Customer First measures and targets

1. Introduction

1.1 Customer First measures and targets are important for our customers, potential customers, residents, employees and management of the council. They help to define what a customer can expect and to remind management and employees of the challenge and obligations that they face.

1.2 Customer service needs to be owned and driven at a corporate level to ensure that the customer's experience is consistently good across all services and access channels. Customer service is more than a website and a contact centre. It is about how the organisation operates and more importantly, how it views, understands and responds to its customers, so that it can better anticipate and plan the delivery of services around them.

1.3 At present we do not measure customer satisfaction effectively across the council and only measure and report on a fraction of the main elements of the key drivers of satisfaction. This results in no added value to our customers and residents and missed opportunities to improve our business efficiency and effectiveness.

1.4 However setting measures and targets is of no use if performance against them cannot be measured as well as the cost of data collection needs to be balanced against the ideal service definition.

1.5 We also need to communicate performance against our published standards to our customers and employees on a timely basis.

Anonymous Quote

"You don't hear things that are bad about your company unless you ask. It is easy to hear glad tidings but you have to scratch to get the bad news"
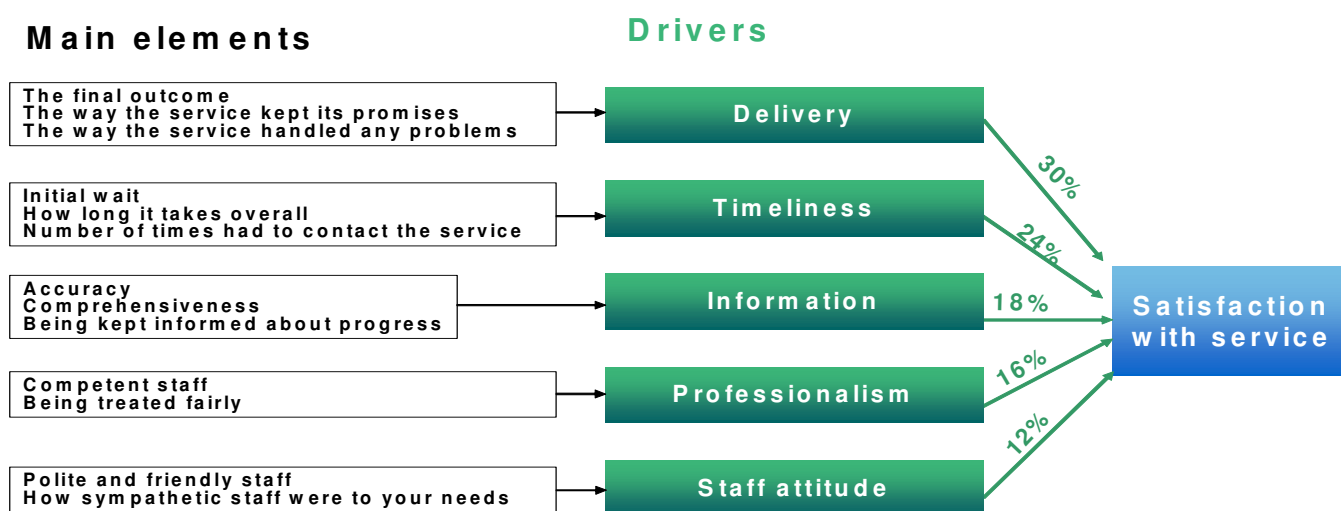
2. Defining Customer First measures and targets

2.1 Each measure needs to be defined precisely before they can be considered as a true service measure. To do this it is important to understand what elements are most important in determining customer satisfaction and detailed research has been conducted to identify the key drivers of satisfaction across public services.

2.2 Detailed research conducted by Mori, Institute of Customer Services, BSI Code of Practice for Customer Service amongst others have all identified a powerful set of five factors that drive satisfaction across public services. In order of impact, they are:

1. **Delivery** - the service delivers the *outcome* it promised and manages to deal with any *problems* that may arise.

2. **Timeliness** – the service responds *immediately* to the initial customer contact and deals with the issue at the heart of it *quickly* and without *passing* it on between staff.

3. **Professionalism** – staff are *competent* and treat customers *fairly.*

4. **Information** - the information given out to customers is *accurate* and *comprehensive* and they are kept informed about *progress.*

5. **Staff attitude** - staff are *friendly, polite* and s*ympathetic* to customers' needs

2.3 Additional drivers are – **physical environment** and **access**

Key drivers of satisfaction

Main elements

Drivers

The final outcome / The way the service kept its promises / The way the service handled any problems	Delivery
Initial wait / How long it takes overall / Number of times had to contact the service	Timeliness
Accuracy / Comprehensiveness / Being kept informed about progress	Information
Competent staff / Being treated fairly	Professionalism
Polite and friendly staff / How sympathetic staff were to your needs	Staff attitude

30%
24%
18%
16%
12%

Satisfaction with service

This model explains 67% of the variation in satisfaction

Source: MORI

2.4 Further research was conducted through our Talkabout panel in February 2008 in order to understand what is important to local residents.
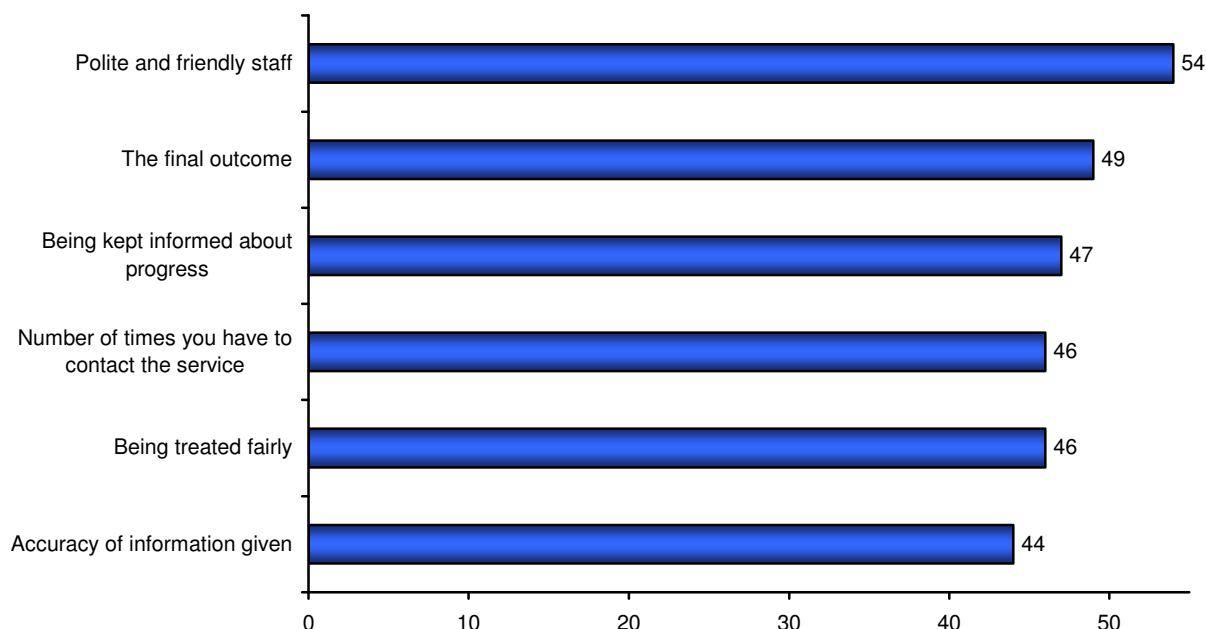
2.5 A total of 1492 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 66%. A sample of this size is accurate to + / - 3% at a 95% confidence level.   The main aim was to assess: -
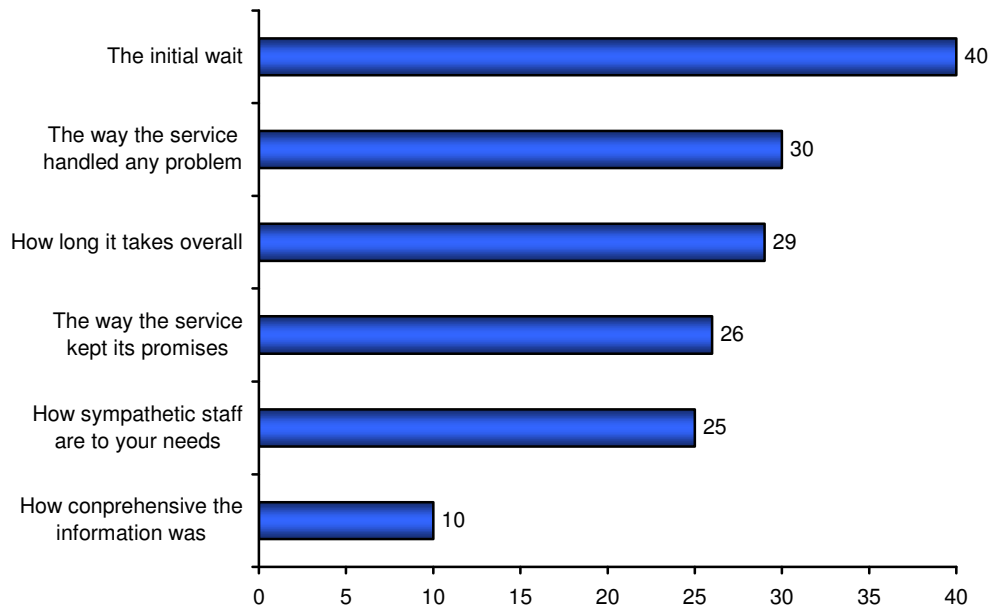
- which factors are important to residents when contacting the council
- opinions of how the council should measures or publicise the handling of different aspects of complaints
- the maximum time residents would expect to wait for service in a council reception
- the maximum rings residents would expect to hear when phoning the council
- the maximum time residents would expect to wait for an outcome of a complaint they had raised with the council

2.6 The results showed: -

- The factor of most importance when contacting the council with a complaint, comment or suggestion is how polite and friendly staff are (54%). Of least importance to panellists was how comprehensive the information was, with one in ten (10%) saying this.
- 92% of respondents agreed that the council should measure how many times a person had to contact the council before the problem was resolved, which was the highest satisfaction level of all the statements related to complaints.
- There was least agreement with the statement that the council should publicise how it performs against its performance targets (68%). Although this statement received the least satisfaction, less than one in ten (8%) respondents actually disagreed.
- When asked how long panellists would expect to wait in a council reception nearly two-fifths (39%) of respondents would expect to wait a maximum of five minutes. A further 37% would expect to wait no longer than ten minutes. 5% of respondents are not prepared to wait.
- Around three-fifths (62%) of panellists would expect to hear five to ten rings before their call was answered, when phoning the council. Only 1% would expect to hear over twenty rings before their call was answered.
- Panellists were asked how long they would expect to wait for the decision or outcome of a complaint they raised with the council. Just under a third (30%) would expect to wait ten days. 28% said they would expect to wait under ten days, with 26% they would wait fifteen days.

2.7 Factors of most importance when contacting the council

The initial wait — 40
The way the service handled any problem — 30
How long it takes overall — 29
The way the service kept its promises — 26
How sympathetic staff are to your needs — 25
How conprehensive the information was — 10

3. External Drivers

3.1 A key delivery mechanism of Transformational Government and a central recommendation of the Varney Report (recommendation 24) was to establish the Contact Council which has responsibility for customer contact across government.

3.2 In the mid- to long- term the Contact Council will focus on setting and implementing the strategy for delivering modern customer contact for public services. In the short term the Contact Council is concentrating on implementing the Varney recommendations and establishing best practice performance indicators in contact centres.

3.3 This set of performance indicators (known as the Performance Management Framework or PMF) was compiled with input from departments, agencies, local authorities and the police and published in May 2007.

3.4 A further recommendation – number 27 – is *"to establish best practice performance indicators and benchmarks in public sector', this document sets out a set of performance indicators for use in all publicly funded contact centres".*

4. Objectives

4.1 The key objectives of establishing revised Customer First measure and targets across the council are to: -

- Make performance measurement more consistent and comparable across the council;
- Identify areas of excellence and opportunities to share good practice and areas to target additional focus;

- Improve senior level visibility of customer service performance and to improve decision making;
- Focus performance improvement in the areas most in need;
- Establish peer awareness of performance and performance trends;
- Provide a common language for experience sharing and learning amongst council managers;
- Improve understanding of cost to serve and drive better value for money
- Align Customer First to the Contact Council PMF requirements and to help achieve accreditation to a customer service excellence award
- To measure customer satisfaction effectively across the council.

5. Existing Customer First measures and targets

- 95% of letters dealt with within 10 days

- 100% of customers seen within 10 minutes

- 100% of those customers who need further help seen within 10 minutes

- 95% of calls answered within 20 seconds

- 95% of stage 2 complaints dealt with within 10 days

- 95% of stage 3 complaints dealt with within 10 days

6. Proposed Customer First measures and targets

6.1 In order to propose robust, challenging but achievable targets in this area further analysis and modelling work needs to take place to identify

    a.   What is desirable set of targets
    b.   What we would need to do to achieve these targets
    c.   What customers think of the targets
    d.   Whether these targets should be generic or service specific

6. 2 The proposed measures below are taken from our work on phase 1 of easy@york and best practice in other authorities

Customer Contacts

- Total number of contacts across all channels across the council
- Total number of contacts via each channel
  - Face to face
  - Phone
  - Email
  - Web
  - Letter
- Total % of contacts assessed as avoidable

Telephone Contact

- Number of calls received – total and by process

- Number of calls resolved at first point of contact
- Number of calls assessed as avoidable
- % of calls resolved at first point of contact
- % of calls assessed as avoidable
- Number of calls abandoned
- % of calls abandoned
- Average speed of answer
- Service Level %
- Satisfaction rating of the service
- Number of calls transferred to Council wide (signpost)

Face to Face Contact

- Number of customers – total and by process
- Number of customer requests resolved at first point of contact
- Number of customer requests assessed as avoidable
- % of requests resolved at first point of contact
- % of requests assessed as avoidable
- Number of customers visiting
- Average waiting times
- Average transaction times
- Number of customers making multiple requests
- Satisfaction rating of the service.

Web Site and Self Service Facilities

- Number of transactions - total and by process
- Number of transactions resolved at first point of contact
- Number of transactions assessed as avoidable
- % of transactions resolved at first point of contact
- % of transactions assessed as avoidable
- number of transactions for multiple requests
- Satisfaction rating of the service

Cost Comparator / Cost Benefit Analysis

- Service costs
- Staffing costs
- IT investment
- Premises / Asset costs
- Measures of Success

Customer satisfaction/experience

- Percentage of contacts made to the Council customer contact centre that are dealt with at the first point of contact
- Reduction in average waiting time for calls to be answered
- Reduction in Abandoned call rate
- Increasing number of service transactions on the Council's website
- Number of visitors to the Council's website
- Percentage of Council Services providing Electronic Service Delivery
- Number of services delivered by fully interactive electronic government

- Annual percentage satisfaction in the customer survey with contacting the Council and using the council's website
- Reduction in the number of people needing to contact the council by visiting an office or telephoning (where the cause it attributed to the Easy Programme/ Customer Strategy e.g. separate process have been joined up therefore reducing the need for a form or additional contact or providing web or telephone process reduces office visits)

<u>Efficiency benefits</u>

- Annual audit of savings in process time and economies of scale by modernising customer services – see above
- Reduction in office capacity required due to changes in working practices e.g. increased use of mobile working, home working