

Customer charter

Developing Our Customer Charter

Throughout 2023 and 2024, we tested out the aims of our vision in focus groups and an extensive process review. This has shaped the aims and objectives for how we will operate and our approach to customer contact.

The findings from the focus groups (205 participants) included that communication on what is happening and by when was the clear request. This has been built into [our framework](#) that will help us make changes in the future.

Our customer charter

We are committed to providing a consistently excellent customer experience by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do. Our charter sets out our commitment to you and what we aim to deliver.

The Customer Charter applies to all staff, Elected Representatives, and contractors in all engagement with internal (Highland Council) and external customers (service users, stakeholders, advocates, and organisations)

For young people (when in an education setting) please see [Promoting Positive Relationships](#) (2021)

We will play our part by:

- we will work on actioning and responding to your request, the first time you contact us whenever this is possible and ensuring you know what happens next and by when.
- we will offer a variety of ways to access our services that reflect how customers like to contact us.
- providing a quicker and easier online experience
- taking your information and looking after it
- aiming to find a satisfactory solution and having a 'can-do' attitude within our available resources
- avoiding jargon and making things understandable
- responding to your contact within our published timescales

To help us, we would like you to play your part by:

- accessing our services by the available routes or methods as published by us
- acknowledging we may need to pass on your request (to other Council staff or services) so we can deal with it.

- recognising that we will not be able to meet every need.
- being aware of our financial constraints
- providing us with the information that we need to help you, including answering questions and providing further information if required.
- asking us to explain things you are not sure of
- keeping any appointments that you have with us and notifying us if you are unable to attend.

We will be respectful by:

- Treating you politely, fairly, and respectfully, with equality, diversity, and your well-being central to everything we do
- being, helpful and open with you
- listening to you and your needs
- explaining decisions and outcomes clearly
- respecting your rights to privacy and confidentiality
- ensuring our information is in a format that can be easily accessed and understood.

To help us, we would like you to:

- treat us politely, respectfully, in line with our Customer Relationship Policy (link to be added once ready)
- respect that no filming/recording within council premises or of employees is permitted without appropriate permission.
- respect that we have a zero-tolerance approach to abuse:
- the safety and well-being of our staff is a priority, and they have the right to do their jobs without being abused.
- we understand on occasion you may disagree with a decision. We also understand you may be experiencing vulnerability. However, we have a duty of care to protect our staff, and anyone present.
- if you are aggressive, abusive, or behave violently or are perceived to be threatening harm towards a member of our staff we will decide what action to take, and this may include involving the Police.

We will constantly try to improve by:

- encouraging you to give feedback on our services, using the Council's website, phoneline(s), response forms, or through a member of staff

- putting you at the centre when we design services to make sure, they meet customer needs.
- publishing our performance to show how we are doing.
- handling any complaints with professionalism and learning lessons if we fall short of our standards (link to be added once ready)

To help us, we would like you to:

- offer us ideas to help us improve what we do.
- let us know if we fall short of our standards and you wish to [complain by using our complaints form](#).
- let us know if you have received outstanding service using our [compliments form](#)