



# Customer Access Strategy 2020



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
KENSINGTON  
AND CHELSEA

# If you live or work in this borough, or visit some of the many shops, leisure and cultural venues we host, then you are our customer.

People contact their local Council at some of the most important points in their lives – to register a birth or a death, to get married, to register for a local school. The Council is the only place to get your parking permit or Blue Badge, to organise essential financial support such as housing benefit, to register so that you can vote and ensure your waste is collected regularly.

It is the place where your elected representatives organise local resources to make sure they work for the people who live and work here through services such as planning, trading standards, parking, education, social care and many others.

## Contact with the Council is unavoidable; but it shouldn't be difficult.

We want you to find contacting the Council easy, helpful and friendly. We have all experienced bad customer service: being on hold for what feels like hours waiting for your call to be answered;

having to speak to several different people for a simple query or request; receiving letters that don't clearly tell you what you need to know; completing lengthy and unclear online forms only to find you have to call or visit with additional information; having to chase someone repeatedly to do something they said they would do; or simply dealing with someone who was clearly not genuinely interested in your circumstances.

These are not the experiences we want for our customers.

- We want our customers to find it easy to get whatever service they need from the Council.
- We want people to put down the phone or leave the building after speaking to us and feel reassured and confident that their needs have been understood, that action will be taken promptly and that their time has been well spent.
- We want them to click 'submit' on an online form or application and think, 'that was easy'.

The aim of this Strategy is to make sure that everyone's day to day experience of contacting the Council is a positive one. It is to make sure that the Council is making people's lives easier.

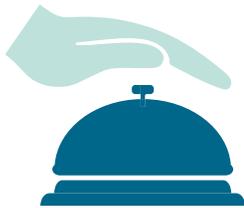
## Facts and Figures:



We receive around  
**600,000**  
phone calls to our  
contact centres  
each year in  
addition to the  
many calls that  
are dealt with by  
individual services.



The Council  
spends around  
**£3.6m**  
each year to make  
sure these calls and  
visits are answered  
and responded to.



Around  
**100,000**  
people visit our  
Contact Service  
Centre at  
Kensington Town  
Hall each year.



There are around  
**15,000**  
businesses in the  
borough.



We provide and  
maintain housing  
for around  
**9,500**  
households.



We have an  
important role  
in the lives of  
the borough's  
**13,000**  
households  
in social  
housing and  
**2,000**  
households  
in temporary  
accommodation.

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## People contact the Council for a wide range of different reasons.



**Ms Daswani is opening a new cafe in North Kensington.**

She is applying to the Council for the licences she needs, parking permits for her delivery vehicles and setting up her business rates account and payment scheme.

She's also getting advice on food safety and hygiene ready for the planned inspection of her premises.



## Red Shed Limited are planning consultants.

They are acting for their client in Chelsea who is seeking permission from the Council to carry out extensive refurbishment works

on their new home, including the creation of a basement beneath the property and rear extension.



## Mr Bashir lives in West Sussex but his elderly parents live in Earls Court.

His father has been diagnosed with dementia and he is contacting the Council to arrange for some respite care to help his mother.

He is also applying for a Blue Badge so that it is easier for them to get out and about and remain independent.



**The Jasper family have a seven-year-old son, Alfie, who has been diagnosed with autism.**

They are currently working with the Council's Special Educational Needs team to complete an Educational Health and Care Plan which will help determine which educational

setting will best suit his needs. The team will help them apply to the right school and settle in, and make sure that he gets any travel support he might need.



**Mr Edomi is a Council tenant and lives in Chelsea.**

His heating has stopped working and he has no hot water.

He needs the Council to repair this as quickly as possible.

Many of our customers want to complete their task online without having to speak to anyone. What really matters in these cases is that we have modern, intuitive online services that can be used any time of the day or night.

The ability to do straightforward tasks online such as renew a parking permit, or make an application for a licence will be a basic expectation and the most convenient way for some people to get what they need. We all do this in other aspects of our lives, and people expect the same from the Council.

This is not only a matter of customer convenience. It will come as no surprise that providing a service online is a cheaper option; research indicates that the difference in cost between online, telephone and face-to-face contact is significant. Face-to-face contact costs three times more than telephone contact and 57 times more than online.

**As the guardian of public resources, it is important that we make sure that this less costly way of accessing services is widely and easily available to those who want to use it.**

However, as in the examples opposite and on pages four and five show, people also contact us about extremely personal and sometimes sensitive arrangements that are much more than transactional.

At such times, when customers really need a conversation with the Council, this exchange should not add to the challenges they are facing but provide relief from them.

It is essential that they can speak to someone who understands their circumstances and can organise the right support quickly, but also with genuine care and consideration.

We will dedicate time and effort into these conversations, while improving our systems and delivering training to our staff to make sure everyone gets the service they need and can rightly expect.

**Our aim is to provide the right type of contact to people at the right time and make sure they get the right result.**

# What our customers expect

After the Grenfell tragedy, the Council commissioned the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) to conduct an independent review of the Council's governance and the way it makes decisions. In March 2018 the CfPS published the resulting report, Change at the Council. This included a series of recommendations including one that the Council adopted 12 principles for good governance.

## The first of these is an important driver for this strategy: **Connect With Residents.**

In the months that followed, residents worked with us to develop our Dedicated Service for the bereaved and survivors from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. This has taught us much about how services can be organised and designed so that they provide more comprehensive support and break down silos. From this, we've learned potential value that can be created through the development of close, continuous, and reflective engagement with the public we serve.

Over 2018 and 2019 the Council also spoke to residents across the borough to find out what is important to them and where we must improve.

### **Drawing on this learning, this is what we believe our customers expect from us:**

- To feel like a customer — their 'customer experience' is prioritised, their opinion valued and their input and response appreciated
- To be treated with genuine respect and kindness in any interaction with the Council
- That interaction with the Council is a positive and compassionate experience
- Not to be made to feel inferior because of the professional expertise of an officer
- For their wider needs and circumstances to be understood and to be taken into account
- To be confident that action will be taken promptly
- Services are available online at all times
- Services are available by phone and face-to-face Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm
- Emergency out-of-hours services are available at all times
- Details on the progress and outcome of requests are readily available
- Information provided is correct, relevant, easily found, and accessible
- Social media is a two-way communication platform
- Resolution at first point of contact – no handoffs, and no need to chase
- To be signposted to other solutions where the Council can't provide what's needed
- To be safe when accessing Council services (during the Covid-19 pandemic)

# Our objectives

Our strategy is built around the following six objectives:

- **Keep residents safe (during the Covid-19 pandemic)**

We will make sure that essential Council services can be accessed safely during the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that we will avoid, wherever possible, the need for face-to-face contact for as long as the pandemic continues. We will improve and expand the ability for customers to access services online and over the phone and will provide targeted support for those customers who do not have digital access.

- **Value customers and treat them with respect and dignity; listen to what they want and take time to understand what they need**

We will make sure – by improving our systems and training programmes – that anyone contacting the Council feels that they have had a positive experience. This means that they will feel reassured that their circumstances have been understood and taken into account, confident that action will be taken, and content that they have been treated with good customer care. We will work with customers to develop service standards that reflect this and against which we can be held to account. Our emphasis will be on ensuring that ‘as an organisation’ we value contact with our customers as an end in itself and not simply as a mechanistic transaction.

- **Prioritise the people who use our services over convenient organisational practice**

We will develop our systems and processes so that customers do not need to speak to several different teams or officers to have straightforward queries or service requests resolved. We want to minimise the effort required of customers to access services and make it easy to track progress on existing requests and get information without having to repeatedly contact us unnecessarily.

- **Make as many services as possible available online, while ensuring that all ways of contacting the Council provide an equally good experience**

We will improve our systems and simplify our business processes to ensure that wherever feasible services can be accessed online.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a dramatic effect on all our residents in many ways and it is clear that the ability to access and use technology will undoubtedly continue to play a role in how well we manage to live safely and well during this crisis and potentially beyond. With social distancing a requirement, technology has taken on a more prominent role in our lives.

Research by the Lloyds Banking Group in 2020 found that 80 per cent of respondents said that technology had been a vital support to them since the start of the pandemic, with over a third stating that they had increased their use of technology to help with their mental health and wellbeing.

While we want to improve the ability for our customers to access services online, we continue to value and recognise the importance to our residents of other means of contacting the Council. Our services will continue to be available for people to access face-to-face or over the telephone.

Our research shows that older residents are far less likely to have access to, or the skills to use, online tools. Amongst all groups, but more so amongst those over 65, there is a significant proportion of residents who do not have online access and do not want it. It also tells us that people with a disability are almost twice as likely as those without a disability to not use online services. For many this was related to their disability.

We will ensure that you can continue to contact the Council in whatever way works best for you.

- **Resolve issues at the first point of contact; where we can't signpost to someone who can**

We will improve our systems and simplify our business processes to ensure that, wherever possible, they can be resolved during the first contact with the Council. Where the Council cannot provide a resolution, we will work with our partners to ensure we are able to direct customers to alternative, more appropriate sources of support.

Working to avoid our customers having to contact us repeatedly or speak to several people about a single issue, will make their lives easier. But it also has a second advantage: it will reduce the cost of these services. Repeated calls about the same issue and duplicated work costs unnecessary time and money and we want to make sure that Council resources are spent efficiently and where they have the best possible impact.

- **Engage customers in improvement, learn from feedback and monitor our performance**

This strategy is the start of our journey to improvement, but by no means the end. We will actively seek feedback from customers to constantly learn what works well and what doesn't and adapt and improve our services (and our strategy) accordingly.

Where we do make changes to our processes, we will involve customers from the outset to ensure improvement is driven by their experience. We will routinely capture, report on and analyse our performance data.

**The following pages set out in more detail the actions we will take to achieve these objectives.**

**Objective:** Keep customers safe  
(during Covid-19)



How	Actions Required
Provide alternatives to face-to-face contact wherever possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review all pre-existing face-to-face services and determine where face-to-face is necessary/adds real value.</li> <li>● Establish locations throughout the borough for safe face-to-face contact where this is required.</li> <li>● Implement appropriate arrangements (screens, PPE, social distancing) in suitable locations for face-to-face contact.</li> <li>● Provide suitable payment methods for telephone/online and through whatever outlets are available.</li> </ul>
Improve and expand the online offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish priority (high demand/low complexity) services for automation online.</li> <li>● Build on and learn from adaptations successfully made during lockdown.</li> <li>● Promote existing online services with residents.</li> </ul>
Improve and expand the telephone offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proactively use phones for outreach and welfare support for our vulnerable residents.</li> <li>● Build on and learn from adaptations successfully made during lockdown.</li> <li>● Facilitate uptake of online services to release capacity for telephone contact for those who rely on it.</li> <li>● Develop a single point of contact for businesses requiring specific support due to Covid-19.</li> </ul>
Provide targeted support for those without digital access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide online access for those without it (in libraries, for example).</li> <li>● Ensure those without telephone access can reach key services through a phone point outside the Customer Service Centre.</li> <li>● Initiate proactive and targeted telephone outreach for those who can't get online.</li> <li>● Develop infrastructure (fibre networks) to improve borough-wide access.</li> <li>● Provide devices in key community settings (e.g. care homes).</li> <li>● Identify suitable online classes and training for residents.</li> <li>● Ensure staff have the skills to help customers to use digital tools.</li> </ul>

**Objective:** Value customers and treat them with respect, and dignity; listen to what they want and take time to understand what they need



How	Actions Required
<p>Emphasise the value and importance of customers in any contact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop and deliver a training programme for contact officers that incorporates the following skills:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relationship building and maintenance</li> <li>○ Empathy and emotional intelligence</li> <li>○ Compassion</li> <li>○ Humility</li> <li>○ Overcoming unconscious bias</li> <li>○ Cultural competence</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Introduce quality assurance mechanisms to measure and monitor these.</li> <li>● Review and refine service standards and implement across all touch points and involve both customers and staff in this to ensure they reflect what works best for the people who use them.</li> </ul>
<p>Value contact as an end in itself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support contact officers (by providing them effective tools and training) to focus on the individual resident and their needs, and to personalise the Council's service to meet them.</li> <li>● Balance performance measures so that they capture and measure the quality of contact and not just the service outcome and efficiency.</li> </ul>
<p>Demonstrate accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monitor and ensure service standards are met routinely to demonstrate that meeting customer expectations and timescales is a priority.</li> <li>● Provide clear timescales and expectations on service responses.</li> <li>● Proactively keep customers informed of progress and delays.</li> <li>● Follow up promptly and proactively when people are not happy with the service they've received.</li> </ul>
<p>Get to know customers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support contact officers to take a genuine interest in each individual and their specific circumstances and needs.</li> <li>● Ensure sufficient time is made available to hold meaningful conversations with customers.</li> <li>● Train contact officers in Active Listening techniques.</li> </ul>

How	Actions Required
Create a more unified view of our customers across services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce a corporate contact management IT system (CRM) that is used across all customer facing services and integrated with back office systems (including the Gazetteer to create a better understanding of people's needs).</li> </ul>
Develop a holistic service, where multiple needs can be identified and responded to in a single contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop scripts and workflows in CRM that support officers to identify other Council services and proactively discuss them with anyone in contact with us.</li> <li>● Ensure contact officers have a solid understanding of different services/ teams across the Council.</li> </ul>

**Objective:** Prioritise the people who use our services over convenient organisational practice



How	Actions Required
Use customer journey mapping to redesign end-to-end processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Process redesign to be undertaken for each service in scope (beginning with customer journey mapping and customer insight).</li> <li>● Adapt business processes to suit the people who use our services, irrespective of organisational structures.</li> <li>● Train contact officers in Active Listening techniques.</li> </ul>
Reduce the need for people to be handed over to other officers for a request to be resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrate a corporate contact management IT system (CRM) with back office systems to ensure processes are automated end-to-end and remove the need for manual intervention.</li> <li>● Ensure integration of processes is unconstrained by organisational structure.</li> <li>● Introduce scripts and workflow alongside CRM to build automated, simplified end-to-end processes that can be used online and in the contact centre (allowing for greater depth of resolution at first point of contact).</li> <li>● Explore contact centre consolidation where it would improve people's experience.</li> <li>● Develop a single comprehensive support service for businesses.</li> </ul>

How	Actions Required
Establish a customer experience officer group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify representatives to ensure all relevant services are involved.</li> <li>● Agree terms of reference.</li> <li>● Establish how to include partner representatives to improve understanding of need and opportunities for collaboration.</li> </ul>
Reduce avoidable contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review all written communication and ensure it is clear.</li> <li>● Review all web content and ensure it's clear and all necessary information is provided.</li> <li>● Allow people to track progress of their ongoing requests.</li> <li>● Improve the tools and process for publishing information on our website so information is up to date.</li> <li>● Implement a corporate CRM that allows avoidable contact to be identified routinely.</li> <li>● Streamline and simplify forms and application/access processes.</li> <li>● Ensure outbound communication provides clear access routes to support/resolution of issues.</li> <li>● Review and improve 'Tell Us Once' arrangements.</li> <li>● Explore the use of Identity Assurance tools to reduce the need for document submission by customers.</li> </ul>
Minimise the effort required for people to apply for/receive services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Streamline and simplify forms and application/access processes.</li> <li>● Ensure outbound communication provides clear access routes to support/resolution of issues.</li> <li>● Review and improve 'Tell Us Once' arrangements.</li> <li>● Explore the use of Identity Assurance tools to reduce the need for document submission by customers.</li> </ul>

**Objective:** Make as many services as possible available online, while ensuring that all ways of contacting the Council provide an equally good experience



How	Actions Required
Adopt an 'online by default' approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Start with an understanding that all services will be available online; only services that don't lend themselves to automation (low volume, high complexity, improved through human contact) will be excluded.</li> <li>● Map current online availability to identify gaps in provision.</li> <li>● Analyse available data to identify high volume, low complexity transactions which will be prioritised for automation.</li> </ul>
Simplify processes/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simplify our business processes and charges to ensure they can be automated.</li> </ul>
Integrate IT systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrate CRM with back office systems to allow for end-to-end automation.</li> </ul>
Align the IT Strategy and Customer Access Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a clear set of requirements (with early engagement from IT Services) that can be embedded within, and delivered through, the Council's IT strategy/implementation plan.</li> </ul>
Support digital inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to offer assistance in libraries and other access points to access online services.</li> </ul>
Provide customers with a personalised view of their transactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review the current account functionality for suitability both in terms of technical platform and design (with an eye to principles such as 'single sign on', back office integration, nominated access, security levels etc).</li> <li>● Identify and implement any necessary improvements/amendments to ensure it allows people to easily access their transactions with the Council in a single, secure place.</li> </ul>

**Objective:** Resolve issues at the first point of contact; where we can't, signpost to someone who can



How	Actions Required
Standardise end-to-end processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Simplify our business processes (through business process reengineering in line with customer journey mapping) so that more services can be resolved at the first point of contact by the contact centre or online.</li> <li>● Introduce scripts and workflow alongside CRM to build automated, simplified end-to-end processes that can be used online and in the contact centre.</li> </ul>
Reduce the need for people to be handed over to other officers for a request to be resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrate a standard corporate CRM with back office systems to ensure processes are automated end-to-end and remove the need for manual intervention.</li> <li>● Ensure integration of processes is unconstrained by organisational structure.</li> <li>● Introduce scripts and workflow alongside CRM to build automated, simplified end-to-end processes that can be used online and in the contact centre (allowing for greater depth of resolution at first point of contact).</li> <li>● Map existing contact points and explore contact centre consolidation where it would improve the customer experience.</li> <li>● Develop a single comprehensive support service for businesses.</li> </ul>
Clarify the role of social media as a channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a social media policy to ensure there is consistency across all accounts across the organisation.</li> <li>● Where concerns or issues are raised on social media channels, signpost people to the relevant contact point for resolution.</li> <li>● Introduce scripts and training to enable customer contact staff to engage with customers effectively via social media.</li> </ul>
Signpost to other services where the Council cannot provide what's needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop wider contact strategies with partner agencies.</li> </ul>

**Objective:** Engage customers in improvement, learn from feedback and monitor our performance



How	Actions Required
Engage customers in the review of each process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use Arnstein’s principles (Charter for Public Participation &amp; Council Community Engagement Toolkit) to determine the level of engagement appropriate for each individual service/review.</li> <li>● Establish at the outset any ‘red lines’ for each review/service.</li> <li>● Determine which stakeholders need to be engaged and how best to achieve this.</li> <li>● Use customer journey mapping and user-led design.</li> </ul>
Seek and use feedback from the people who use our services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Build mechanisms for feedback into each channel to proactively and routinely seek feedback from people who use our services.</li> <li>● Ensure staff with direct contact with customers (e.g. contact centre) have mechanisms to quickly and easily escalate feedback from them.</li> <li>● Ensure this is regularly analysed by a newly formed Customer Experience Officer Group with responsibility for ensuring corresponding action is taken.</li> <li>● Map what customer feedback/insight exists, identify gaps and establish arrangements to address these.</li> </ul>
Improve data capture and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce CRM and system integration to ensure data is available on end-to-end processes.</li> <li>● Actively monitor outcomes of service requests to establish trends and inform improvement activities.</li> </ul>
Engage local people in the continued development of the strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collate feedback through existing arrangements (complaints, website feedback, surveys etc).</li> <li>● Identify existing mechanisms (focus groups, interest groups, advocacy groups etc) for additional data gathering.</li> <li>● Work with the Dedicated Service to learn from co-production of services that has already taken place.</li> </ul>
Support staff to convey customer feedback and insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proactively involve staff with direct contact with customers to identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>● Involve staff with direct contact with customers and knowledge of relevant processes in improvement.</li> </ul>

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# Notes

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## English

Information from this document can be made available in alternative formats and in different languages. If you require further assistance please use the contact details below.

## Arabic

يمكن توفير المعلومات التي وردت في هذا المستند بصيغ بديلة ولغات أخرى. إذا كنت في حاجة إلى مزيد من المساعدة، الرجاء استخدام بيانات الاتصال الواردة أدناه.

## Farsi

اطلاعات حاوی در این مدارک به صورتهای دیگر و به زبانهای مختلف در دسترس می باشد. در صورت نیاز به کمک بیشتر لطفاً از جزئیات تماس ذکر شده در ذیل استفاده کنید.

## French

Les informations présentées dans ce document peuvent vous être fournies dans d'autres formats et d'autres langues. Si vous avez besoin d'une aide complémentaire, veuillez utiliser les coordonnées ci-dessous.

## Portuguese

A informação presente neste documento pode ser disponibilizada em formatos alternativos e em línguas diferentes. Se desejar mais assistência, use por favor os contactos fornecidos abaixo.

## Somali

Macluumaadka dokumentigan waxaa lagu heli karaa qaabab kale iyo luuqado kala duwan. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawinaad intaas dhaafsiisan fadlan isticmaal xiriirka faahfaahinta hoose.

## Spanish

La información en este documento puede facilitarse en formatos alternativos y en diferentes idiomas. Si necesita más ayuda por favor utilice la siguiente información de contacto.

Telephone: **020 7361 3000**

