Seven Steps to a Citizen Charter with Service Standards

Implementation Plan for Governmental Organizations



Practitioners handbook









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Reading Guide

Implementation of a citizen charter comprises several steps.

The seven-step plan applies to a broad variety of organizations, from a decentralized Municipality, a Police District to a large implementation agency with multiple locations. Each step can be modified to fit the characteristics of the organization in question. This brochure is designed primarily for the authorizing person to introduce a citizen charter, the line management, and the project leader managing the practical introduction of a charter. The appendices provide you with a variety of examples in several European countries.

Introduction: What is a citizen charter?

Key to a citizen charter is an organisations commitment to the customer about the quality of its services the customer can expect. Citizen charter is a policy term, in practice also called service guarantee or service standard.

A citizen charter essentially consists of the 3 C's:

- 1. customer-driven service standards
- 2. communication
- 3. control
- 1. Service standards are concrete and significant to the customer.
- Communication of these standards is accessible for all (potential) customers, preferably at locations where customers interact with service providers (e.g. reception desks, newsletters, website).
- 3. Maintain control of your activities. Measure the results. The numbers in which service standards are not met, are a concrete reflection of the activities being performed for customers. Assurance of the processes is of paramount importance. This is what brings success: do ordinary things extraordinarily well.

The innovative idea underlying the citizen charter is to make concrete commitments to the customers of public services. Transparent communication of service standards generates 'external' pressure to deliver as promised. This external incentive is reinforced when the organization systematically registers when standards are not met.

Organizations generally opt for a strategy of involving citizens (and entrepreneurs) in implementing "customer-driven service". Adopting service standards provides a sound basis for listening actively to citizens and learning about their needs. This is not to say that the customer is always the decisive factor. There are limits to the customer-driven approach. Government can never be the personal problem solver for individual citizens but the key purpose of a citizen charter is to implement adopted policy reliably and effectively.

The citizen charter in the framework of total quality management

Quality improvement of public services is at the heart of the agenda for change. Citizen Charters form a part of the range of ideas around Total Quality Management although other tools can also be used. Consequently, Citizen Charters can easily be combined with CAF, EFQM, BSC, customer satisfaction survey, process management or comparable operational management instruments like customer journey mapping, usability testing and website analysis.

It is important to recognise that no one of these instruments provides all of the answers. It is for the organisation to decide which instrument fits best to its own development needs.

The added value of a citizen charter is that in a very direct manner, the organisation makes contacts with the outside world. By making promises concerning the quality of the services, a charter contributes toward the relationship with citizens and firms in the outside world. A citizen charter makes public organisations transparent and by consequence open to challenge on performance. Delivering that performance can often best be achieved using a mix of quality approaches. For example:

- a form of Total Quality Management like CAF

So how do you construct a Charter? The following ten guidelines for preparing policy choices on form and content of contacts with citizens were developed in the Netherlands (advocated under the Burgerlink-programme) and form a useful starting point.

1. Choice of Channel

As a citizen I can choose for myself in which way to interact with government. Government ensures multi channel service delivery, i.e. the availability of all communication channels: counter, letter, phone, e-mail, internet.

2. Transparent Public Sector

As a citizen I know where to apply for official information and public services. Government guaranties one-stop-shop service delivery and acts as one seamless entity with no wrong doors.

3. Overview of Rights and Duties

As a citizen I know which services I am entitled to under which conditions. Government ensures that my rights and duties are at all times transparent.

4. Personalised Information

As a citizen I am entitled to information that is complete, up to date and consistent. Government supplies appropriate information tailored to my needs.

5. Convenient Services

As a citizen I can choose to provide personal data once and to be served in a proactive way.

Government makes clear what records it keeps about me and does not use data without my consent.

6. Comprehensive Procedures

As a citizen I can easily get to know how government works and monitor progress.

Government keeps me informed of procedures I am involved in by way of tracking and tracing.

7. Trust and Reliability

As a citizen I presume government to be electronically competent. Government guarantees secure identity management and reliable storage of electronic documents.

8. Considerate Administration

As a citizen I can file ideas for improvement and lodge complaints. Government compensates for mistakes and uses feedback information to improve its products and procedures.

9. Accountability and Benchmarking

As a citizen I am able to compare, check and measure government outcome. Government actively supplies benchmark information about its performance.

10. Involvement and Empowerment

As a citizen I am invited to participate in decision-making and to promote my interests. Government supports empowerment and ensures that the necessary information and instruments are available.

Customer Insight

A number of supportive instruments can be used to gain insight in to customer need. These include:

- front line staff surveys and other information
- · customer journey mapping
- usability testing and website analysis
- · consultation e.g. focus groups

Customer insight should be treated and managed as a strategic asset to ensure that the right information is being supplied to the right people, at the right time and in the right way. Only in this way will it be applied to the greatest effect. Instruments to help gain insight include:

Front line staff surveys

The front line is a rich vein of customer insight which is often overlooked. Public sector staff working in call centres, contact centres and walk-in centres as well as front line staff in hospitals, schools and police stations, are in contact with the public daily. Typically they have an excellent idea of what is important to their customers, what customers would like to have more of, what frustrates them and what they would change.

Customer journey mapping

A customer journey map is a way to describe the experiences of a customer during their interaction with a service or set of services and the emotional responses these provoke – from their first consideration of a related need, to receiving the service outcome.



Usability testing and website analysis

Usability testing should always be employed when designing new services, particularly within the online environment. It is a means for measuring how well people can use something (such as a web page, a computer interface, a document, or a device) for its intended purpose. During usability testing, the aim is to observe people using the product in as realistic a situation as possible. It involves users navigating their way through a system and set of processes and tackling tasks in a controlled environment. It can offer valuable information about how a customer is likely to respond to a service and practical ideas for service improvement.

Consultation

Consultation exercises can be a useful way of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. An inclusive approach should consult those responsible for service delivery (as discussed in the section on front line staff) and a representative sample of those people who could benefit from the outcome of the government service in question. Consultation covers a variety of techniques from more targeted and direct consultation with key stakeholders and customers to more traditional types of written consultation.

1 Decide to introduce a citizen charter

Actions:

- 1. Communicate within the organization the decision to introduce a charter, preferably specifying an introduction target date.
- 2. Designate a project leader and allocate a budget.
- 3. Be clear about what you want to achieve with the Charter and how it will operate in practice. Do not be afraid to be flexible in interpreting these guidelines to fit your own circumstances and business need

The start of the process is a decision (letter of intent) to introduce a citizen charter. Top management endorses and communicates the decision. A successful introduction of a citizen charter is no sinecure. The decision to do so generally is a direct consequence of a quality program introduced by the national government. Introduction of a citizen charter is based on sound reasons. Citizens are more critical of the quality of services. Society – in part as a consequence of developments among private sector service providers – imposes higher standards on contacts between citizens and public sector agencies.

The introduction of a citizen charter requires courage and perseverance. There is always the risk of a flagging improvement drive, for several reasons:

- 1. Quality improvement is a high-resistance process. Mainly, because it requires a culture change. The customer is still regarded as a nuisance because 'he/she keeps getting in the way of the work'. There is often a conflict with internal obligations.
- 2. Service standards make an organization more transparent. The outside world clearly sees when a standard is not met.

Organizational Conditions

Every organization member must participate. And it is imperative to maintain the pace. This requires the appointment of a project leader who is supported by top management. The project leader forms, as appropriate, a project team with a broad-based membership.

The duties of the project leader are:

Provide sound arguments for the introduction of a citizen charter. What does customer-driven
service mean for your organization? Persuade others, using relevant figures. Illustrate what are
realistic waiting times against actual, what is the quality of letters sent out based on incoming
complaints or on percentage of erroneous decisions, etc.



- Articulate an ambition concerning service level.

 For instance 'Be the best service provider in the sector'.
- Write a draft set of concrete service standards. In organizations where the discussion was started on the basis of 'provisional' service standards, the process proceeded orderly because everyone knew what it was about.
- Involve external parties familiar with the practice of charters and convey their experiences to the organization.
- Maintain the pace in the project. Set deadlines, track them and make sure the organization is kept informed of progress.
- Some aspects need to be coordinated with professionals, as opposed to determining the content of service standards. These aspects are:
 - Carefully consider embedding the charter in the organization's operating processes.
 - Ensure timely publicity surrounding the introduction of the citizen charter.

2 Draft a set of service standards

Actions:

- 1. Inventory who to consult first.
- 2. Draft a set of service standards.
- 3. Reach agreement with top management on the form of making apologies when a standard is not met.

Once the organization has expressed its intention to work with a citizen charter, the first priority is drafting a list of service standards. Staff should be heavily involved in deciding these in order to help ensure their ownership and support for the results. Articulating service standards often means a breakthrough for the discussion on quality policy. Questions like "What does a customer-driven approach imply for me?" become concrete because they must be translated into service standards. It can be helpful to know the top-5 irritations felt by your customers.

People in the organization will usually get more readily engaged when there is a concrete proposal on the table. This also keeps up the pace and focuses attention on the content of the standards. The project leader may therefore write the first set of draft service standards to start up the organization-wide discussion, which is to lead to more support for the charter throughout the organization. The project leader has the difficult job of mining the organization for reliable information to articulate customer-driven service standards. This requires having or developing empathy with service providing issues within the organization and with the needs of the customers. Most productive is to tap into the knowledge available among front-office and back-office staff. Especially large organizations have many players affecting the quality of service providing. Please keep in mind that in some organizations problems arose during the introduction of the charter because key players had been overlooked during the informal consultation round. Plus this tip. Seek out success stories in other organizations to use as inspiration for your own standards.

When drafting service standards, the project leader needs to be aware of the following essential factors:

 Do not select too many standards, do not make the charter too long. State only the standards most important to the customer. Better to select two important standards that stand out than ten that do not. Otherwise a charter becomes a means not to improve satisfaction but to cause citizen dissatisfaction.

- 2. Customer-driven standards focus on relevant aspects of service provision. This requires a needs survey among your customers. For instance through complaints analyses to verify which standards appeal to citizens or entrepreneurs. The project leader should contact the complaints coordinator. Or tap into the information available among reception desk staff. Another useful tool is to organize focus groups, as these meetings clarify key issues for customers.
- 3. The standards may cover the entire range of service providing. They can depending on organization type reflect:
- waiting time, e.g. 'A complaint about street lighting is resolved within two workdays'
 - Studies often identify the element 'waiting time/term of responding' as important aspect of the quality of service providing. So, include the time aspect when drafting standards. This may be the waiting time for the customer at the front desk before getting the service, or the period within which the customer can expect a reply to a request / application / etc.
- transparency of the process, e.g. 'You can digitally track the progress of the processing of your complaint or request' or 'Within two hour you will receive a digital confirmation message'
- treatment. The charter can include a 'soft' standard, e.g. 'You will be treated with courtesy and professionalism'. Courteous treatment is a subjective standard. Several studies identify the importance of courteous treatment, given the numerous complaints coming forth from a lack of courtesy. A soft standard can be made hard. E.g. the standard 'You will be treated with courtesy' can be made concrete into 'You will have privacy while reporting your complaint to the police' (e.g. reporting theft or bodily harm at the Police Station: not at the front desk, but in a designated room). A citizen charter can highlight courteous treatment (please challenge us at once if you feel we are not courteous in our treatment).
- actual service being provided, e.g. 'Our school provides its graduates free remedial teaching when employers are not satisfied with their educational level'.
- 4. Standards must be concrete and where possible measurable. Key is that they are verifiable during the actual service providing. So: 'you will be attended within 15 minutes' ('hard') and not: 'ready while you wait' ('not concrete'). The customer must be able to verify whether standards are met. So: 'you will have our reply within two weeks' and not 'your request will be processed within an average of two weeks'.



- 5. Avoid the tone of 'standard operating procedures' in the wording of customer commitments. A commitment like 'We provide fast delivery in 85% of visits' is of no interest to a customer.
- 6. To ensure continued progress of the discussion, it is imperative to word the service standards precisely. Keep the language straightforward, avoiding unnecessary reservations. Avoid words and phrases like:
- not, never (use positive wording)
- always (for, this is virtually equivalent to a commitment)
- average, in most cases (does not relate to a commitment to a person)
- with the exception of, on the condition that, unless (it ceases to be a commitment)
- we attempt, we strive (a commitment is more than a well intentioned attempt)
- 7. Service standards usually include a complaints procedure. One of the principal objectives of introducing a citizen charter is to improve customer relations; you want to provoke a reaction from customers so you have a starting point for an improvement.
- 8. In principle, a charter only addresses your commitments to the customer. Customer-focused company by-laws make sense but should not be included in this document. Though it can make sense at times. But you do so at the risk of making the document too long and loosing the attention of the customer.

What to do when a service standard is not met?

The consequences of a situation when a commitment is not honoured must be discussed. In different countries different solutions are being used. Possibilities are:

- 1. The failures are registered and the organization takes measures to improve.
- 2. In some cases the organization is presenting the customer with an apology card. For instance:

	Municipal Public Services of Logisticoaster
in the	person of Pierre Salutoo offers its apologies for failing to meet the service standard
F	or more information about our service or your specific request/objection/permit application, please contact:
name:	
telepho	onenumber:
e-mail:	

3. In other cases e.g. The Netherlands, Spain, Estonia a form of compensation is advocated. Examples include: gift voucher, home delivery of an overdue service (driver's

license, passport), a florist's voucher, a priority voucher (if the customer is asked to reschedule), making a donation to charity, set of bicycle lights, theatre or cinema ticket or an excuse. The nature of the compensation is a sensitive issue and is best reviewed at the highest level in the organization. Paying a consideration or compensation could convince the customer that the organization takes him seriously. This gives the customer a means, through a relatively simple procedure, to get redress from the organization.

The quantity of compensations is a simple and effective management signal. If compensations are paid too frequently, it is an incentive to improve the quality of the service providing or to assure the stated quality level.

3 Consult staff about service standards

Actions:

- 1. Plan meetings with all concerned and discuss service standards with all relevant work process participants.
- 2. Write final set of service standards.

Having drafted a set of service standards, the project leader interfaces with the organization. All staff affected by the service standards are afforded the opportunity to give input for the final document since they will often be experts on the capabilities, challenges and blocks within their own organisation.

The project leader works to broaden the support for the service standards. Some employees and managers can be change averse and resist a move towards greater transparency of service provision. This makes it easier to dive into complicated situations. Improving the service provision demands intense efforts and a service oriented attitude from all. This means that top management must demonstrate a keen interest in the content of the service standards and in the culture change among those actually providing the service.

A suggested time path is:

- 1. Begin by organizing a meeting for middle management during which top management unambiguously backs the introduction of a citizen charter with meaningful service standards and clarifies its purpose. The project leader explains the draft set of standards, providing background on the importance of the other C's. Feedback is asked on the draft set of service standards to identify bottlenecks. Middle management receives commitment from top management for support during implementation. The manager accustomed to working by internal standards (e.g.80% of customers receive assistance within a specified period) now has a problem with the remaining 20%. What happens in case of peaks? What happens in case of a flu epidemic? Resistance against a citizen charter can be generated by the fear that people think they will now be required to solve all the problems in the organization. Create more insight by asking the question: "What efforts or resources are required to overcome an obstacle? Please elaborate." These meetings are also a reality-check of the draft standards.
- 2. If necessary, a series of bilateral meetings are set up between project leader and middle management.



- 3. Staff receive detailed information from the project leader during their regular progress meetings. Preferably the top management kicks off this meeting. To be discussed are questions like: What are meaningful service standards? How do service standards fit in a citizen charter? What does the implementation of a citizen charter for the organization? What is the time path for implementation? Of course there is an opportunity to make suggestions for changes in the draft service standards.
- 4. Extra joint meetings of middle management and staff. Restrict the number of people attending the meeting on specific service standards to twenty. Participants must be given the opportunity to give active input for the final version of their standards. Remember to ask back-office personnel for their input. You don't want them to feel ambushed. One might invite hands-on experts from other organizations to act as ambassadors and help overcome resistance.
- 5. During regular progress meetings the staff is informed about the final version of the citizen charter including service standards and are encouraged to take real ownership of the document and what it means to the way they will do business.

4 Write a citizen charter

- final service standards
- publication plan
- embedding in the organization

Actions:

- 1. Organize implementation of a citizen charter in an organization, including registration of results.
- 2. Provide communication material and have it tested.
- 3. Decide duration of test period, as appropriate
- 4. Produce a document addressing all aspects of a citizen charter and submit for final approval.

With the input of the staff incorporated, the service standards are final. Before communicating the citizen charter, the publicity plan must be prepared. This is best left to an external firm.

Moreover, the organization must be equipped for effective implementation of the service standards. This includes a performance rating system. It is sometimes advisable to have a test period first. This avoids discussions about what might go wrong; these don't lead to anything. The proof is in the pudding; this is the rationale for a test period. A test period has the following guidelines:

- A test period is of short duration. Minimum one week, maximum three months.
- Use this period to also test the communication material, folders, etc.
- Register the results. At the same time keep a record of the notional number of apologies or frequency of compensation payments. This is a clear indicator of the feasibility of the standards at that moment.
- Should the test period demonstrate that the standards are not realistic then adjust the standards, or if feasible in the short term existing operating procedures. It is imperative that the charter is introduced at the agreed moment.
- Please remember: the decision to introduce the citizen charter has already been made. So, this is about realistic implementation only.



5 Publish with style

Actions:

- 1. Make an inventory of the various formats of the charter (brochures, letters, internet, flat screen, local paper)
- 2. Organize styling (brochures etc.) to be done by a professional designer.
- 3. Agree on a planning that ends in the date of publication.

Actual operations under a citizen charter start from the moment of publication. Both customers and staff need to familiarize themselves with the charter. Celebrate the publicity moment. Most organizations invest much in the communication around the introduction. This might be formal congratulations extended to the first customer entitled to rely on the standards. Publication is a key moment. Put some effort into dressing up the start and generate more publicity. What type of publicity fits your organization?

Do your customers know the standards?

There are several methods to enhance awareness of the standards:

- Use the company house-style for the charter lay-out. In brochures, billboards, etc. Use a
 professional firm. It is harder than it looks to convey a publicity message effectively.
- 2. Actively publish the service standards at places where the service is being provided. Specify the standard each time a product is delivered, e.g. in the acknowledgement of receipt of a letter, on the reception desk, on the Internet, etc. Posting a simple pamphlet on a bulletin board or a placing brochure in a literature display attracts little attention.
- 3. Active distribution of the standards benefits users and staff. The customers know what they can expect and the staff know that the customers are familiar with the quality standards.
- 4. Staff should be instructed to actively make customers aware of the service standards. E.g. when privacy is an issue: 'would you prefer a little privacy?'.
- 5. A press release is useful for communicating the standards to the general public, but perhaps other forms of publicity appeal to your target group? E.g. talk-show, banner on your website, a page in the neighborhood paper or distribution in community centers.
- 6. Pay attention to legibility of letters and to layout.
- 7. Clearly state a contact address in/with the standards (and make sure the contact persons are familiar with the charter).
- 8. Make sure that the charter can be used in the longer term.



Some organizations have account managers in regular touch with large customers, generally businesses. This is an excellent channel to communicate the citizen charter.

Do your staff know the standards?

Do not overlook your own organization! Familiarity by the staff with the charter may be advanced by means of:

- 1. Publication of the standards internally on placemats, trays, mugs or posters. Make sure the standards cannot be missed by anyone.
- 2. Highlight a standard every month via personnel newsletter or intranet.

6 Control: organize embedding of the charter in the organization.

Actions:

- 1. Organize registration of results (degree to which standards are being met). Review possible ICT applications.
- 2. Write an action plan to ensure that results at operations level are on the agenda of regular progress meetings.

The introduction of a citizen charter is a project. It has a defined end being the launch of the charter. From that moment on, the charter ceases to be a project and is a structural element of operations management. Make sure you communicate this in unambiguous terms, otherwise those responsible in your organization will feel that once the introduction of the charter is complete their work is done. We know from experience that charters — with service standards as key component — tend to get forgotten very quickly. This is why the embedding in the organization must be rigorously organized in advance.

Essentials

- Continue registering the times when standards are not met. It is important to discuss this in
 advance with the staff concerned. Do not refrain from registering because you wish to avoid
 hurting people's feelings. Registering the number of times the standards is not met after all is
 an element of professional operations management.
- Make the standards and corresponding results a fixed element of existing management reporting. Make sure there is periodic (external) communication to customer groups. For instance via citizens annual report, free home delivery papers, or the website.
- Before the actual introduction, get commitment that statistics with regard to infractions of standards will be published regularly and publicly.
- Make sure the service standards from the charter are included in focus group studies or customer satisfaction surveys in your organization.
- Top management decides the date of the evaluation of the citizen charter

Involve staff and keep the standards lively

To increase knowledge by staff:

- Ensure opportunities for feedback on the charter in progress meetings. Inform staff on targets and provide updates. Use internal newsletters to display results in graphs to show progress in terms of the standards. It motivates people on the floor when they see that top management appreciates the importance of the charter and is aware of all the work being done by those on the floor.
- Ensure that the standards are an element in performance evaluations. The leading principle
 being that the results are not used to hold individual people to account. It is however
 standard operating procedure that employees (including staff interfacing with customers)
 are accountable as far as possible.
- Proper maintenance of the charter requires transparency of responsibilities related to
 achieving the service standards at top management, middle management and floor levels.
 This includes where feasible optimum delegation of competencies to those working on
 the floor. This generates job satisfaction and pride in the organization, and at the end of the
 day improved service.

More tips to keep the charter vital

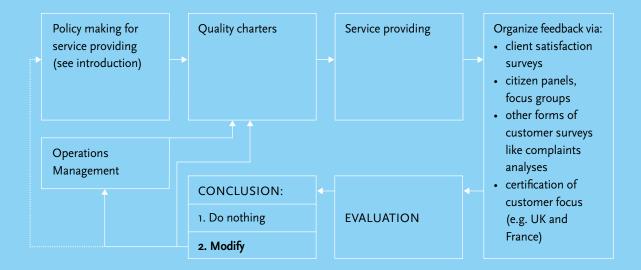
- The Municipality of Maastricht (The Netherlands) designated a citizen charter customer
 monitoring employee at the front desk. This is not a manager but a member of the reception
 desk staff. This job monitors the staffing levels and the degree to which standards are being
 met. When it gets crowded, extra staff can be called in and vice versa. The post holder also
 acts as role model offering customers apologies if charter standards are not met.
- Organize training courses focusing on 'customer-driven attitude'. Many complaints result from discourteous, unprofessional treatment. How do you apologize and offer compensation, as appropriate?
- Unannounced verification of standard compliance is another option. Mystery-guest surveys test overall quality levels of the service being provided. They help keeping citizen charter issues in people's minds. Mystery-guest survey proved to be a good management tool in the implementation of the Marianne Charter (France), showing that a gap can appear between a self declared commitment and the actual implementation of service standards. It underlined the need to improve the reliability of the commitments, with a stronger involvement of the middle management in managing changes.

7 Integrate the citizen charter in the improvement cycle

Actions:

- 1. Decide the date of the evaluation of the service standards.
- 2. Prepare pro arguments for possibly required modifications of service standards.
- 3. Once modifications of service standards are required, plan for implementation of the contemplated modifications.

For many public sector organizations, service providing to citizens and entrepreneurs is core-business. Ideally, organizations pursue continuous improvement of service providing in a plan-do-check-act-improvement cycle. A citizen charter including service standards can be embedded as follows.



Decide in advance on a clear evaluation moment and work towards this moment. Once the feedback has been assessed, the central question is whether the organization is satisfied with the level of service it provides. If not, the decision can be to do the complete cycle.

Evaluation

Evaluation might focus on the following questions:

1. Can an improvement of the quality of service be detected?

Effective evaluation requires performance scoring of the organization and, preferably, benchmarking against other organizations. Demonstrate that the organization not only improved its own performance but scores better than other organizations. This attaches real value for the user to the excellent performance.

2. Were the most appropriate standards selected?

A new situation may create a completely new set of needs, or a key need has been overlooked. So it is critical – also during future evaluations – to involve the citizens. And remember, these consultations must first and foremost be pragmatic. For more fundamental issues concerning the nature of the standards a focus group is more useful. The evaluation can also address the question whether the charter should be implemented more broadly in the organization. For instance, should more departments operate under service standards.

3. Can the standards be fine-tuned?

The content of standards will change over time. Such a change may result in the need for fine-tuning. Fine-tuning is not always required. A specified waiting time may simply be acceptable. An instance of required fine tuning is the evident underperformance of one link in the service providing chain, e.g. when a more efficiently operating mailroom will result in a significantly faster response time for letters.

The process of quality improvement may receive an impulse by a strong external incentive in the form of a response (e.g. an excuse) in cases a service standard is not met.

4. Do staff and customers still know their citizen charter?

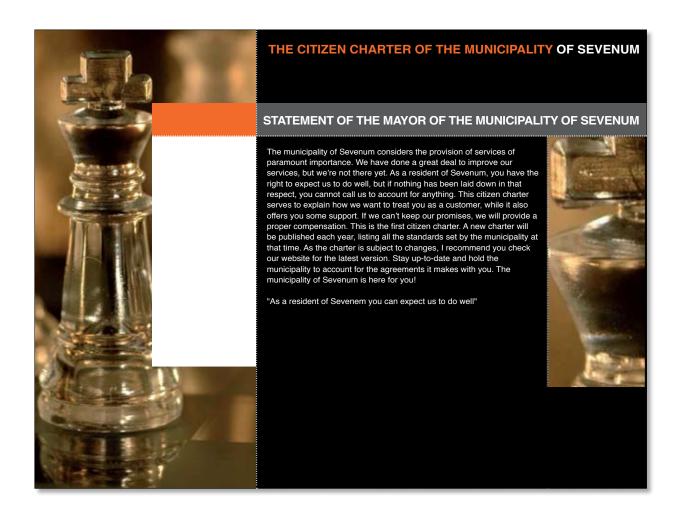
Organize feedback cycles to deduce information on how well staff and (potential) customers know their service standards.

An example of an evaluation in this field:

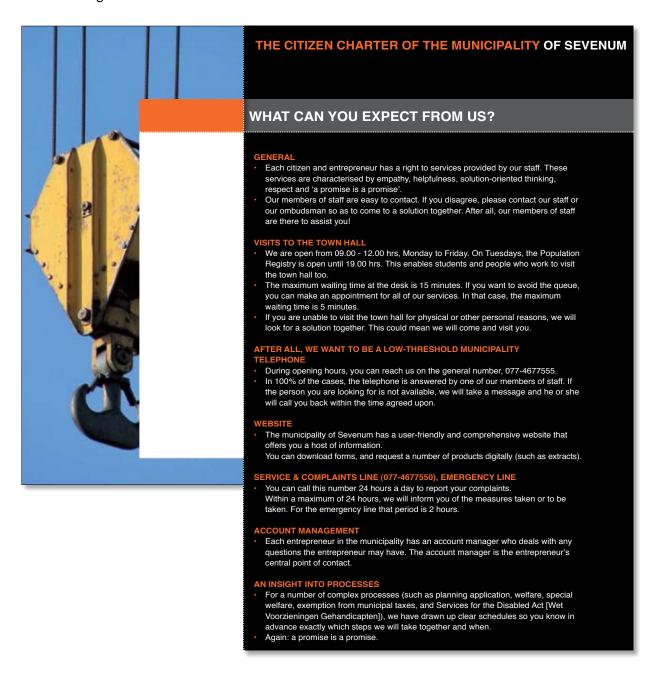
In 2006, France introduced the "Label Marianne", as a set of service standards similar to those used in service certification, and controlled by an external body. A pilot project took place in 2007 in about 60 sites. The evaluation of this phase was conducted in several ways: feed back of the assessors, feed back of the departments taking part in the pilot, focus groups with users, with staff members, opinion survey. This led to a new release of the standards, with a higher level of commitment, and a more customer oriented formulation (see appendix 3).



Appendix 1



The following service standards have been communicated to the citizens:



THE CITIZEN CHARTER OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SEVENUM

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT FROM US?

PLANNING PERMIS

- The municipality has abolished the buildings aesthetics committee. If you stay within the stipulated frameworks, you can submit your planning application immediately. Our members of staff will then help you to process this application as quickly and smoothly as possible, and to realise your building requirements (within the legal frameworks).
- Your application will be dealt with by one contact person who ensures that you will receive your planning permission within no more than 6 weeks (3 weeks for light regime planning permission). In the event of an exemption procedure, these deadlines do not apply.

- ASSPORT/ID CARD/DRIVING LICENCE
 After having applied for your document at the town hall, you will receive it within no more than 5 working days.
- If it is an emergency, you will receive it within 1 day, subject to a surcharge.

Following your application, you will have a decision within no more than 10 working days. In close cooperation with the CWI (Central Organisation for Work and Income), we will do everything to make the process as easy as possible for you and to avoid you having to submit all kinds of information more than once.

- Our website and a special brochure enable you to find out for yourself if you qualify for any of the above.
- Following your application, you will receive the result within no more than 4 weeks. The maximum term for exemption from municipal taxes is 6 weeks.

SOCIAL SUPPORT ACT [WET MAATSCHAPPELIJKE ONDERSTEUNING] The municipality and its partners (incl. CIZ (Care Assessment Centre)) will do

- everything within their powers to ensure a fast and smooth application and supply of aids.
- Following your request, we will notify you of the outcome within no more than 4 weeks.

- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

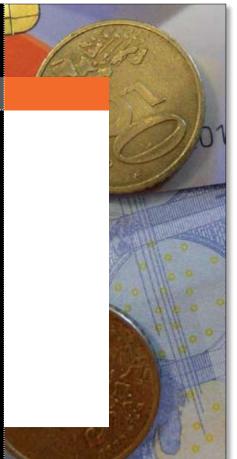
 We are interested in the findings of each customer once they have made use of one of our products. That is why we ask customers about their level of satisfaction throughout the year.
- We use the results to further improve our services, 365 days a year. After all, it is all about you, our customer!

WHAT WE DO IN RETURN
This citizen charter lists the things you can expect from us. We give you a "guarantee" as it were, for many aspects of our service provision. If we give a guarantee, we of course also have to do something in return should we fail to offer you what we promised. After all, promise is debt. That is why we give you a \in 10.00 flower gift voucher in the unlikely event that we are unable to keep our promises. We feel flowers are the perfect way to offer our apologies.

Nevertheless, we assume these occasions will be few and far between, because we have faith in our services. The municipality of Sevenum is here for you!

H. de Bekker

Municipal clerk for the Municipality of Sevenum



Additional information about organisational aspects:

Availability/Communication

The service standards have been published/ announced to the customers via the municipal website, the local door-to-door magazine, leaflets, posters and the municipal guide.

Involvement of the customer

How has it been assessed that the standards are in line with what is on the customers' minds?

The citizen charter is a result of a survey, held by the municipality of Sevenum, into the customer's wishes. The purpose of this survey was to gain a better insight into the services provided by the municipality of Sevenum. This time it wasn't satisfaction that was the subject of the survey, but the wishes and expectations of the customers. We can measure satisfaction only when those wishes and expectations have been identified. The expectations and experiences of four different panels (three comprising residents, 1 comprising entrepreneurs) were identified, which ultimately led to a top 10 of measures. This top 10 of measures formed the input for ten internal taskforces who have started working on the measures.

Involvement of staff

How were the members of staff informed about the development of the citizen charter and how has the involvement of staff been guaranteed?

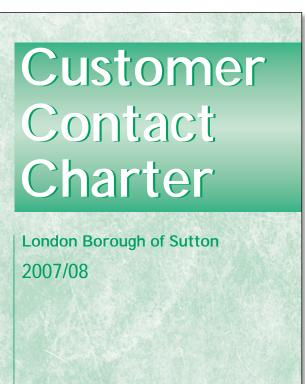
The top 10 of customer's wishes that was the result of the survey was assessed for its feasibility by taskforces comprising 2 to 3 members of staff. These taskforces tested the feasibility of the service standards proposed by the customers and what it requires to realise these standards. As such, the citizen charter was created by the customer and subsequently tested for feasibility by the members of staff. In practice, 90% of the standards as put forward by the customers have been incorporated in the final charter.

Results

In what way have the service standards improved the service you receive?

The citizen charter came into effect in January 2008, so unfortunately we are unable to make any specific statements about this.

Appendix 2



www.sutton.gov.uk



The purpose of this Charter is to define the standard of response that you as a user of Council services can expect when contacting us. We are committed to providing quality services that meet customer's needs and welcome your comments. We will use your comments to make improvements and will update this Charter from time to time to reflect the changes.

CUSTOMER CARE

We aim to give the highest standard of customer care to all members of our community. When contacting us you can expect:

- Staff to acknowledge you, be courteous and give their name and the service area.
- Your dealings with us will be treated as confidential and we will tell you if the information you provide is to be used for any other purpose.
- Our Customer Service staff to take ownership of your issues or problems and to resolve these issues at the first point of contact and not pass you on to anyone else unless necessary.
- To have a choice of access methods to suit a range of needs.
- Not to be kept waiting too long.
- Clear communications
- We will provide additional facilities for hearing and sight impaired customers and those whose first language is not English.

CORPORATE STANDARDS

Telephone Calls

We are changing the ways we deal with telephone calls to our published numbers by creating contact centres that can deal with all requests effectively. You can continue to use the numbers you have previously used, however we have created easy to remember numbers to eventually replace the existing 67 numbers.

- The telephone numbers for our main services are listed in 'Contacting your council - an A - Z guide' available from council reception desks. Information is also listed on our website www.sutton.gov.uk
- We aim to use answerphones as little as possible. If you do leave a recorded message we will get back to you by the end of the next working day.
- If you don't get through to the right person straight away, our staff will transfer you or ask the right person to telephone you back.

When you visit our offices

- One of our receptionist will see you quickly (and you can recognise them by their name badges).
- We aim to see all callers within 3 minutes, but at busy times you might need to wait longer.
- We will provide a comfortable waiting area and an opportunity to discuss your business privately.
- Our receptionists have experience of dealing with most enquiries themselves. Sometimes someone from one of our service areas will be better able to help you.

When you visit our Civic One Stop Shop

- If you need to see someone in our One Stop Shop, our receptionist will give you a ticket or call the appropriate person to see you.
- We aim to see all callers within 30 minutes if they do not have an appointment and within 5 minutes if you have an appointment.
- If queues get too long we will bring down more staff from service areas
- We aim to resolve 80% of queries at first point of contact.

When you visit our Local Access Points

- The Officer will be able to help you on a wide range of services including accepting cheques and credit and debit card payments. If they are unable to help with a complex Housing Benefits or Council Tax they will make an appointment for you to see someone either in the Civic One Stop Shop or at your home. The services we offer are:
- Abandoned Vehicles
- Allotments
- Assorted collections
- Births, Deaths and Marriages
- Bookings bulky items, fridge collections, pavilions and pitches
- Broken Gullies
- Building Control
- Childcare
- Council Housing Rent and Repairs
- Council Tax
- Disabled parking
- Doctors and Dentists
- Dog Fouling and StraysEducation Welfare
- Environmental Health

- Food Complaints
- Garden Waste
- Graffiti
- Health Promotion
- Highways (maintenance, licensing, advertising)
- Housing Benefits
- Land charges
- Licensing
- National Non Domestic Rate
- Noise and Air Pollution
- Parking
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Pest Control
- Planning
- Play scheme
- Refuse
- Recycling
- Renovation Grants
- School Admissions
- School Travel
- School Uniform Grants
- Skip Licences
- Street, Roads and Paths (cleaning, lighting, potholes)
- Student Loans
- Surrendered Vehicles
- Trading Standards
- Trees
- Uniform Grants

Appointments

- We will aim to arrive for appointments within 5 minutes of pre-arranged times.
- We will call you to let you know if we will be later than 5 minutes.
- We will call you in advance if we are unable to keep an appointment.

When you write by letter, email or fax

- We will acknowledge receipt of your email request within 1 working day for published email addresses available on our website. However we cannot guarantee this response from individual officers
- We will reply to your communication within seven working days of receiving it.
- If we cannot answer you fully within seven working days, we will write and tell you who is dealing with your query and when you can expect a full reply, this will be within 20 working days.
- If your communication is about your Council Tax account, Business Rates, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit we aim to reply within 10 working days. We have different targets for appeals or requests for a revision of a benefit claim. If you would like more information about this please call Housing Benefits on 020 8770 5444.
- Our response will give the name and telephone extension of the person dealing with your query.
- We will respond to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act within 20 working days.

When you visit our website www.sutton.gov.uk

- We aim to provide 100% of council information online
- You can report faulty street lighting, abandoned cars, graffiti, rubbish, waste and more
- Make a payment online including council tax, housing rent, parking fines and housing benefit
- Find information on council services, phone numbers, emails and maps
- Comment and complain about a service and have your say
- Find out how to get involved with our current consultations
 Access useful websites by using our external and useful link sections
- Get help on using our website including improving accessibility, easy navigation and help with translations

ACHIEVEMENTS		
General information line (020) 8770 5000	2005/6	2006/7
To answer 95% of all calls.	92%	95%
Average time to answer 15 seconds	14.5 seconds	11 Seconds
75% of calls answered within 20 seconds	90%	92%
Environmental Contact Centre (020) 8770 5070		
To answer 95% of all calls	87%	92%
Average time to answer 20 seconds 75% of calls answered within 20 seconds	50 seconds 65%	34 seconds 71%
80% of calls resolved at the first point of contact	80%	80%
Property Contact Centre - Housing Benefits	3070	0070
(020) 8770 5444		
To answer 70% of calls	78%	88%
Average time to answer 60 seconds	78 seconds	52 seconds
40% of calls answered within 60 seconds	38%	70%
95% of calls resolved at the first point of contact	95%	95%
(The average call time for this service far exceeds the		
other contact centres which is why their time to answer		
is longer).		
Property Contact Centre Council Tax		
(020) 8409 7100 To answer 70% 0f calls	54%	79%
Average time 60 seconds	370 seconds	200 seconds
70% of calls answered within 60 seconds	38%	54%
95% of calls resolved at the first point of contact	95%	95%
The average call time for this service far exceeds the		
other contact centres which is why their time to answer		
is longer		
People Contact Centre Community Services		
and Learning for Life (020) 8770 6080		
To answer 90% of all calls	81%	89%
Average time to answer 40 seconds	50 seconds	34 seconds
75% of calls answered within 40 seconds	67%	77%
60% of calls resolved at the first point of contact	60%	60%
Any other Published Telephone Number		
75% of calls answered within 20 seconds.		
Civic One Stop Shop		
To receive 99.5% overall satisfaction	99.5%	99.9%
95% of customers to be seen within 3 minutes for initial contact	95%	95%
80% of queries resolved at first point of contact	80%	80%

Appendix 3

"Marianne Label" service commitments

You want better and more available services.	We will regularly carry out surveys in order to understand your expectations and adapt our opening hours accordingly.			
We are committed to providing the best possible access based on your needs.	We will keep you informed about when and how you can access our services, and let you know each time these conditions change. 3. We will direct you to the right service and look after you.			
your needs.				
	We will provide easier access for persons with reduced mobility.			
	We will provide a customised welcome for disadvantaged persons.			
You expect to be treated with more consideration.	6. We will treat you with courtesy and give you the name of your correspondent.			
We are committed to treating you courteously and efficiently.	7. We will make it easier for you to consult your files.			
you countedusly and emelenily.	We will provide you with comfortable waiting and reception areas.			
You want your requests handled quickly.	 We will ensure that our letters and e-mails are readable and understandable. 			
We are committed to dealing with them within the stated time periods.	10. We will deal with your letters within a maximum of 15 working days.			
them within the stated time periods.	11. We will deal with your e-mails within a maximum of 5 working days.			
	12. We will answer your telephone calls within 5 rings and handle them appropriately.			
You expect your suggestions and complaints to be taken into account. We are committed to better responding to your feedback.	13. We will respond to your suggestions and complaints concerning our service commitments within a maximum of 15 working days.			
You want us to listen to you more. We want you to help us make progress.	14. Every year we will carry out a satisfaction survey and publish the results.			
To meet our commitments, we will improve our organisation	15. We are committed to improving our services and involving our staff in the process.			
and expand our skills.	16. We will ensure that our literature provides users with accurate and up-to-date information.			
	17. We will regularly check that our commitments are being met.			
	18. We will regularly evaluate our practices with a desire for continuous improvement.			
	19. We will produce an annual report, and initiate actions for improving reception of users and the services they receive.			

"Marianne Label" detailed list of service commitments (extract)

No.	Commitment	Explanation		
	You want better and more available services. We are committed to providing the best possible access based on your needs.			
1	We will regularly carry out surveys in order to understand your needs and adapt our opening hours accordingly.	We conduct surveys to understand users' needs and expectations concerning accessibility. Based on the results and on analysis of our practices, we can adjust the opening hours of our reception points and create appointment-only time slots.		
2	We will keep you informed about when and how you can access our services, and let you know each time these conditions change.	Type of information: Users are provided with the following information about a given public organisation: Street address(es), e-mail address(es) and telephone number(s) Opening hours for in-person and telephone contacts Peak and off-peak visiting hours Useful access information (nearby parking areas, access via public transportation, specific information for those with limited mobility, etc.) Projected average waiting times, except under exceptional circumstances, which will be announced to users Documents essential for completing and handling users' files How to make an appointment Commitments concerning the quality of users' reception How users can communicate suggestions and complaints about whether the service guidelines have been met In addition to this information, users are also offered: The opportunity to conduct their affairs from a distance (via Internet or a call center, for example) The URL for the official portal for the French civil service (www. service-public.fr), and the call number 3939, for all information concerning user rights and procedures to follow Means for providing this information to the public: Up-to-date information is available at the service's public reception points and on its web site (if it has one). The site must comply with the Ergonomics Charter that has been defined for all French civil service sites for the general public. Upon request, information may also be sent via mail or e-mail. The commitments in the Marianne Service Guidelines are displayed in a visible manner. Opening days and times are clearly displayed outside the building's main entrance. The organisation's current postal address, telephone numbers and opening hours are available on www.service-public.fr.		

Appendix 4

Estonian Tax and Customs Board

Declaration of Income of Natural Persons in 2006

The promises to the client

Internet homepage

On the Internet homepage of the Tax and Customs Board (www.emta.ee) the tax return forms, guidelines for filling in the tax returns, the texts of legal acts, etc. are available. Information and guidelines are also available in Russian.

Telephone accessibility

We will help you in filling both the paper tax returns and electronic tax returns. Average waiting time upon calling is 25 seconds. Simple and routine questions will be answered immediately. If the problem is more complicated or it concerns a taxpayer's personal data:

- the phone call shall be forwarded to a tax expert, or
- the taxpayer's telephone number or e-mail address shall be asked, and the taxpayer will get an answer not later than within 2 workdays, or
- the telephone number of the tax expert shall be given to the taxpayer.

Information telephone responds in Estonian, Russian or English.

Written questions

If answering presumes further collection of information, the answer shall be issued within 30 calendar days. Simple and routine questions are answered within 5 workdays. The questions are answered in Estonian, but also in other languages.

Service Bureaus

Service bureaus are open from Monday till Thursday at 8.30 A.M.–16.30 P.M. and on Friday 8.30- A.M. - 15.30 P.M. Average waiting time is 10 minutes, and the maximum waiting time is 30 minutes. Service is provided in Estonian, also in other languages. In all service bureaus there are computers available for usage and the officials will help you to fill in the tax return if needed. You may also slip a filled tax return form into a special post box in the service bureau.

Refund of income tax

From 22nd February 2007 refunding the amount of income tax overpaid to the taxpayers, who have submitted their income tax returns through the E-Tax Board, will begin. From April refunding the amounts of income tax overpaid to the taxpayers, who have submitted their income tax returns on paper format, will start. The Tax and Customs Board shall refund the amounts of tax overpaid to the bank accounts shown in the tax returns not later than by 1st July 2007.

Appendix 5

Practitioners Handbook – Malta cases

Overview

The following cases are taken from Service Standards and from Quality Service Charters.

Service Standards apply across the Maltese Public Service, except where superseded by higher standards in a department's Quality Service Charter. Service Standards are divided into five (5) categories related to: Correspondence and Communication: Appointments and Queues; Information: Complaints: and Accessibility.

Quality Service Charters are a formal commitment by an organisation to deliver a quality service and include:

- a guide to services offered;
- a statement of customers' rights and responsibilities;
- standards related to time and quality of service; and
- a formal complaints procedure.

Case Examples – Service Standards

- Answer phone calls within 3 rings and supply identification. If query cannot be answered by
 respondent, the latter will put caller in contact with the relevant person, department or section.
 The person handling the first call is to ensure that the caller has managed to get through
- Provide, where necessary, a Freephone service or a direct telephone line for queries
- See customers within fifteen minutes of their appointment time.

Case Examples – Quality Service Charters

The following samples were taken from three (3) Quality Service Charters and highlight these elements accordingly. Samples are accompanied by a brief description of the organisation, as well as the launch date for the said Charters.

Central Public Library

Charter Launched: May 11, 1999

Our commitment

We deliver a wide range of services and host 6 libraries, namely the Adult and Junior Libraries, the Melitensia Library, the Reference Library, the Audio-Visual Library and the Special Needs Library. You can expect us to:

- be quick, courteous and helpful at all times;
- be knowledgeable, dedicated and well-trained in customer care and library procedures;
- · identify ourselves by wearing nametags.

Passports Office - Malta

Launched: October 29, 1999

Apart from the Quality Service Charter, the Office also offers an interactive website and related e-services at www.passaporti.gov.mt

Our services

Applying for a new passport for the first time (Persons over 16 years of age)

Application forms are available from:

- our Office;
- police stations;
- local councils;
- · travel agencies; or
- our website.
- 2. If you handed in your application personally, you may collect your passport after 4 working days. If you sent your application through the mail, you may collect your passport 7 working days after mailing it to us. If your application form is not adequately completed, we will contact you for any missing information. In these cases your application may take a longer time to be processed.

We also provide a next day service should you require it. This service is offered at an extra charge of \in 30.28 (Lm13).

Cleansing Services Department

Launched: November 18, 2005

The Cleansing Service Department's mission is to provide Waste Management Services to Central Government and Local Councils, particularly Public Cleansing, in order to keep urban and non-urban areas free from litter and illegally dumped waste, thus enhancing the environment.

How we monitor our performance

Assessing how well we perform against our charter standards is an important element for your satisfaction. We maintain our standards by taking into consideration queries, complaints or requests we receive from you and by conducting customer surveys. We also review our chartered standards periodically.

If you are not satisfied with our service

If you think that we have failed to maintain our service delivery standards for our services and you want to lodge a complaint, please send an email on customercare.cleansing@gov.mt or write to:

The Director,
Cleansing Services Department,
Kordin Industrial Estate
Paola PLA08.

We apply the same standards of service we use for correspondence and will investigate your complaint immediately.

Learning from you!

We welcome any suggestions for service improvement. Kindly forward us your suggestions by filling in the Feedback Form attached to this leaflet and leaving it in the suggestion box or send it by post to our office. You can also lodge a complaint, make a suggestion or ask a question by accessing the Customer Care System at www.servizz.gov.mt

Colophon

Edition

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