

The NICS Customer Service Principles

Publishing service standards

Each organisation will publish a set of customer service standards setting out the level of service its customers can expect. The standards should be challenging, relevant, measurable and meaningful and should be publicised widely. Each organisation's performance against the standards should be made available to customers.

Informing the customer

Each organisation will provide clear and straightforward information about its services and those of related service providers in a variety of ways, including the Internet. The information will include one or more telephone enquiry numbers, text phone numbers and email addresses and should be timely, updated regularly, and easily accessible, of professional quality and in plain language. Where organisations require particular actions or information from customers or otherwise consider customers have certain responsibilities, they should explicitly state this.

Service accessibility

Each organisation will make its services accessible to its customers by doing everything reasonably possible to make its services available to everyone including people with special needs and those whose first language is not English. Where it is necessary for customers to attend public service offices, organisations should ensure that their premises are clean, comfortable and welcoming.

Consulting with customers

Each organisation will consult with and will involve customers and potential customers about how its services will be delivered. They will consult in a variety of ways and use their views to improve the services provided. The results of consultation should be reported to customers together with plans for service improvement.

Polite and helpful staff

Each organisation will ensure that staff are polite and helpful and that appropriate training in customer care is provided. Staff must be identifiable and the wearing of name badges should be encouraged.

Seeing Callers

Each organisation will ensure that callers are seen without undue delay by setting a target for seeing callers with and without appointments. Callers should be informed of any likely delays. Procedures should be put in place to ensure that queuing systems are fair and flexible and that, where appropriate, waiting time information is provided.

Answering telephone calls

Each organisation will ensure that telephone calls are answered quickly. The name of the organisation and that of the person answering the call should be given and the person answering the call should be able to deal with the enquiry or transfer the caller to a person who can do so.

Answering letters, faxes and emails

Each organisation will set targets for ensuring that letters, faxes and emails are answered quickly and clearly. Responses will include the name and address of the organisation and contact details. If it is likely to take more than 10 working days to respond, an acknowledgement will be sent within two working days, which will give a target date for the full response. All correspondence, whether letter, fax or email should be clear and presentable.

Having a complaints procedure

Each organisation will have a complaints procedure – or procedures – for services provided which should include its policy on redress. They should be publicised through a variety of means, including on the Internet and should be clear and straightforward with an option for independent review. Each organisation will set and report on targets for dealing with complaints.