

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY

2023-2027



Who are our customers?

Everyone who lives, works, studies, visits, or does business in, Newark and Sherwood will use a council service in some way. Making them all our customers. We also work with, and provide information and support to, other local authorities and public bodies as well as the third sector.

Why do we need a strategy?

The whole Council is dedicated to serving the diverse range of people who live and work in our district. This strategy has been developed with our Council values in mind to ensure that the people and businesses we serve are at the forefront of everything we do.

We have a great workforce that always strives to give the best possible service to our customers, however there are sometimes inconsistencies in the way we deliver our services. We receive too many contacts following up information that hasn't been clear enough. We need to make sure we tell our customers what they need to know in a way they understand. This strategy will ensure that the same high standard is consistent across all our services, and that all our services are designed with the customer in mind. Getting these services right every time will ensure we reduce 'failure demand' and customers will not need to contact us to clarify when a service will be delivered or to ask for further information.

This strategy is designed to put our customers at the centre of what we do. Success will be every customer receiving the best possible service. That means adapting our approach to provide the best possible service to each customer and their individual needs, allowing our customers the freedom to choose how they wish to communicate with us, and listening to our customers' feedback and using this feedback to drive improvement.

Refining our customer definition

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, and our district is made up of a diverse range of customers. Our district has a wide range of residents in terms of ages and economic status and there is a combination of affluent areas and areas with significant deprivation where customers rely on us to provide them with support they need. Because of this diversity, our approach to our customers must be dynamic and adaptive, which is why this Strategy cannot deliver a single approach.

Newark and Sherwood has an older than average population. **44.2% of residents are over 50** compared to the 37.8% English average.

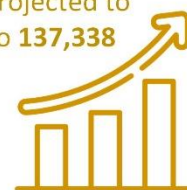


Whilst **22.9%** of Newark and Sherwood's population is **over 65**. This is projected to increase to 27.7% by 2040.



10% of the District's dwellings are owned by the Council and leased to tenants as **social housing**

Population of **122,956** which is projected to increase to **137,338** by 2040.



In Newark and Sherwood there is **1.89 residents for each hectare**. Reflecting that Newark and Sherwood is the largest district in Nottinghamshire.



There is significant health inequality within the district. There is a 9.5 year difference in life expectancy across the district for men and 7.2 years for women. This means people living in the most disadvantaged areas live on average 8.35 years less than those in the most affluent areas.

96.3% of Newark and Sherwood is white and the other **3.7%** represents a range of ethnic groups.

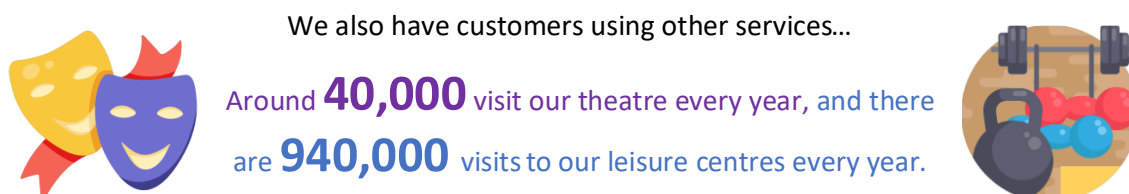


How do our customers interact with us?

The diagram below shows how, and how often, our customers contact us. Based on our population this diagram shows that every resident contacts us on average 1.5 times a year. This is a high number but remember this might be some residents contacting us once or twice every few years and other residents getting in touch often to receive multiple services. For example, on average 6,700 people move into Newark and Sherwood every year and every new household will need to get in touch with us to set-up their Council tax as well as request any other services they need, such as a garden recycling bin.



Our website also receives around **515,800** views per year



Finally, do not forget that every resident is interacted with at least 52 times a year when their bins are collected!

Our Contact Channels

We want to maximise our digital channels, taking advantage of new technology as it becomes available so that, wherever possible, our services can be accessed online. We will also ensure that these digital services are designed to be quick and easy to use. This means we will: -

- Increase our number of online forms,
- Improve our webchat service,
- Keep our website up to date, and
- Always improving the online offer.

Digital is the first choice for most people wanting to contact the council, however we appreciate that digital is not for everybody and that for some people, and for some queries or services, digital is not appropriate. Therefore, we will continue to invest in face to face and telephony services, ensuring that whatever means the customer uses to contact us they will receive a great customer service.

OUR CUSTOMER PROMISE

At Newark and Sherwood District Council we always want to provide the best possible service to our customers. These are our promises to you.

WHEN YOU GET IN TOUCH...

- | We will be here for you, in the way that works best for you, whether that's digitally, on the telephone or face-to-face.
- | You will be greeted in a friendly and welcoming way.
- | We will always aim to resolve your query at your first point of contact.
- | When communicating with you we will use plain English, adapting when needed.
- | We will only collect relevant information from you
- | We will always handle your enquiry with professionalism, honesty, and openness

KEEPING YOU INFORMED...

- | We will provide clear information to let you know when you can expect the service you have requested, or when we are able to answer your enquiry.
- | We will consider your wellbeing and personal circumstances when communicating with you
- | We will take ownership of your enquiry.
- | If your enquiry cannot be resolved first time, we will make sure that you understand what will happen next.
- | If your enquiry is complex, we will make sure you have a point of contact.

LISTENING TO YOU, LEARNING FROM YOUR FEEDBACK...

- | We will listen to you with care and empathy.
- | All feedback whether that be a complaint, compliment or suggestion will be used to ensure that we keep improving our services.
- | We will undertake regular consultation.
- | We will look at how we can do things differently to improve and meet the changing needs of our customers.
- | We will develop new processes with you in mind.



Delivery Framework

To bring about the changes required to realise the vision set out in this strategy, we need to deliver four key outcomes over the next four years. To do this we will work with our staff, our customers, and our partners.

Outcome 1 – To have customer led and designed processes

- We will do this through a long-term project to review all the documents (letters, forms etc.) we use with our customers to ensure they are clear, easy to understand and outline the process and next steps. This project will be delivered over several years and will be phased to tackle the most frequently used documents first.
- We will train all our customer facing staff on the customer promise and embed in our ways of working the importance of communicating in plain English and with respect and professionalism. This action will be completed by the end of 2023 and moving forwards we will deliver this training all new starters in customer facing roles.

Outcome 2 - To provide customers with a consistent high-quality experience, regardless of the contact channel they use

- We will continue to develop our digital services, from e-forms to webchat and digital self-service, with the aim that our customers can access services when and how it is convenient for them. We will ensure that however a request is received, whether by telephone, online form, or a self-serve request, that it is processed to the same quality and time standards.
- We will continue to utilise non-digital communication channels, which are as important as our digital methods. We will ensure that the opening hours of our non-digital services (such as telephones) are reviewed to meet the needs of our customers, and where necessary we will undertake relevant pilot projects to assess the suitability of opening hours.

Outcome 3 – To be open with our customers, communicating effectively throughout the process of a query or action and welcome feedback

- We will encourage feedback from our customers by actively signposting our customers to giving us feedback and we will use this to learn and improve our services where possible.
- We will ensure every area of the Council actively asks their customers for feedback

Outcome 4 – To set service standards for every service a customer receives

- We will, over the course of this strategy, work with each service area to set a service standard for every service we provide so a customer knows when they can expect their service to be completed/actioned. We will also ensure these standards are communicated to the customer when they start their service journey, and for longer and more complex services we will set a clear timescale for every 'phase' of the service.

Measuring Success

Performance management is not simply counting a number, it is a mechanism to drive continuous improvement. This is used to identify how we are performing and thus what we need to do to enhance our services for our residents. To measure the success of this strategy we will utilise a variety of mechanisms including satisfaction measures and performance indicators to monitor factors such as response times, customer satisfaction and ease of access. We will also use customer feedback and analysis of the customer journey to identify weaknesses and deliver improvements by learning from our mistakes. Performance, and progress against the delivery framework above, will be reported to the Portfolio Holder, and Cabinet as appropriate, on an annual basis.

Interlinking Strategies

Our Customer Experience Strategy is significant because of how wide reaching it is. This strategy sets the standard for how every department within the Council interacts with customers, across various communication platforms. However, this strategy is closely interlinked with several of our other strategies, and they all share common ground in the community plan, which influences and provides purpose to all our strategies. For example, the Council’s Digital Strategy has a section on ‘Digital Place’ which outlines how we will support and facilitate work across the district to narrow the digital divide top tackle digital inequality. This is relevant to this strategy as it supports residents to use our digital communication channels.



Approval, Consultation and Review Timetable

Document title	Customer Experience Strategy 2023 - 2027		
Version number	DRAFT v.1	Protective marking	Official
Lead Director	Director Customer Services and Organisational Development		
Lead Business Unit	Customer Services and Transformation		
Lead Contact	Customer Services Business Manager		
Date approved (SLT)	13 March 2023	Date approved (Members)	11 July 2023
Reviews due:	Annually		
Consultation			
Consultee	Date	Comments received	Material change requested (yes/no)
PPIC (Customer Promise only)	6 March 2023	Endorsed	No
Cabinet	11 July 2023	None	