

Equalities Monitoring – Services

Appendix D – Customer Services

Annual Report - 2020-21



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1. Introduction

Customer Services provides a first point of contact for the public with the Council, via several communication channels - telephone, email, website providing online forms, webchat, and social media. Over the past year face-to-face services have been suspended due to the Covid pandemic. The service deals with around 80% of enquiries to the Council including general enquiries from the public for information and service requests, for example, waste and recycling, landscaping and trees and highways.

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents.

To ensure the service is fair and equitable within Customer Services, monitoring has been undertaken in terms of:

- Access to the service
- Satisfaction with the service

It has been analysed by the following equality groups:

- Sex
- Age
- Race
- Disability
- Religion/Belief
- Sexual Orientation

The data below has been taken from:

- Customer Satisfaction Survey 2020/21. The data covers the period commencing 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 inclusive. An email link is sent to customers who have interacted with Customer Services.

2. Access to the service

Access to the service is open to all members of the public via several communication channels: telephone calls, email, online forms, webchat, and social media. Over the past year face to face services have been suspended due to the Covid pandemic. For members of the public who have come to the Council's Time Square office during the pandemic, key contact numbers for service areas and a telephone in the office's lobby area have been supplied to support customer enquiries. Customer self-service using on-line forms and information on the Council website has been promoted and where this has not been possible for customers, support has been provided over the telephone. In addition, the libraries reopened earlier this year, and this has enabled customer access to computers and photocopying/scanning facilities.

Not all users of the Council's services will have English as their first language, however, staff make every effort to meet the needs of individuals. There may be occasions when an interpreter or translator is required and the Council has several

volunteer members of staff who speak other languages, and access to several specialist companies if needed to provide translation or interpretation services.

Documents and publications can be provided in alternative formats for people who have difficulty with accessing text information, including people with learning difficulties, partially sighted people and blind people.

During the year Customer Services has supported the Council's Covid response by making calls to residents on the extremely clinically vulnerable list. The calls involved completing a series of questionnaires to ensure that appropriate support for those residents shielding during the pandemic was in place. Over 15,000 outbound calls, largely to this group of people, were made in 2020-21. Several people were called on more than one occasion to ensure they continued to have the support they needed.

3. Satisfaction

The information on satisfaction below has been taken from the Customer Services satisfaction survey for 2020/21, covering the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 inclusive. A total of 486 customers returned surveys. The data has been analysed to see if there is any difference in satisfaction rates in terms of the person's sex, age, race, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation. The definition for satisfied has been set at all respondents who reported satisfaction of excellent or good. The definition for not satisfied has been set at all respondents who reported satisfaction of fair or poor.

Age

There were 475 people who responded to the survey and included their age, (11 did not state their age). The table below shows the satisfaction results by age from the people who responded.

Table 1: Satisfaction by Age

Age Group	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
<18	0	2 (100%)	2 (1%)
18-34	18 (86%)	3 (14%)	21 (4%)
35-49	57 (66%)	30 (34%)	87 (18%)
50-64	137 (81%)	32 (19%)	169 (35%)
65-79	149 (82%)	32 (18%)	181 (37%)
80+	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	15 (3%)
Total Answered	375 (79%)	100 (21%)	475
Not Answered			11 (2%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

Satisfaction levels by age group are generally high for most groups. People aged 35 to 49 years had the highest dissatisfaction rate with 34% of this group being dissatisfied; however, this group makes up just 18% of the total sample size. The table also shows that satisfaction levels generally improve with age.

Sex

The table below shows satisfaction rates for men and women, 465 customers responded to this question.

Table 2: Satisfaction rates by sex

Sex	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Total
Male	163 (75%)	54 (25%)	217 (45%)
Female	203 (82%)	45 (18%)	248 (51%)
Total Answered	366 (79%)	99 (21%)	465
Not Answered			21 (4%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

The data shows that female respondents are slightly more satisfied than male respondents, although the sample shows that more women than men answered this question.

Disability

The table below shows the satisfaction rates in terms of whether the customer has a disability, 465 customers responded to this question.

Table 3: Satisfaction rates by disability

Disability?	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Total
Yes	110 (86%)	18 (14%)	128 (26%)
No	263 (78%)	74 (22%)	337 (70%)
Total Answered	373 (80%)	92 (20%)	465
Not Answered			21 (4%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

The data shows that 128 (26%) of the overall respondents advised that they had a disability. A large proportion of these customers were satisfied with the service they received (86%). The satisfaction rate for customers without a disability, whilst still high at 78%, is lower in comparison to those customers with a disability, however, the numbers of customers in this group is much higher.

Race

The table below shows the satisfaction rates in terms of the customers' race, 467 customers responded to this question.

Table 4: Satisfaction rates by race

Race	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Total
White	362 (80%)	89 (20%)	451 (93%)
Black & Minority Ethnic groups	11 (69%)	5 (31%)	16 (3%)
Total Answered	373 (80%)	94 (20%)	467
Not Answered			19 (4%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

The table shows that satisfaction rates for the White Ethnic group is 80% compared with 69% for the Black & Minority Ethnic groups. However, the total number of customers who responded to this question in the Black & Minority Ethnic groups is relatively small at 3%.

Religion/Belief

The table below shows the satisfaction rates in terms of the customers' religion/belief, 459 customers responded to this question.

Table 5: Satisfaction rates by religion/belief

Religion/Belief	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
None	128 (80%)	33 (20%)	161 (33%)
Christian	224 (83%)	45 (17%)	269 (55%)
Buddhist	2 (100%)	0	2 (0.4%)
Hindu	3 (100%)	0	3 (0.7%)
Muslim	1 (100%)	0	1 (0.2%)
Sikh	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	3 (0.7%)
Jewish	0 (100%)	0	0
Other	10 (50%)	10 (50%)	20 (4%)
Total Answered	369(80%)	90 (20%)	459
Not Answered			27 (6%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

The table above shows the majority of customer's answering this question are Christian (55%), with 83% satisfied with the service they had received.

161 (33%) respondents advised that they had no religion/belief and a further 27 (6%) of respondents did not answer the question. The numbers of people stating their religion as Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jewish or Other are very small, therefore any differences in levels of satisfaction should not be viewed as statistically significant.

Sexual Orientation

The table below shows the satisfaction rates in terms of the customers' sexual orientation, 454 customers responded to this question.

Table 6: Satisfaction rates by sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Total
Heterosexual/Straight	323 (83%)	66 (17%)	389 (80%)
Gay Man	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	6 (1%)
Lesbian/Gay Women	0	1 (100%)	1 (0.2%)
Bisexual	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	4 (0.8%)
Prefer not to say	35 (65%)	19 (35%)	54 (11%)
Total Answered	365 (80%)	89 (20%)	454
Not Answered			32 (7%)
Overall Total			486

Comment

The table shows that most customers' answering this question were heterosexual/straight (80%), with 83% of this group satisfied with the service they had received. 11% of customers preferred not to advise their sexuality and 7% did not answer the question. The numbers for other groups are so small that any differences in levels of satisfaction should not be viewed as statistically significant.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, overall satisfaction is quite high and there are no major differences relating to the various equality groups. Sample size is relatively low for this survey, particularly when compared with responses received in previous years: 963 responses received for 2019-20, 623 responses received for 2018/19 and 506 responses received for 2017/18. A key factor in this downturn is most likely connected to the Covid pandemic.

The pandemic has impacted on the face-to-face service usually available at the Council's Time Square office, however, the measures put in place to support customers during this period helped in managing customer enquiries. In addition, the outbound calls to the clinically extremely vulnerable who needed to shield, helped to further support customers during this challenging time.

5. Recommendations

Continue efforts to increase the take-up of the customer satisfaction survey to help provide more meaningful data.

Consider other ways in which to gather satisfaction data and incorporate these into future work plans.

Build on the learning and experience of the past 12 months in managing customer enquiries during the pandemic.