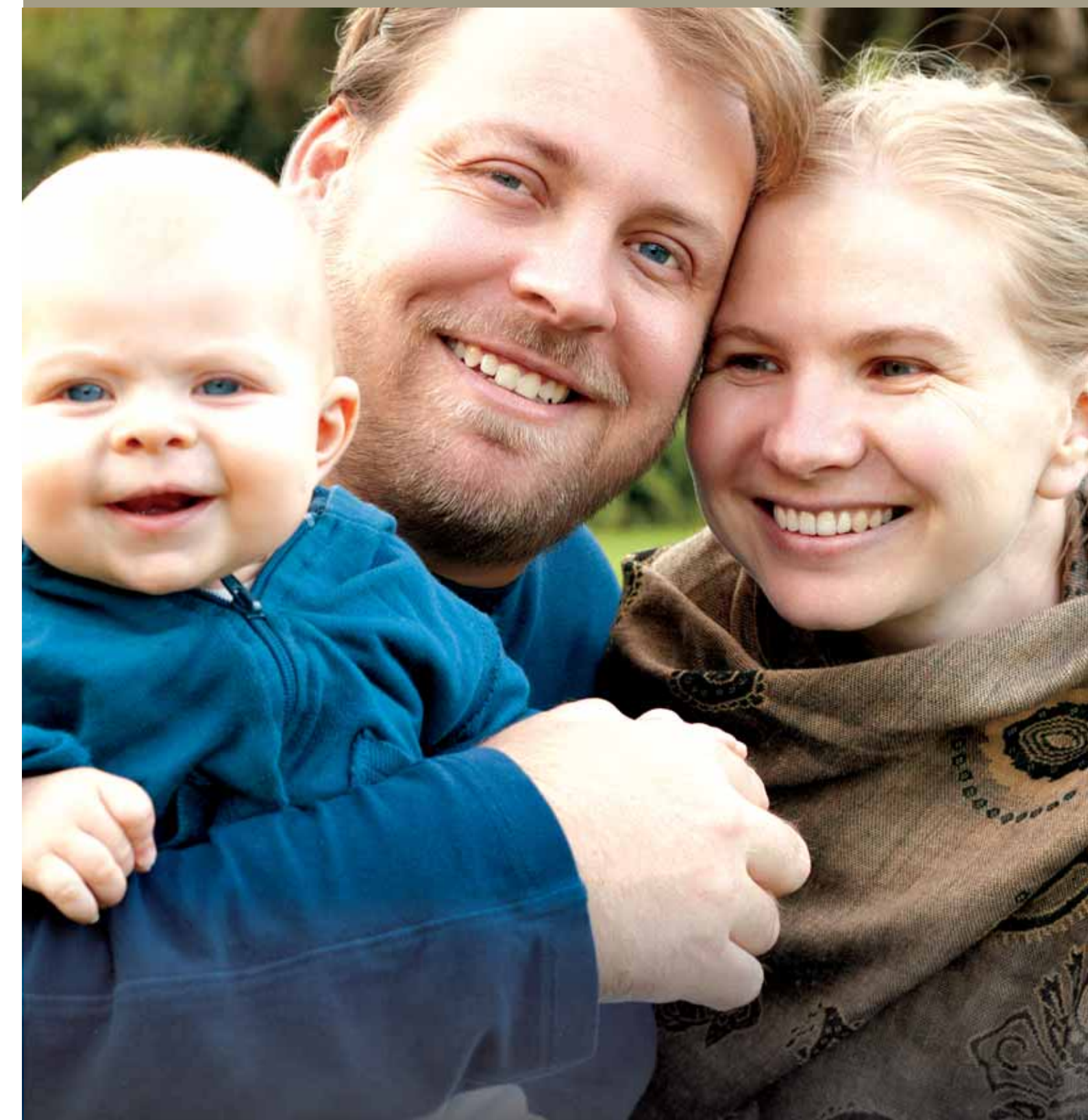
- Make it simple for you to contact us and find the information, advice or help you need
- Train our staff to provide great customer care
- Make it easier for you to use our services
- Listen and learn from you when you want change

This strategy is the start, but only the start. We want your comments and challenges. That's why every page of this strategy has a feedback area. We will constantly update the strategy to fit with what you want. This is all about you, our customers, our residents, businesses, communities and visitors. This is the first step. But it is just the first step and we want you to join us in our new direction. It is time for Change.

Ken Maddock
Leader

Sheila Wheeler
Chief Executive

Any comments - have your say
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YOU SAID:

😊	"He gave us his email address so we were personally talking to him rather than speaking to several people, which was really great and so much easier"	😊 Thanks – We are building on what we already do well and learning all the time.
	"The Council treats me with respect and is polite".	
	"I think it sounds great that the Council are trying to look at us as individuals and trying to be more customer focused".	
	"I really do think that the joint reception idea is a good one because it could deal with housing, benefits, social care advice and everything really".	

😞	"The Council is bureaucratic".	<p>We have removed large numbers of back office managers including senior managers to reduce bureaucracy.</p> <p>👍 We will update you regularly on our management headcount.</p>
😞	"The Council is overstaffed".	<p>Our workforce has reduced over the past year by close to a thousand and this will continue.</p> <p>👍 We will update you regularly on our staff headcount.</p>
😞	"The Council is inefficient".	<p>We measure our performance to make sure we deliver the best value for money.</p> <p>👍 We will publish our targets and performance measures so you can hold us to account.</p>

OUR RESPONSE:

😞	"The Council holds endless meetings".	<p>😊 We will move away from traditional work practices and fully embrace flexible working and new technology.</p> <p>👍 We will work more closely with our partners and where practical share buildings with them to cut down on meetings and free up much needed finances. We will use technology to cut back on face-to-face meetings.</p>
😞	"The Council can appear condescending, especially to vulnerable groups".	<p>😊 Looking after vulnerable people is our priority.</p> <p>👍 We will train frontline staff and their managers. We will measure satisfaction levels and publish them. We will be open and learn from criticism so that we can improve.</p>
😞	"The Council is distant, remote and not customer focused".	<p>😊 We are committed to change.</p> <p>👍 We are moving to a new type of Council, one that wants to listen to you and take action to improve – to put you at the heart of what we do.</p>
😞	"The Council provides a huge range of services but people have a low awareness of what is available".	<p>😊 We are reorganising and reviewing all our services – and making sure customers, what they want and need, is at the heart of those reviews.</p> <p>👍 We will improve our communications and technology across the Council. We will train our staff to provide great customer care.</p>

THIS IS OUR COMMITMENT, WE WILL:

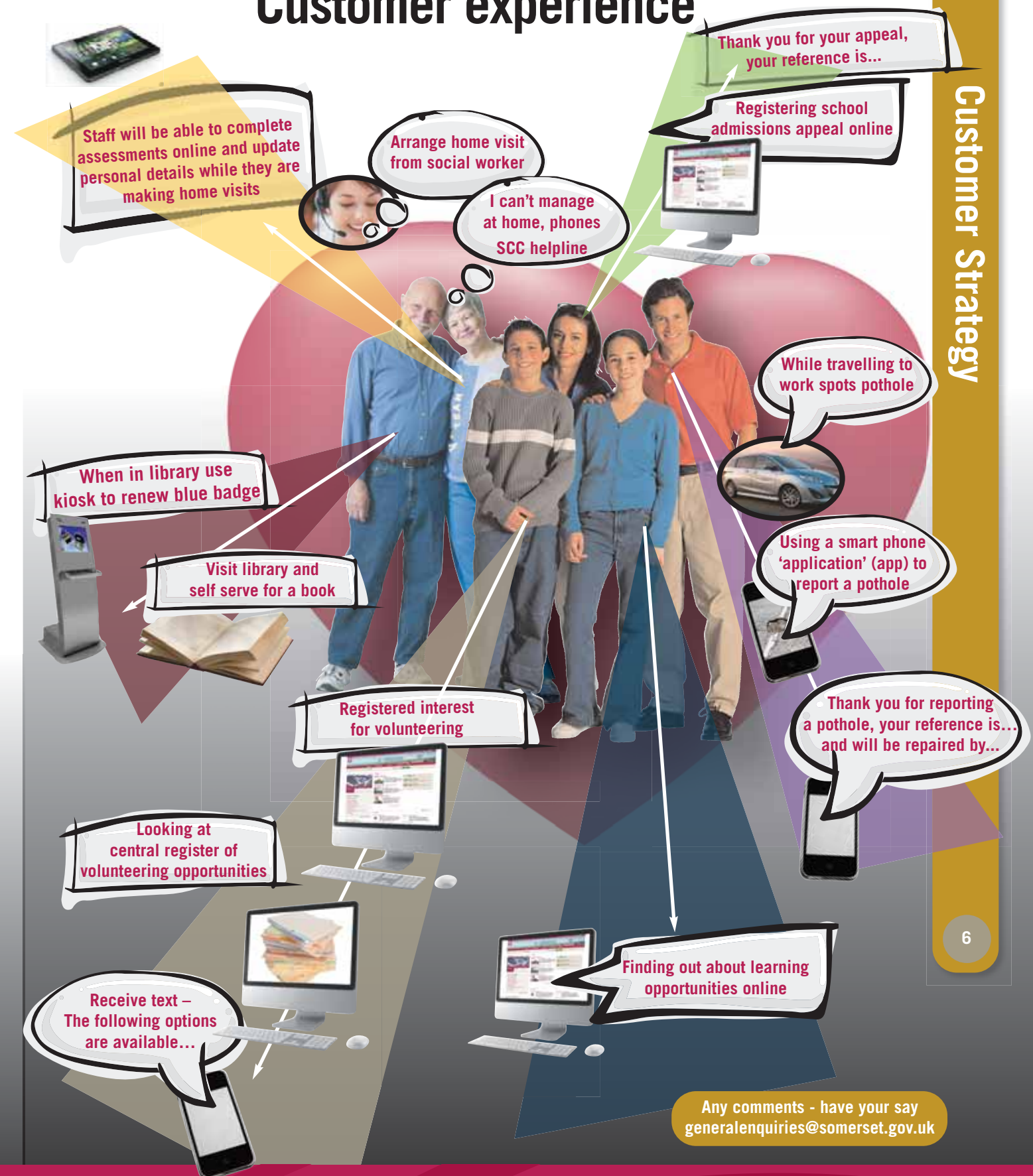
- 😊 Change the way we work – for all our staff to "think customer" before acting.
- 😊 Make it easier for you to contact us. Those who want information can find it easily and it is presented in a way that is easily understood.
- 😊 Tell you what to expect when you make contact with us.
- 😊 Improve the way we talk to vulnerable groups so they feel they are respected and are confident they can get help with they need it.
- 😊 Make it easy for you to get what you need from us or from our partners.

We need to take advantage of what technology can do for us by introducing new ways of accessing our services at a time that is convenient for you.

For example:

- ☺ Carrying out multiple tasks at a local access point, such as a library
- ☺ Accessing more services online
- ☺ Providing information in the right way

Customer experience



INSIGHT - Understanding

“

We want to work locally, we employ local people. If we got to know you better, you would get to know what we do better and we could help each other out in that respect.

”

Quote from a business representative at a focus group



INSIGHT

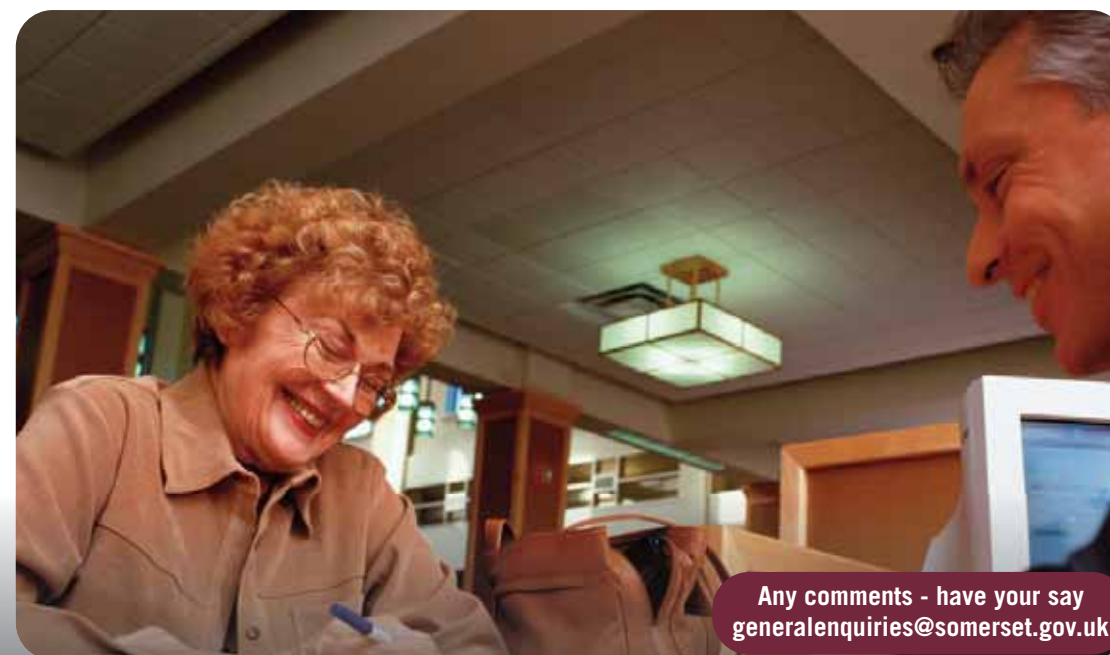
Understanding

Each year we deal with a wide range of people across Somerset. Your expectations are growing, which means we must improve our understanding of the needs and preferences of all our customers and use this to shape and change our services.

People use our services in different ways. Some services are provided for everyone such as maintaining our roads, building new schools, libraries and protecting our environment. Other customers require the help and support we provide tailored to their individual needs. Increasingly funding is provided direct to these individuals so they have more choice and control over the way it is used. We need to know more about all our customers so we can improve what we already do well.

WE WILL:

- ✓ Consult with you regularly so we can understand you and your needs better
- ✓ Work with you to improve our services
- ✓ Measure how satisfied you are with our services and publish the results
- ✓ Consult you once but use this information many times
- ✓ Improve the way we deal with your feedback, including complaints, suggestions and compliments
- ✓ Use new ways of getting feedback including tools such as social media.



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ACCESS - Connecting

“

It must be simple and accessible, the latter is most important because at the moment not everything is. So doing social media for the sake of doing it because the whole world seems to be doing it is not necessarily doing the right thing. But, where its direct text messaging to youngsters, that's perfect.

” Quote from
focus group

You contact us in a variety of ways to get hold of information, to ask for help and support and to make comments about our performance – complaints and compliments.

Some customers prefer **face to face** contact, through our offices or through staff visiting our homes or workplaces. We will make face to face contact better by working more closely with our partners to cut out duplication where we can.

Some customers prefer using the **phone**. Our dedicated call centre takes a huge number of calls. We will be more efficient and effective in managing and reacting to your calls and text messages where appropriate.

Some customers prefer going **online**, using our website or emailing us direct. We will make sure that our online areas are clear, customer friendly, easy to use and that we respond to this growing area of demand.

WE WILL:

- ✓ Use the rollout of our exciting superfast broadband project to help more of our customers get hold of the information they need and the services they want in the most convenient way.
- ✓ Improve the information we provide so it is easily found, clear and easily understood
- ✓ Work to make sure we understand all the ways you want to make contact with us and to respond to new opportunities as they are developed.
- ✓ Recognise that customers will always want to use a variety of methods to contact us. We will ensure that those who use traditional routes such as letters are not disadvantaged in any way.
- ✓ Develop local access points with our partners.



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FOCUS - Serving

“

SCC is only as good as its weakest link. Need people with the right attitude. If their (SCCs) employees think that we are customers they would probably act slightly differently to if they saw us as just residents.

”

Quote from focus group



We want to make sure that we focus on you in everything we do. All our staff will be encouraged to “think customer” before acting. We will train staff to understand how to deliver great customer care. Many of our staff are brilliant at this – and where we have excellence in one area, we want to share it and roll it out to other areas. We are committed to treat people fairly, to respect privacy and dignity and to pay attention to people who have special needs. We want to make sure this becomes even more part of our culture and that all staff are clear about what is expected of them.

WE WILL:

- ✓ Help our county councillors to represent all our customers and communities
- ✓ Train our staff to help you more and look for ways to improve
- ✓ Listen to your views, measure and publish how satisfied customers are with our staff and services
- ✓ Make sure all our communications are easily found, clear and easily understood
- ✓ Listen to how you would like us to communicate with you
- ✓ Make sure we are clear about what you can expect from us



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SUPPORT - Helping

“

Look, we just want to see an efficient county council. Full stop. Don't talk in acronyms and don't talk about departments, because I don't know how many departments there are in County Hall and I have no idea what they are called.

”

Quote from focus group



We are working more and more closely with partners across the county. Where this works well it is a great help to our customers. Sometimes it can be confusing for you when you deal with a number of different agencies. We will work to improve this. We will develop a culture where, when you make contact with us, we will help you even if your enquiry doesn't relate to our Council. We are calling this our "no wrong door" policy. It shouldn't matter who takes your enquiry, the important thing is that you get the help you need as quickly as possible.

Where we work with partners to provide help and support, we will be clear about this with you. We will set out clearly how we will share customers' information with our partners. We want you to be confident that we are protecting privacy but using important information effectively to get you the help you need.

WE WILL:

- ✓ Provide clarity for you through a single approach to Customer Services
- ✓ Work with partners to make it as convenient as we can for you to get the help and support you need
- ✓ Keep your personal information secure
- ✓ Make it easier for customers to influence local decisions



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