CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY
Customer Services Strategy

1. Policy Statement

The NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) understands the importance of Customer Service in the delivery of services to individuals and groups.

We are committed to creating and developing a positive approach to Customer Service in which we strive to consistently exceed the expectations of our customers. We aim to create an environment within which ‘Customer Service’ is seen as essential to the management and delivery of services.

The aim of this strategy is to ensure that all users of NWSSP services including our staff are treated as valued customers.

2. The Strategy

The strategy concentrates on creating the overall conditions under which excellent service delivery can be achieved.

The different elements of the strategy that need to be considered are:

- Defining our customers
- Defining good Customer Service
- Allocating responsibilities
- Planning implementation in terms of:
  - Mainstreaming into service delivery
  - Staff awareness and training
  - Information and publicity
  - Comments and Complaints procedures
  - Consultation
  - Performance Standards and Monitoring
  - Employment Partnerships and Contractors
  - Complaints Strategy Review

3. Who are our customers?

In the context of this strategy our customers include the following:

- Health Boards (HBs), NHS Trusts, Welsh Health Assembly (WAG), Community Health Councils (CHCs) & Public Health Wales (PHW)
- Third party customers who receive a service as a consequence of our Service Level Agreements with HBs such as General Practitioners, Dentists, Opticians, Pharmacists and the General Public.
- NHS Wales staff
- NWSSP staff (we are all customers of each other) and hosted bodies.
- Our partner organisations including public and voluntary sector organisations with whom we work.
4. What do we mean by good Customer Service?

Good Customer Service means providing services which consistently exceed the expectations of our customers. We will do this by:

- Being efficient and reliable doing what we say we are going to do when we say we are going to do it.
- Taking personal responsibility for resolving problems when they arise.
- Being responsive and prompt.
- Having staff with the knowledge relevant to the job.
- Being courteous and listening to what customers tell us.
- Providing a personalised service to the customer empathising with their situation and making them feel that they are important.
- Asking for our customers views on the service we are providing.
- Striving constantly to improve what we do.

The following values are fundamental to the Customer Service culture of NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership:

- To develop a high quality Customer Service culture for NWSSP;
- To place Customer Service at the centre of NWSSP’s policies and procedures;
- To understand the needs of our customers and put them first;
- To make it easy for customers to make comments or complaints about the service we provide;
- To seek continual improvement in Customer Service standards through effective consultation, monitoring and evaluation;
- To motivate all employees to assume responsibility for providing high quality Customer Service;
- To eliminate any discrimination against any customer;
- To ensure that when a ‘no’ is given there is an explanation provided in an appropriate manner; and
- To be responsive to complaints about the service we provide

Our promise to our customers is:

Putting Quality Service first: We aim to provide services that focus on people:

- As a customer you are important to us.
- You should feel well informed about the services that we offer.
- You should feel welcomed whenever you contact us.
- We will deal with your enquiry promptly and efficiently.
- We will find the right person to help you.
- We will aim to provide you with the appropriate service.
- If we are not able to provide what you want, we’ll explain why.
- We welcome comments and enquiries as they help us improve our service to you.
If we're not delivering on these commitments to you, please bring it to our attention to help us identify how we can improve.

All NWSSP employees must understand and support 10 Customer Service points:

- Everyone is a customer.
- Every customer is important.
- If you can't help, find someone who can.
- We welcome comments and complaints as they can be positive.
- The customer may not always be right, but we must always be polite and courteous.
- When we get it wrong, apologise and learn from it.
- Treat your customer as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Don't make promises you can't keep but make sure that you keep the ones you make.
- Always try to do your best for your customer.
- To a customer YOU are the NWSSP.

5. Responsibilities

All NWSSP employees are expected to carry out their responsibilities to provide good service under this strategy. They have a significant role to play in ensuring that all customers, clients and partners receive good Customer Service.

The NWSSP Management Team will ensure that NWSSP is implementing the strategy and will monitor this via regular reports and updates.

The NWSSP Management Team has overall responsibility for making sure that NWSSP as a whole carries forward a coordinated approach to Customer Service.

Assistant Directors and Heads of Divisions/Functions have a duty to actively promote Customer Service within their Departments and Line Managers have a duty to actively promote Customer Service within their teams and ensure that this strategy is implemented. They should update staff on Customer Service issues through team meetings, agreed “Key Skill Framework” plans and training.

The implementation and monitoring of the process will be overseen by the NWSSP Management Team.

5.1. Functional Teams

Each Division will regularly review customer satisfaction and performance levels at departmental meetings which will include:

- Monitoring Customer Service quality in the department
- Identifying Customer Service training needs
- Overseeing information and advice produced by the department
- Undertaking and reviewing, monitoring and evaluating of Customer Satisfaction
- Reporting to the Management Team on progress and issues to be addressed
6. Implementation

6.1 Service Delivery

The best way of ensuring that Customer Service is placed at the centre of all of NWSSP's relationships with its customers, clients and partners is by:

- Building Customer Service into all our policies, practices and reviews
- Making sure that all NWSSP employees see Customer Service as central to NWSSP's work and are trained to deliver their element of service well
- Ensuring that policies are interlinked with Customer Service and are not seen as separate or isolated policies
- Working hard to overcome apathy
- Making sure that it is easy for everyone to find out about NWSSP's services, the service levels that they can expect and how to comment and complain
- Regular monitoring of the effectiveness of our strategy and practices and changing them where necessary.

We will implement this strategy via action plans at NWSSP Management Team and Divisional levels supported by guidance. Such action plans will contain the specific objectives of each department in a form that can be monitored.

6.2 Awareness and Training

Training at a variety of levels is essential to achieve excellent Customer Service and we will make sure that all KSF outlines will be tailored to meeting and exceeding our objectives.

The NWSSP will ensure that:

- All employees undertake appropriate training or guidance in Customer Service and that they understand and accept the importance and centrality of Customer Service to the delivery of services.
- Customer Service will be included in the induction training given to all new employees
- All staff will have Customer Service training suitable to their level of operation.
- All frontline staff will have specialised training in Customer Service and regular refresher training.
- Managers will consider the implications of this strategy when developing and implementing individual training plans.

Core Customer Service training should include:

- Management responsibilities for customer service.
- Devolving responsibilities to employees.
- Identifying who our customers are.
- Good customer service practice.
- Attitudes and behaviour.
- Handling complaints.
- Equal opportunities.
Additional and follow-up training should include:

- Reception skills.
- Telephone skills.
- Written skills.
- Handling difficult situations/people.
- Diffusing and managing anger.
- Equal opportunities.

Training will be made available either through internal resources or where deemed appropriate through outside bodies.

6.3 Information and Publicity

The existence of this strategy will be publicised to staff through Induction courses, Divisional and Functional Leads and Departmental meetings and through any Organisational Development Programme. HBs and Trusts will be able through the “Business Account Manager” review meetings to comment on both the NWSSP’s performance and their level of customer satisfaction. The feedback from these quarterly meetings will be used to populate the NWSSP performance management reporting systems.

Customers will receive a copy of this strategy. In addition copies will be made available in all NWSSP Offices and reception areas and by other appropriate media available to NWSSP.

6.4 Monitoring of Comments and Complaints

Electronic and departmental systems for recording enquiries, compliments, comments and complaints will be developed to ensure that we can monitor and evaluate the level and areas of concern. Monitoring and evaluation will ensure that enquiries, comments and complaints systems will be used to inform developments in service delivery, customer service, consultation, satisfaction and performance indicators.

6.5 Consultation

The NWSSP needs to take into account the results and feedback from all types of consultation. When appropriate, specific issues relating to customer service delivery should be consulted on. No significant changes in service will be implemented without full consultation with our customers.

The feedback of the results and ‘outcomes’ of consultation are vital to ensure good practice in Customer Service.

6.6 Performance Standards and Monitoring

Monitoring will mean systematic collection and analysis of data relating to performance indicators, complaints and comments.
The introduction of new integrated performance reports based on “Business Account Managers” reports will ensure that the “Management Team” and Assistant Directors/Functional Leads are able to monitor and measure performance, and customer satisfaction.

In addition to the “Business Account Managers” reports every opportunity to gain feedback through normal channels will be encouraged such as:

- National Meetings
- Operational Meetings
- Functional Meetings
- Operational Meetings

An annual report including a comprehensive analysis of all customer service issues will also be produced by the Management Team and shared with staff and customers.

6.7 Employment

In all employment matters we will ensure that:

- All employees undertake, where appropriate, training and guidance in Customer Service and that they understand and accept the importance and centrality of Customer Service to the delivery of services
- We monitor, review and revise recruitment, selection and promotion practices to reflect the importance of Customer Service in the workforce at all levels
- Employees making selection and promotion decisions receive appropriate training

7. Partnerships and Contractors

We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations within the public, private and voluntary sectors. We will encourage our partners to follow the principles of this strategy.

We will encourage any contractors we employ to apply Customer Service principles in the delivery of services.

8. Complaints

Any customer, client or partner organisation that feels we have failed to implement this strategy in the service they receive will be encouraged to bring this to our attention. If having given the NWSSP a reasonable time to address the issue they still feel the matter has not been resolved to their satisfaction they should address any complaint to NWSSP under its “Complaints Procedure”.

9. Strategy Review

This strategy statement will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains relevant to NWSSP’s aims and objectives. It will also be updated when changes in local circumstances and legislation occur.
Management will take appropriate action where an employee fails to observe the provisions of this strategy or consistently fails to meet Customer Service standards.

10. Customer Charter

The attached Customer Charter expresses in a concise manner the principles underpinning this Customer Services Strategy.

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