

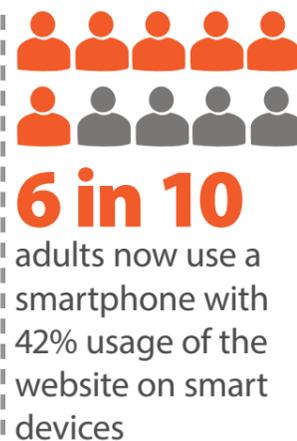
Customer access strategy

Improving how services are accessed by our customers, with a particular focus on digitising our services.

What is it?

Improving access to services for our customers.

Context



What are the priorities?

Supporting customers to access 80% of Council services online

Improving the efficiency of customer service processes

Measuring customer experiences and acting on feedback

Providing a framework of digital skills and support



Customer Access Strategy 2016

This strategy sets out how Cornwall Council will deliver innovative, efficient and easy to use contact channels to enable our customers to access our services where and when they need them – digital by preference and access for all.

Part of Cornwall Council's Organisational Development Framework

Foreword – Mark Read, Head of Customers and Communities

I am pleased to introduce our 2016 Customer Access Strategy, which sets out the way we will provide customer services to the people of Cornwall.

The strategy is about responding to our customers' current and future needs and tailoring services to meet those needs within our budget.

Our customers want services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable and cost effective. We need to be able to adapt to new technologies that will help us deliver services in new ways. We also need to develop more seamless services together with our partners, communities and the voluntary sector.

Exceptional budget pressures and new technology are changing the way we deliver our services across Cornwall. That means we have to rethink how we interact with our customers, ensuring we deliver our services within the budget available to us. At the same time as the organisation is changing, our customers' expectations are increasing. Widely available internet access and mobile technology mean that customers expect to access services and be able to communicate with us anytime and anywhere. They are also more willing to use self-service channels because of the greater convenience they offer.

This strategy embraces the shift to digital channels and self-service while ensuring that customers who need to access services in more traditional ways still can. It builds on research and best practice and is driven by customer needs. It sets out our aspiration for customer access, the principles that shape what we do and how we will engage customers and other stakeholders in its delivery.

Links with other strategies and initiatives

The Customer Access Strategy will support the delivery of the Council's Strategy and its Business Plan. It will also complement the delivery of the Organisational Development Framework and is closely linked to some of the 10 component strategies, including:

- The **Business Improvement Strategy** is leading on driving forward Organisational Development across the organisation leading to more efficient and effective service delivery.
- Communication is key in any change environment, and the **Communications and Marketing Strategy** will ensure that clear communications channels are in place in order to engage and consult with staff across the organisation.
- The **People Strategy**, through the development of People Plans will provide the tools to ensure that our staff are customer focussed at all times.
- The **Information Strategy** will be pivotal in ensuring that the right technology is in place to enable our customers to access our services in the way that they want.

Cornwall Council's Organisational Development Framework

The Customer Access Strategy is one of ten strategies which sit beneath Cornwall Council's Organisational Development (OD) Strategic Framework.

Each strategy focusses on a different aspect of the organisation and will contribute to the overall ambition of the OD Strategic Framework:

Cornwall Council; fit for purpose and prepared for the future

The Customer Access Strategy will also contribute to the achievement of the four strategic aims of the OD framework:



The actions identified in the ten strategies will be incorporated into the Council's annual business and service plans for delivery. These are subject to the Council's standard risk and performance management processes.

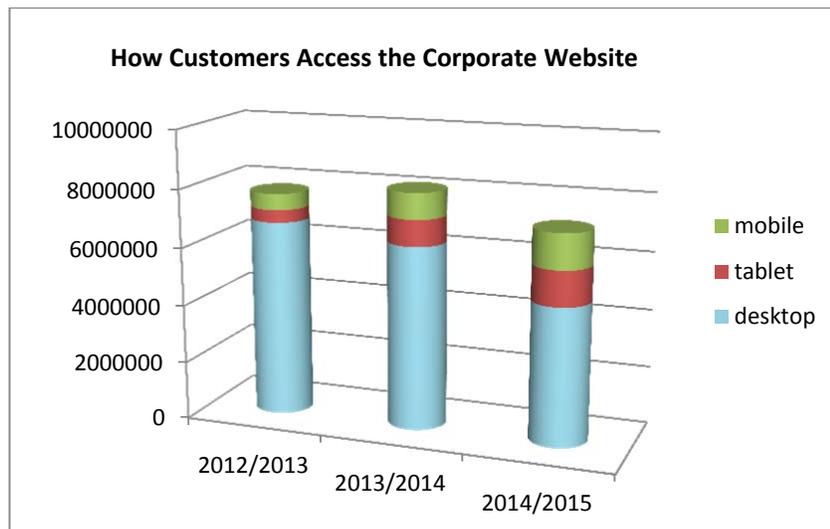
The Organisational Development Steering Group will monitor delivery of the overall framework and progress towards the four strategic aims.

Context

Cornwall has over 540,000 residents with a wide variety of needs spread across a large rural area. The Council and other public sector organisations are facing significant budget reductions against a backdrop of growth and increasing customer demands.

Since 2012 there has been a rise in the number of people saying they prefer to use email or websites to complete government processes¹. At the same time, the number of people using mobile technology is increasing. 83% of adults in Cornwall now go online using different devices in any location.

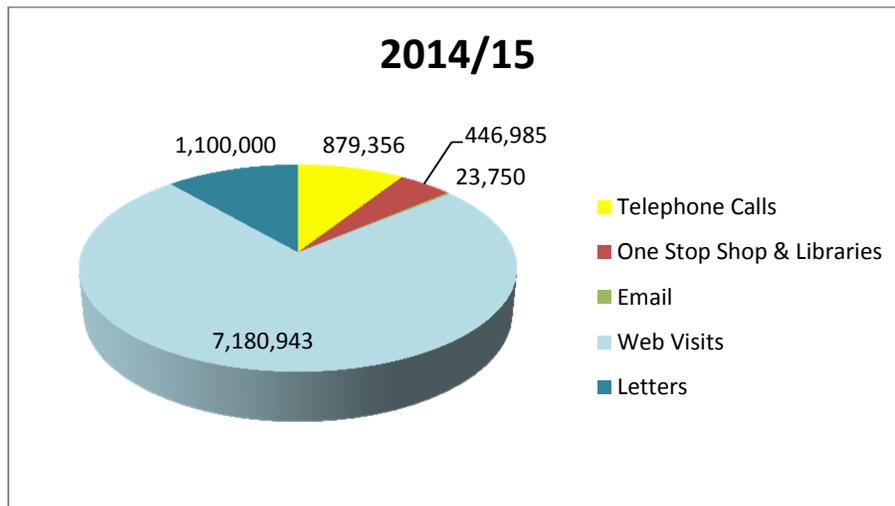
This change is also reflected in the way customers access our website. Over the last three years there has been a shift from using PCs to access our website to using tablets and phones instead.



We need to respond to these changes in our customers' behaviour and our budget by ensuring that more of our services are designed to be delivered digitally. This will provide quicker and more convenient access for those customers who choose to use digital services while freeing up resources to provide services in other ways for those who can't access services digitally or who are vulnerable.

¹ Source: <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/other/research-publications/adults/adults-media-lit-14/>

The chart below shows how customers chose to contact the Council last year:



While modern efficient channels such as the website are well established, there is clearly potential to encourage more customers to make the switch from more traditional channels such as face to face and letter.

By 2019 we aim to have:

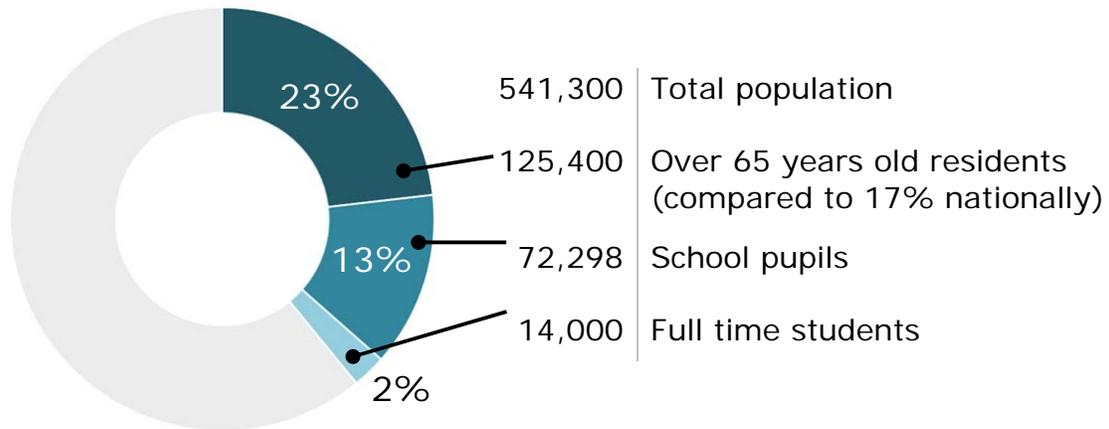
- 100% of our services that are able to be accessible online, are accessible online
- Specialist advice available where it is needed rather than everywhere
- Clear customer standards
- A Cornwall wide programme to help customers develop digital skills, co-ordinated with our partners
- A Library and Information Service that is delivered within budget and meets its statutory obligation of being 'comprehensive, efficient and available to all who wish to use it'
- Fewer cash payments from customers in preference for paying in more cost effective ways
- A modern, responsive telephony service
- Ways to routinely monitor customer feedback and satisfaction

Developing a better understanding of our customers forms a key part of this strategy. As we move toward more accessible services and efficient communication, we must take into account the different requirements of Cornwall's local communities and the ways in which local people want to interact with the Council. What works in one part of Cornwall will not necessarily work in other areas.

We need to be clear about who our customers are, the level of service they actually want, how customers currently access our services and how they might access those services in the future. A current snapshot of our customers is shown overleaf:

Resident population

Key groups



Cornwall Local profile (at 2014/15 unless stated)

541,300	Residents
264,005	Number of habitable households
21,480	Businesses
13,500 (4.9%)	People unemployed, compared to 6.5% nationally (2013/14)
63,000	People have never accessed the internet in Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
4m	Domestic overnight tourism trips to Cornwall a year (2013)
319,000	Trips from overseas visitors a year
53,166 (10.0%)	Population who say their day to day activities are limited due to a long term health problem or disability, compared to 8.5% for England and Wales (2011)
7,180,943	Visits to our website
800,000	Calls handled at our contact centre
Over 1,000,000	Items received by post in a year
9941	Live web chats in a year
78,000	Web forms received through current online services 2014/15
440,000	Visits to our one stop shops
83%	% of adults on-line using any type of device in any location
9%	% increase in those over 65 going online
6 in 10	Adults using a smart phone
20,500	Cornwall Council followers on Twitter
77,000	Visits via Facebook to our website

Sources: 2013/4, Annual Population Survey, Mid-year 2013 population estimates, ONS, UK Businesses: Activity, Size and Location, 2011 Census, DfE Looked-after children (at 31 March 2014), Cornwall Council Strategic housing Framework, Great Britain Tourism Survey, International Passenger Survey (IPS), Office for National Statistics, Cornwall Council. Stakeholder.ofcom.org.uk/market data resear

How will we deliver the Customer Access strategy?

- The delivery of the Customer Access Strategy will be led by the Customer and Digital team, following a distinct programme of work and supported by customers, staff and members.

How will we measure our success?

At its core, the strategy will measure its success through the delivery of the programme of work with 5 defined work streams. The work streams will ultimately deliver the following:

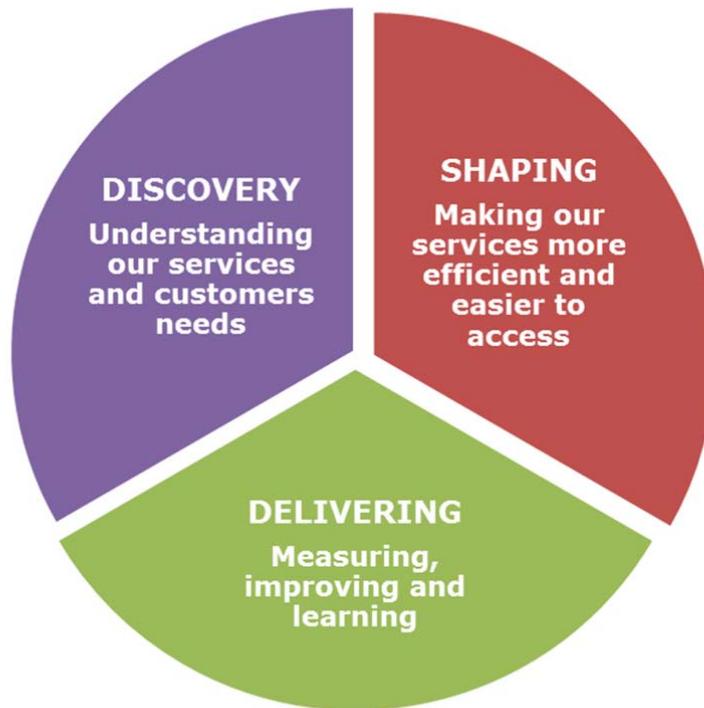
- Developing a better understanding of who the Council's customers are and how they need and want to access its services;
- Establishing the costs of delivering services using current contact channels and which channels customers use most;
- Involving customers in designing new services so they meet customers' needs;
- Informing and educating customers to help them move to new ways of accessing Council services;
- Ensuring Council services and processes are reviewed regularly and changed as needed so they are delivered effectively and efficiently;
- Helping customers to develop their skills so they can use digital services but also providing suitable alternatives for those who can't use digital services;
- Using new technology and channels for customer access where it's efficient and effective

Ultimately this 4 year programme will deliver:

- 100% of services that are able to be accessible online, are accessible online
- Specialist advice available where it is needed rather than everywhere;
- Clear customer standards
- A Cornwall wide programme to help customers develop digital skills, co-ordinated with partners;
- A Library and Information Service that is delivered within budget and meets its statutory obligation of being 'comprehensive, efficient and available to all who wish to use it';
- A reduced average transaction cost in relation to payments from customers making maximum use of digital technology.;
- A modern, responsive telephone service;
- Ways to routinely monitor customer feedback and satisfaction

The strategy integrates into the Organisational Development Framework to strengthen the manner in which the Council achieves its strategic and operational priorities.

Our Customer Access Strategy is made up of three strategic aims:



Over the next few pages each of these will be presented as follows:

- The **strategic aim** describes what we are going to do to support the overall Council Strategy.
- The **rationale** explains why this is important and describes the current context.
- The activities explain **what we will need to do** or put in place to achieve our strategic aims.
- The measures describe **how we will evaluate our success**.

Strategic aim:

Discovery – understanding our services and customers

The rationale...

The discovery phase is about defining customer expectations. Cornwall's residents have widely varying needs and are spread across a large geographical area. Each local area has different expectations and needs.

To improve services for our customers, we need a better understanding of who they are and how they expect services to be delivered. Traditional methods of contact, such as face to face or letter, are usually more expensive and time consuming. Understanding why certain customers prefer these channels can help us to help them to move to quicker and more efficient channels.

We also need to understand the level of service customers want before we can improve the customer experience. Examining the customer journey and the cost of delivering each process can identify key areas for improvement as well as the areas customers consider to be less important and where savings might be made.

Using customer insight, feedback and consulting with different customer groups and partner organisations will help us to understand the requirements of our customers and also identify those customers that may be vulnerable or have more specialist needs. Identifying these customer groups for which digital services and self-service may not be the most suitable type of access, will enable us to develop our services to meet all of our customers' needs and ensure no one is excluded from accessing services.

Understanding both our customers and our services during the discovery phase will enable us to make decisions based on real data and real customer feedback instead of making assumptions about what our customers want.

We will achieve our aim by...

- Developing a more in-depth understanding of who our customers are
- Understanding why services are used in the way that they are
- Understanding and defining needs and expectations of customers across different communities
- Capturing accurate customer data within services
- Understanding the cost of delivering our services
- Analysing data to forecast future needs
- Developing systems to collect and monitor customer feedback and satisfaction from all access channels
- Reviewing of Freedom of Information requests, complaints and compliments every month
- Using our understanding of our customers to reduce digital exclusion

How will we know we've been successful...

- All staff will routinely capture customer insights and feedback and act on them.
- We will involve customers in designing our services and build services around customer needs and expectations.
- Digital champions will help customers develop their digital skills.
- We will have clear customer standards in place.

Strategic aim:

Shaping – making our services more efficient and easier to access

The rationale...

The shaping phase is about changing the way we deliver our services and the channels we offer based on what we learn in the discovery phase. Ensuring we make accessing our services easier and quicker for customers and more efficient for the Council. It involves streamlining and improving the customer journey via digital services, while still providing efficient traditional channels for those who have specialist or additional needs and can't access digital services.

We want to deal with more customers at the first point of contact, with staff signposting self-service options where suitable for the customer's needs and channelling customers towards our existing information points and partners. As more services become available online more customers will be able to self-serve, but only if we tell them about our online services and only if the services are easy to use – effective marketing is key and this strategy has close links with the Councils Communication & Marketing Strategy.

We will use the understanding of our customers developed during the discovery phase to define our services and deliver them in the most efficient way. The whole authority needs to record customer contacts so we can develop individual profiles for customers that include all of their contacts with us.

Our customers expect good and consistent standards across all our services. We need a comprehensive plan to ensure our staff are empowered to deliver high levels of service and have the skills they need to do so. It is particularly important our staff are skilled to be able to identify where customers may need additional support and how most appropriate to direct them so they can easily access the necessary services in a way that meets their needs.

Our one stop shops currently undertake a large amount of cash and cheque transactions which are costly to collect, reconcile and manage. Encouraging customers to move to more cost effective payment methods will reduce the need for cash and cheque transactions.

New technology continues to emerge and customer preferences change. We must be prepared to change our customer contact channels and the way we deliver our services based on our customers' preferences and needs. In this phase we will continue to develop our web chat and social media options to make our service delivery more effective.

We will achieve our aim by...

- Taking a corporate approach to encouraging customers to move to more efficient and effective methods of interacting with the Council
- Dealing with more customers at first point of contact
- Encouraging customers to take a self-help approach and seek information online first
- Redesigning services based on customer feedback
- Making more of our services available online
- Enabling all customers to access our services, whether they have digital skills or not
- Implementing corporate customer standards
- Providing secure and easy to use online transactions
- Encouraging customers to make payments in efficient and cost effective ways

How will we know we have been successful:

- Managers and staff will understand and be able to design and deliver digital services.
- We will have a standardised design for our digital services.
- 100% of our services that are able to be accessible online, are accessible online.
- Our services will be designed for and with our customers.
- We will have clear and consistent customer standards across the authority.
- The whole authority will record customer contacts, which will be used to create an individual profile for each customer.
- Customer feedback and industry measures will rate our website as comprehensive, easy to use and accessible.
- Customers will have high rates of satisfaction with our automated telephony system.
- We will provide specialist advice available where it is needed rather than everywhere.
- Our security governance will be adequate.
- There will be a partnership improving digital inclusion across Cornwall.
- We will use new technology and customer preferences to provide better customer contact.
- Customers will make fewer cash payments in preference for and more cost effective payment methods.
- All our customers can access our services regardless of their individual needs e.g having information available in formats suitable for people with disabilities and minority groups, including the Cornish, translation services available for people who do not speak English as their first language etc.

Strategic aim:

Delivering – measuring, improving and learning

The rationale...

The delivering phase is about continuing to monitor and improve the customer experience after we have reshaped our services. We need to design our processes with a clear definition of what the service will look like when it's successful, how we will measure the service's level of success and how we will record customer feedback.

Service review and redesign needs to be a normal part of service delivery. This will help us to provide a better customer experience by determining when services need to change, expand or be discontinued.

Having redesigned our services around our customers' needs, in this phase we need to help more customers move to more efficient ways of contacting the Council. Our individual customer profiles will identify those customers who are still using traditional channels to access services and suggest better ways of meeting their needs. Where appropriate to do so we will work with customers to help them understand the benefits of moving to modern channels and to remove any barriers to them doing so.

Consistent customer standards also play a key role in customer satisfaction. We will ensure that all staff understand the level of service they are expected to provide and that they have the skills they need. We will monitor service levels and provide feedback on areas for improvement if required.

We will work with service area teams across the Council to ensure that they have the skills they need to continually improve services and encourage customers to move to more efficient channels.

We will look to the future, keeping our finger on the pulse of new ways of delivering services, considering risks while not being afraid to challenge the norm in order to deliver effective and efficient services for both our customer and the Council.

We will achieve our aim by...

- Ensuring measurement and monitoring are integral to each new service
- Constantly reviewing and improving our processes
- Providing a consistent quality of customer contact
- Improving our customer standards based on customer feedback
- Promoting new ways for customers to contact us and access services
- Reducing and managing customer demand
- Measuring, managing and improving performance digitally

How will we know we've been successful...

- We will design our processes to include ways of measuring whether they are effective.
- We will promote and market modern and improved channels and services to our customers.
- We will publish our customer charter, customer standards and complaints procedure.
- Customer satisfaction levels will remain stable or improve.
- We will have fewer complaints about service delivery.
- Services will have the skills to develop processes themselves.
- All of our contact channels and new services will include ways of collecting and monitoring customer feedback.
- We will benchmark ourselves against similar high performing organisations

Summary...

- This strategy sets out how we will develop customer access to our services over the next four years.
- Key actions include:
 - Developing a better understanding of who our customers are and how they need and want to access our services
 - Establishing the costs of delivering services using our current channels and which channels customers use most
 - Involving customers in designing new services so they meet customers' needs
 - Informing and educating customers to help them move to new ways of accessing our services
 - Ensuring our services and processes are reviewed regularly and changed as needed so they are delivered effectively and efficiently
 - Helping customers to develop their skills so they can use digital services but also providing suitable alternatives for those who can't use digital services
 - Using new technology and channels for customer access where it's efficient and effective

By 2019 we will have:

- 100% of our services that are able to be accessible online, accessible online
- Specialist advice available where it is needed rather than everywhere
- Clear customer standards
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