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# CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2015-2018

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## FOREWORD BY THE BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Welcome to the Customer Service Strategy which sets out our commitment to our customers. It includes our vision for customer service delivery and reflects the fact that we aim to be a customer focused organisation which delivers a consistently good service, striving for excellence in everything we do.

Customers now expect to be able to contact us 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Our plans for improvement include developing our website ([www.barnsley.gov.uk](http://www.barnsley.gov.uk))

enabling our customers to access the services and information they need online, anytime. We'll encourage our customers to use online services and we'll support people to do this.

We'll ask our customers about their experiences, and use their feedback to make real improvements to our services, putting customers at the heart of what we do. We're committed to getting customer service right and continually improving the customer experience.



*Stephen Houghton*

Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton  
CBE

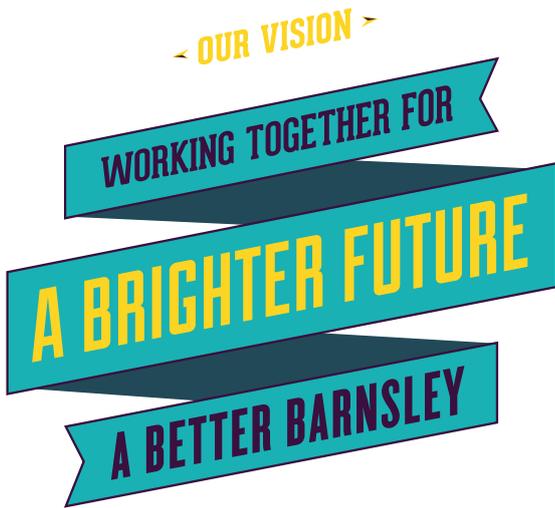


*Diana Terris*

Diana Terris  
Chief Executive

# OUR COUNCIL VISION AND VALUES

Working together for a brighter future, a better Barnsley.



- Working together – with our communities.
- A brighter future – people achieve their potential.
- A better Barnsley – our residents think and feel we are making a difference.

**Core values:**

**We're a team:** people are at the heart of helping us to improve and achieve our priorities. We all work together towards the same goal – to make Barnsley a better place for the people who live, work and visit here.

**We're honest:** we say what we mean. We're reliable, true and fair.

**We'll be excellent:** we work hard to provide the best quality and value for money for the people of Barnsley. Only our best is good enough.

**We're proud:** we're dedicated to making Barnsley a better place. We take pride in our work.



## OUR CUSTOMER SERVICE VISION

**We aim to be a customer focused organisation – we'll work to understand our customers and put them at the heart of everything we do, and we'll support customers to do more for themselves.**

All of our staff are encouraged to 'think customer' before acting. We invest in training for our staff to understand how to deliver great customer care.

We're committed to treating people fairly, to respect privacy and dignity and to pay attention to people who need more support. We'll make sure this continues to be an important part of our culture. We'll ask customers what they think, and use their feedback to improve our services.

Each year we deal with a wide range of enquiries and provide help and support for people across Barnsley. Expectations are growing, which means we must understand what customers need and use this to change our services.

People use our services in different ways. Some services are provided for everyone such as maintaining our roads, collecting household waste and protecting our environment. However, some customers need more specific help and support. In some cases funding is now provided directly to these individuals so they have more choice and control over their own services.

### Aims and objectives

#### We'll:

- ask for feedback from customers about their experiences of dealing with us. We'll learn from this and use it to improve
- develop online services that are easy to access using any device, quick to use and available whenever they are needed
- promote self-reliance; whilst continuing to support those who need our help
- talk to focus groups to understand and accommodate access needs
- measure how satisfied people are with our services, publish and learn from the results.

# PRIORITIES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**WE'LL PROVIDE A RANGE OF METHODS OF CONTACT FOR OUR CUSTOMERS, AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING A BETTER RANGE OF ONLINE SERVICES**



## **Our key challenges include:**

**Rising customer expectations and demands** – customers expect to be able to contact us 24 hours a day, seven days a week using our website and social media. They expect flexible and more personalised services.

**Using customer intelligence to inform and shape service delivery** – we'll use good information to understand what our customers need so that we can respond better.

**Digital exclusion** – some people don't have access to the internet at home, and that may mean that they can't find our information and services online. We'll help people who don't have access to the internet at home by providing equipment and support to use at venues across the borough.

We recognise the importance of the younger people in our borough, and we want to help them to develop their

role as citizens of the future. Of course some young people also help their families to access public services, and it's important that our customer service strategy includes methods of contact that they're familiar with such as social media and mobile phone apps. We'll also ensure that our website content is accessible.

**Reducing council resources** – the need for us to provide high quality customer service does not go away as our funding reduces. We must develop more cost effective ways for our customers to contact us and encourage and support our customers to use them.

**Workforce development** – a training and development plan will be produced for customer services. We'll:

- invest in training for all our staff which will include equality awareness and data protection training
- include customer service awareness in our appraisal process.

## COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING



**GETTING TO KNOW OUR COMMUNITIES, AND IMPROVING THE WAY WE WORK WITH THEM IS PARAMOUNT TO OUR FUTURE SUCCESS**

### Community engagement

We have, through elected members, a unique community leadership role among providers of public services, working with partners, local businesses, voluntary organisations and communities themselves to create positive conditions in the borough.

We'll strengthen partnership working, and work with communities to achieve the long-term wellbeing of people in the borough. We'll encourage residents to play a part in their communities, and we'll help them to do this. There are already excellent examples of our community development work helping to build capacity in communities and we'll evaluate and build on that work.

We aim to be a trusted source of information, advice and guidance, using our website and other self-service options.

Our elected members are the first point of contact for many residents, but their role in customer delivery is sometimes complex. We'll support elected members by providing them with better information so that they are able to resolve a range of enquiries and issues on behalf of the communities they represent.

#### We'll:

- get to know our communities and improve the way we work with them
- improve the information available to elected members and their ability to access it.

#### Partnership working

We're working closely with partners across the borough and beyond to make sure our customers get the right help and support. We'll set out clearly how we'll share customer's information with our partners. We want our customers to be confident that we're protecting their privacy but also using important information effectively to make sure they get the help and support they need.

#### We'll:

- work with partners to make it as convenient as we can for customers to get help and support
- keep personal information secure.

## WHAT WE’LL DO, HOW AND WHEN

**We’re committed to providing a range of customer contact options supported by clear information, advice and guidance.**

### Barnsley Council Online

We’ll continue to develop well-designed options which customers can use whenever they need to request a service, complete an application, make a payment or report an issue.



We’ll promote online options and help customers to use them by:

- investing in online options including our website, automatic telephone lines, SMS text, social media and mobile phone apps
- supporting the roll out of superfast broadband across the borough to help more of our customers access the information they need and the services they want in the most convenient way

- providing equipment in a range of buildings and helping people to use it
- identifying and working with individuals or groups who need extra help to access services
- helping customers to access online options through live web chat and our telephone contact centre teams.

### Telephone contact

Our dedicated contact centre teams take more than 670,000 customer telephone calls every year, responding to a huge range of requests and enquiries. We publish over 100 telephone contact numbers which is confusing for our customers and difficult for us to manage effectively. We won’t adopt a single ‘golden’ number instead we’ll reduce to four key contact numbers:

### Customer services

01226 773555

### Council tax and housing benefit

01226 787787

### Adults’ services

01226 773300

### Children’s services

01226 770770

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more than **670,000** customer telephone calls every year

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We’ll keep some numbers for specific service areas where direct contact is necessary.

We'll aim to resolve enquiries first time. To achieve this we'll invest in staff training and make sure they have access to good information. Key actions for us over the next two years are:

- to gather feedback from customers to help us design our services better
- to develop common standards of service for all contact
- to publish clearer information, reducing the need for customers to contact us
- to reduce the number of different telephone numbers we publish
- to provide automatic telephone options for simple requests and enquiries.

#### Face to face contact

We have a network of libraries which also handle customer service enquiries by appointment. This works well and there's no intention to change it. However, we'll look for opportunities to work with partner organisations and community groups to support individuals and communities to be independent and make the most of our combined resources.

#### We'll:

- look for opportunities to work with partners and community groups
- offer a single point of face to face contact in Barnsley town centre at the new Central Library building from 2017 onwards.

#### Email and paper communication

We aim to reduce the amount of direct email, post and paper communication by increasing the range of easy to use automated e-forms. We'll only use letters where it's absolutely essential. To support and enable this approach we'll:

- provide an improved range of online e-forms and encourage and support our customers to use them.



## SERVICE STANDARDS

**Our Customer Service Strategy is a demonstration of our commitment to our customers. We aim to deliver a consistently good service whenever our customers contact us and strive for excellence in everything we do.**

### OUR COMMITMENT TO OUR CUSTOMERS

#### WHEN YOU CONTACT US WE'LL:

- be respectful, polite and treat you with dignity
- be clear about what you can expect from us
- give you a positive experience whenever you contact us
- resolve enquiries the first time you contact us, wherever possible (working towards a target of resolving 80% of enquiries at first contact)
- do things when we say we will, and be clear about our timescales
- make it easy for you to give us feedback. We'll listen, learn and improve
- encourage and support you to tell us when you're not happy and deal with your complaints within agreed timescales
- help and support you to use our online services
- respond to your messages or requests through social media promptly during normal working hours (during exceptional or emergency situations we'll respond out of hours too)
- offer you an appointment with a member of staff if you need more support
- keep the information you give us safe and secure.

#### WE EXPECT THAT YOU WILL:

- be respectful and polite to our staff
- be considerate of other customers
- use our new online services if you can, and be willing to try new ways of contacting us
- keep us informed of personal changes which might affect the services we provide to you
- keep to agreed appointments or let us know if you need to change them
- provide us with feedback about your experiences to help us to learn and improve.

## HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF WE'RE IMPROVING?

**WE'RE DETERMINED  
TO IMPROVE THE  
SERVICE WE OFFER  
CUSTOMERS**



Our overall measure of success will be customer satisfaction with our services. We'll make sure that customers can contact us easily and use more services online. We'll measure some contacts in detail such as complaints and feedback, how many customers use online services and how many customers we support to live independently.

### **We'll:**

- survey customers regarding satisfaction with our services
- ask customers for feedback as part of the way we work
- take advice from those who face the greatest difficulty in accessing services
- review the measures of success and the strategy every year from 2016/17 onwards
- report progress every quarter through our cabinet and publish on our website
- we'll work continuously to improve or customer services. A detailed plan is in place to make sure we deliver efficiently and on time. We'll make sure that improving customer service becomes part of the normal way we work.

# CONTACT US

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If you need help understanding this document  
please call Communications on 01226 773443

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