

Customer Insight Report 2018/19



Getting things right first time,
every time



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Our Vision

Getting things right first time, every time

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29th July 2019

Context

The purpose of this Customer Insight report is to bring together the information about how well we are performing against our Customer Promise and making progress towards our Customer Experience Vision in 2018/19.

By customer we mean any user of council services, whether voluntary or involuntary. This includes residents and visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives.

This report presents what we currently know about our customer services. Our aim is to ensure we better understand the needs of all of our customers, and to learn and grow consistently from the feedback we receive, in order to improve the customer experience.



Customer Insight is one element of our Performance Management Framework that sets out how the council manages performance, to achieve our purpose as set out in the Corporate Plan.

Our Customer Promise

Our promise to you

We have developed our customer service standards as a promise to customers, which we monitor through a range of measures to make sure we are keeping that promise.

To ensure that our Promise is focused on what is important to our customers, during its development, we surveyed a sample of visitors to the Customer Service Centres in Brighton and in Hove.

Customers were asked to rank the qualities of customer service delivery in order of what they felt was most important.

Of those surveyed:

- 40% said that 'First contact resolution' was most important to them
- 21% said 'Professionalism'
- 13% said 'Waiting times'
- 12% said 'A choice of ways to contact the council'
- 7% said 'Being listened to'
- 7% said 'Easy to access services'

In addition to the above survey, we reviewed the feedback we receive from customers through a variety of means such as online survey responses, customer complaints and compliments. Our Customer Promise was created from these priorities, in collaboration with representatives from front line services.

To maximise our ability to keep our promise to customers, we don't just apply these standards to staff who deal directly with customers, but to all staff who work for the council, including those in support services such as Human Resources, IT& Digital teams, Finance, Health and Safety. This approach helps ensure that staff who do deal directly with residents have the appropriate infrastructure, tools and support to deliver the best customer service that they can.

Our customer promise to you

We will make it clear how you can contact or access our services



- Communicate with you digitally where possible and appropriate, because it is more convenient for you and often quicker and more cost effective
- Where digital access is not appropriate offer you different ways to contact us and use our services
- Where you have a disability or impairment, we will work with you to find the best ways to communicate.

We will be clear and treat you with respect



- Increasingly provide digital services but still aim to deliver a personal service, treating you with courtesy, politeness and understanding
- Be clear and easy to understand in all our communication with you
- Keep your personal data secure and ensure your confidentiality.

We will understand and get things done



- Aim to answer the query at first point of contact, when this cannot be achieved we provide clear information about next steps so you know what to expect
- Take care to fully understand and respond appropriately to your needs
- Keep you informed with up to date information and explain what we have done
- Make sure our officers have the skills and tools to deliver the service you need
- Work together across the council to provide a service that minimises your efforts.

You can help us to keep our promise by

- Treating us politely and with respect
- Letting us know if you have any specific needs
- Giving us the information we need to deal with your enquiry
- Telling us if you are happy or unhappy with our service
- Participating when we seek feedback so we can learn and improve.

Please tell us how we are doing

- We welcome all feedback including when things don't go right. Feedback helps us to learn from what we are doing well and also our mistakes. We are committed to using this information to improve our services
- Please tell us how satisfied you are with our service, [this short survey should take you approximately two minutes](#)
- If you would like to provide a detailed compliment or complaint please [contact the customer feedback team](#).

Monitoring our performance against this promise

- We check our performance through monitoring:
 - Customer satisfaction and ease of access
 - Number of compliments and complaints received
 - Evidence of how our customers contact us
 - Survey of residents of Brighton & Hove and service users
- The results will be published through our [Customer Insight Report](#) annually.

Different ways to contact us

Website

We will:

- Aim to have the Council website available for 24 hours a day all year round
- Continually improve the ability to interact with us digitally

Face to face

We will:

- Make sure our Customer service buildings are fully accessible
- Aim to greet you on average within five minutes of arrival and to see you within 20 minutes
- Make clear the range of ways of contacting us

Written communication

We will:

- Ensure all service emails are set up with 'automatic reply' with a clear indication of what will happen next

Social media

We will:

- Be clear how frequently we will respond to any queries received
- Be proactive in sharing relevant information and keep this up to date

Telephones

We will:

- Aim to keep average waiting times under ten minutes. When high demand is anticipated we will give an indication of the expected wait
- Update voicemails and telephone messages regularly to hold accurate information

We have listened to our customers and created this promise using their suggestions and priorities. (July 2017)



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Our Customer Experience Vision: *Getting things right first time, every time*

Efficiency



Services are available online, where possible and are easy to find



Council information systems are joined up appropriately to make it easier for customers



It is clear to customers what the best way of contacting the council is, based on what they need



Staff are skilled in delivering customer service, including being able to resolve customer dissatisfaction quickly and fairly



The Customer Promise is checked regularly to make sure it includes what is important for customers



All services are delivered to the standards set in the Customer Promise



Customers feel confident that everything we do is in keeping with the Customer Promise



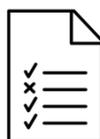
All services engage with those who may be affected before making changes

Consistency

Improvements



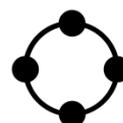
Making improvements to the customer experience is a priority in everyone's day to day role



Customers are asked what they think about the services they receive and their feedback is acted upon



The data and knowledge that the council collects, is used to understand and to improve things for customers



Services work together to improve the customer experience in a consistent way



Council resources are appropriately used to manage customer needs through all contact methods



All services support each other positively to fulfill the Customer Promise

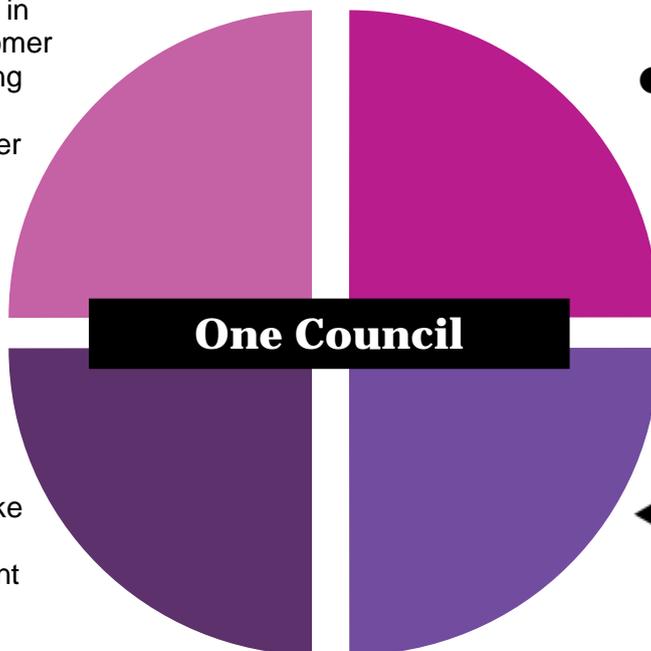


Staff are all able to offer basic advice, support or signposting to other council services and external support.



The council works with other public or private services, charities and community groups to resolve issues together

Resilience



Results summary

Overall satisfaction with the council

As per the 2018 City Tracker survey of residents of Brighton & Hove

satisfaction with the city council is

54%



This is an 9% decrease from the 2017 result of 63%. The national benchmark (LGA resident survey 2018) is 60% - down from 65% in 2017 which indicates the national trend in decreased satisfaction.

These results are based on residents' perception of council services, rather than experience and could be influenced by a range of factors including factors external to the council.

Customer feedback received



There has been a 46% increase, from **922** to **1345** in compliments received about council services. The highest proportional changes have been for Housing Repairs and Maintenance services (+79 compliments) and Registration services (+53)



There has been a 12% increase in complaints, from **1,560** in 2017/18* to **1,740** in 2018/19*. The highest proportional increases have been for CityClean (+114 complaints) and Highways (+25). The service with the greatest proportional decrease is Children's Social Care (-26)

*March - Feb

% of those satisfied with the council by demographic group (10% +/- difference from city average)

76% aged 75+

69% identified as LGB (T not included as response rate to that question was too low for the results to be representative)

54% of all respondents

43% who rent their home from a Housing Association or Trust

41% of those who disagreed that they would have enough money to live on

Complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2

The trend for reduced escalation of cases from Stage 1 to Stage 2 continues, which implies an improvement in Stage 1 responses to customer complaints.

2016/17	12%	Areas with the highest rate of escalation in 2018/19: City Development & Regeneration (36%), Safer Communities (35%)
2017/18	9.9%	
2018/19	9.8%	Areas with the lowest rate of escalation in 2018/19: Revenues & Benefits (6%), CityClean (6%)

Complaints escalated to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman

Percentage of cases upheld in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17

The reduction in the percentage of cases that are upheld by the LGO implies an improvement in handling Stage two complaints

Nationally	Comparator Authorities	BHCC 
57% up from 54%	59% up from 57%	57% down from 67%

The number of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days has reduced, going from 72% in 2017/18, to 63% in 2018/19.

72%



63%

Response times to Stage 1 complaints have improved in year, going from 47% in quarter 2 to 79% in quarter 4.

2017/18

44%

2018/19

78%

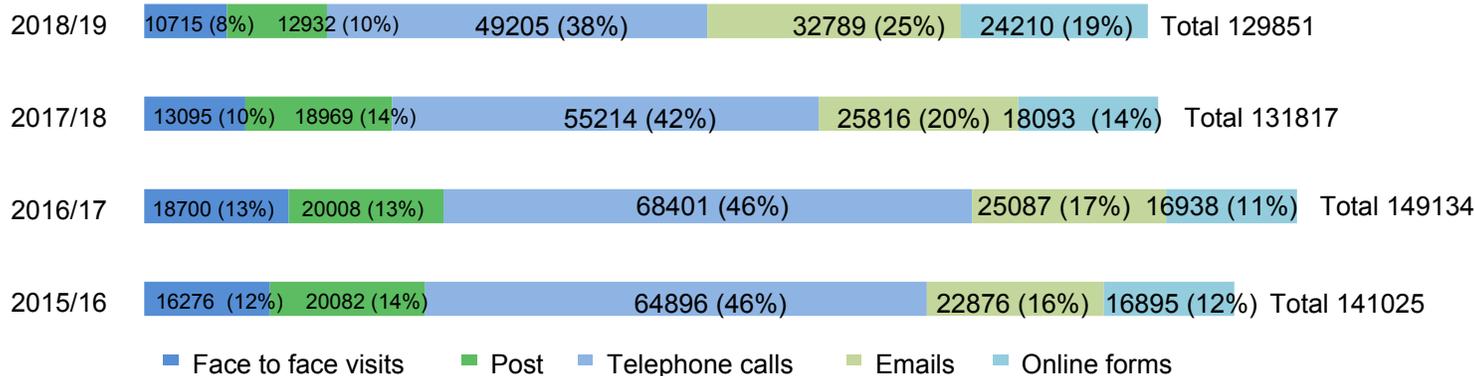
The number of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days has increased, going from 44% in 2017/18 to 78% in 2018/19.



Organisation wide prioritisation of complaints handling and awareness of the positive impact of swift complaint resolution on customer satisfaction, has particularly improved services' engagement with the Stage 2 investigation process, enabling more timely responses.

All contact volumes given are monthly averages

Contact volumes for transactional services by channel



The overall volume of customer contact has reduced by 3% since 2017/18. The trend continues in the direction of increased uptake of digital contact channels (email and online forms) with face to face, telephone and postal methods of communication reducing.

Phone

Overall, incoming calls to the organisation have reduced by 12% since 2017/18, with particular decreases seen in City Environment (49%) and Benefits Services (27%).

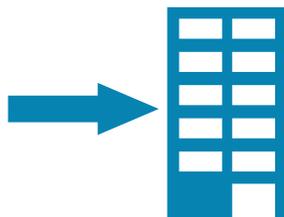
In addition to this, calls to a switchboard operator have reduced by 12% (from 7,493 to 6,592) with more callers using the automated options available rather than choosing to be put through by an operator.

Between April 2018 and March 2019, monthly average call waiting times for the teams with the highest contact volumes (Access Point, City Environment, Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Housing Management, Housing Needs, Parking) have been below 10 minutes, keeping our promise to customers.

Abandoned call rates range from 44% to 10% depending on the service. On average, 18% of calls were abandoned by the caller after an average of 4.5 minutes in a queue.

Face to Face contact

There has been a 18% reduction in footfall to service reception points overall since 2017/18



Services with most significant reductions

- Benefits
- Housing Management
- Parking
- Housing Needs

Online forms

Overall submissions of online forms have increased by 34% since 2017/18.

Notable increases since 2017/18 have been seen within the City Environment service (71%) and Revenues services (90%)



Website

Overall visits to the council website have increased by 27% since last year, at 6.2 million sessions.



Emails

Overall, there has been a 27% increase in unstructured emails since 2017/18

Post

Incoming post volumes continue to reduce with a 32% decrease overall since 2017/18. Significant decreases have been seen in Revenues (35%) and Benefits Services (37%)



Customer Satisfaction with Customer Service Centres



Brighton Customer Service Centre

Hove Customer Service Centre

Satisfaction with reception services at the council's Customer Service Centres has increased -

2017/18

73%

92%

20% more customers were satisfied at the Brighton Customer Service Centre than in 2017/18.

2018/19

93%

91%

Key changes in customer contact

Key changes in customer contact include:

City Environment

City Environment contact centre has seen a 49% reduction in phone contact from 7488 calls on average per month in 2017/18 to 3850 calls on average per month in 2018/19. Email contact to City Environment has also reduced since last year (23%) and online form submissions have increased (71%). These changes reflect the activities undertaken as part of the City Environment Modernisation Programme which have complemented the digital transformation work. An increase in the online offering means residents can now report many issues online. There has been improved management of contact channels which has reduced the number of residents chasing information or reporting the same information twice.

Benefits services

Overall contact to the Benefits service has reduced by 11%, and submissions of online benefit claim forms have reduced by 52% since 2017/18, however, the introduction of Universal Credit has meant that fewer new claims for Benefits are being received by the council. The Benefits service still has a case load of around 19,000 customers, and continues to encourage customer contact through more efficient and effective means, such as email, rather than customers having to visit in person or having to post documentation. The service has seen a 34% reduction in face to face contact since 2017/18 (from 1656 visits on average per month, to 1099 visits on average per month), a 27% decrease in telephone contact (from 4418 to 3247 calls on average per month) and a 37% reduction in post (from 10,495 pieces of post in 2017/18 to 6635 in 2018/19). Their email contact has increased accordingly from 1710 emails per month in 2017/18 to 5771 emails per month in 2018/19.

Blue Badge and Concessionary Travel service

The team responsible for delivering the Blue Badge and Concessionary Travel services are also helping their customers access their service in ways that are more convenient for the customer.

Given the nature of the service, many customers have mobility or other health issues and whilst in general, the most suitable method of communication for the customer group may not be online, the team have made it easier for things to be done without the customer having to visit in person. Telephone contact has increased by 26% since 2017/18, and face to face visits have reduced by 43% in the same period.

Revenues services

Customer contact to Revenues teams (Council Tax and NNDR (Business rates)) has increased by 20% since 2017/18, in the direction of increased digital contact. Telephone calls have reduced by 12% (from 7167 on average per month in 2017/18 to 6303 in 2018/19), post received has reduced by 35% (from 5989 to 3895) and online form submissions have increased by 90% (3995 to 7589). The increase in online forms is particularly significant for this service, as many of the form types are now integrated into the database, which means changes are made automatically and immediately, reducing delays for the customer and increasing efficiency for the service.

Summary – Priority areas for focus

These recommendations are made based on the comments from customers through a variety of customer feedback, including complaints, and feedback from our Customer Experience Ambassadors.

Making it easier for customers to find the help they need by improving internal joint working

Customer Feedback example:

"...department seems to be in two distinct areas. I wasn't sure exactly who did what. "

Recommended Action:

Embed a 'One Council' approach to all aspects of customer service delivery. Produce clear service descriptions and FAQ guides for your service's simple, generic queries and work with other relevant teams to exchange this information. Have these guides handy for front-line staff to help signpost customer to the information they need, rather than adding them to another team's telephone queue. Arrange shadowing exchange sessions with other teams for members of front-line staff, so they understand each other's roles more. Contribute to the creation and use of Intranet pages which makes navigating through the council easier.

Proactive, honest and considerate communication

The example given is of a complaint escalated to Stage 2, as the customer wasn't told that the service offer had changed (risk based approach to drain clearance rather than scheduled annual clearance) at the initial enquiry stage.

Customer Feedback example:

"..the storm drains should be regularly cleared of leaves, more frequently than the usual street clean and monitored so that no build of surface leaves occurs in the autumn to prevent them from being blocked at a time of heavy rain. Cityclean are not proactive in monitoring this area and carrying out additional street cleaning to keep the drains free of leaves, Cityclean should do this and I do not feel that residents should have to report problems."

Recommended Action:

Where services have been changed, reduced or withdrawn, teams and officers need to be proactive and clear with customers about what can and can't be done. Officers should always check the relevant service webpages for the most up-to-date information about service provision and how to get issues resolved, as service offers do change. Being proactive in communicating what services are provided can help manage customer expectations and help identify the appropriate course of action in a timely way.

Clear and consistent information and data management

Customer Feedback example:

".....issues aside, I'm not at all happy about being asked to consent to my information being used for reasons that have not been explained. I am sure this is not compliant with GDPR so would like full clarification on how the council shares personal information across its different departments and what for."

Recommended Action:

Work with the Information Governance Team to ensure that your service has up to date privacy notices which clearly state which other departments or services will have access to customer data provided and make sure that all of your communications with customers are consistent with the information in your privacy notices. (e.g. privacy statements on paper and online forms, or email autoreplies). Aim to understand and utilise all aspects of data protection law to reduce the burden on customers (e.g. providing the same information to multiple departments) and to improve council efficiency (e.g. reduce fraud)

Contact us

We welcome any suggestions, questions or other feedback about this report, please contact:-

Victoria.Paling@brighton-hove.gov.uk – Customer Experience Lead

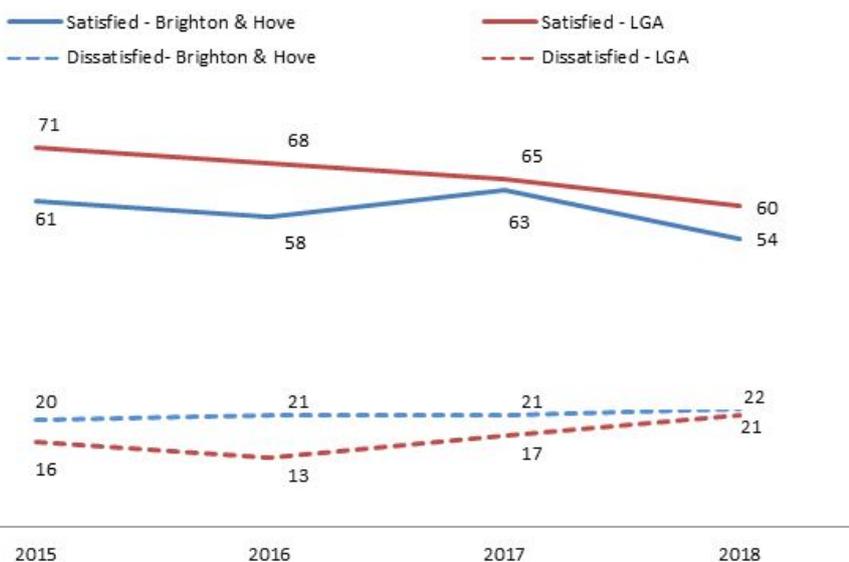
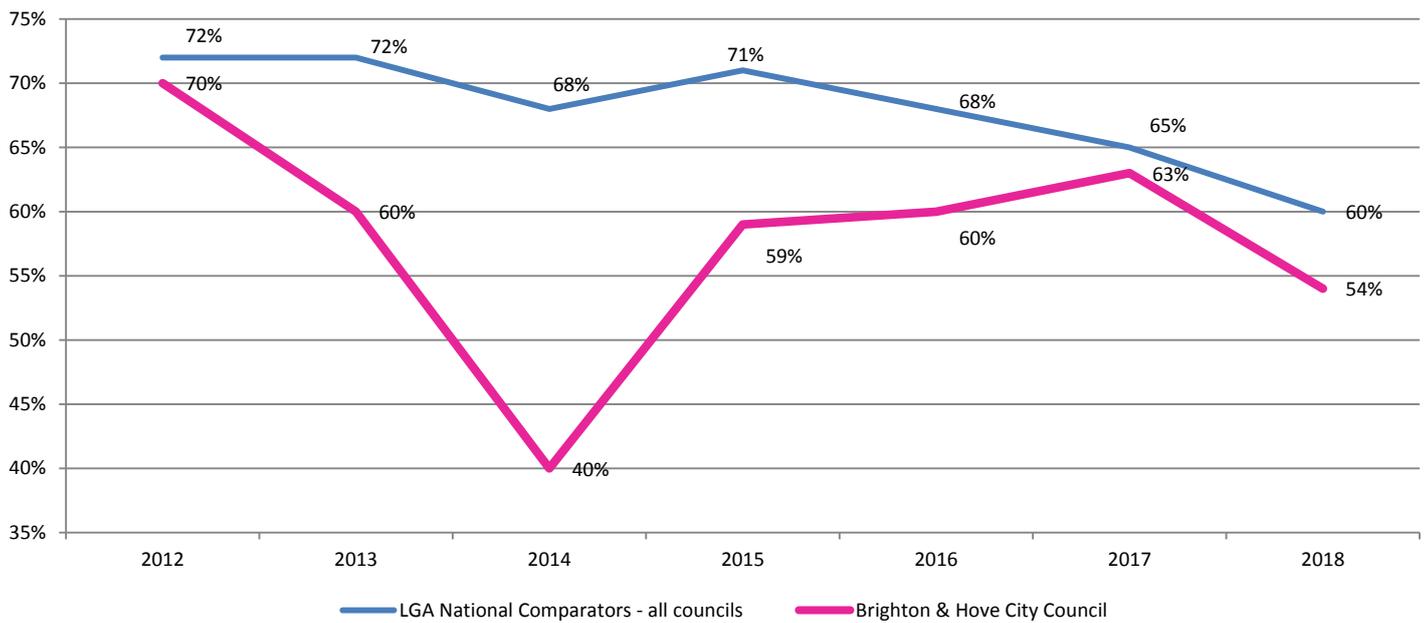
Rima.Desai@brighton-hove.gov.uk – Head of Performance, Improvement and Programmes

Larissa.Reed@brighton-hove.gov.uk - Executive Director - Lead for Customer

Appendices

Current levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with council services

User satisfaction with the services provided by Brighton & Hove City Council (54%) has decreased from 63% previously. Nationally satisfaction with councils has also fallen, dropping from 65% to 60%. The national comparator is the Local Government Association's Resident survey, carried out quarterly.



This chart shows trend over time in dissatisfaction, as well as satisfaction with Brighton & Hove City Council, which has remained broadly static over the last three years, bucking the national trend of increasing dissatisfaction with local councils. The levels of dissatisfaction with our council are now only one percentage point above the national average.

Our key challenges and opportunities include:

Reducing council resources



The need for us to provide high quality customer service does not go away as our funding reduces. We need to develop more cost effective ways for our customers to contact us and encourage and support our customers to use them. We need to find ways to be clearer about what we can and can't do so that there is transparency and to better manage customer expectations.

Meeting rising customer expectations and increased demand



Customers expect to be able to access services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, using our website and social media for relevant services. They expect flexible and more personalised services. Managing this demand in a way that makes the best use of limited resources is essential to continuing to improve the customer experience.

Welfare reform



We have been proactively analysing and managing the impact of changes to the welfare benefits system on our customers. We need to make sure that this strategy is firmly linked to our work of supporting vulnerable customers who could be affected by welfare reforms.

Digital exclusion



Some people don't have access to the internet at home, or have specific accessibility needs, and that may mean that they can't find our information and services online. We need to find ways to help these customers by providing equipment and support at venues across the city, as well as working in partnership with local digital inclusion charities.

Listening to our customers



We need to be able to capture customer comments and use them to improve services.

Community Collaboration



We need to encourage residents to play a part in their communities, and will enable them to do this.

Using customer intelligence to shape service delivery



Customers contact us through a variety of channels. We need to continue to make the best use of the information about this contact, in a timely way, to better understand what our customers need and to inform our service delivery.

Tackling inequality



Our city's communities are changing and becoming increasingly diverse. As a council we work hard to understand our communities and the barriers to access and support needs people may have. Knowing this enables us to provide responsive services that better anticipate all customers' needs and respond respectfully, appropriately and efficiently.

Our Customers

By customer we mean, any user of council services, voluntary or involuntary. This includes residents, visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives.



Brighton & Hove's population is estimated at 286,000



The population eligible to vote is 201,392



130,000 Council Tax payers



32,270 children attending school



20,000 receiving housing benefit



11,552 total council owned dwellings



11,300 Business rate payers



624km of carriageway



1,020km of footpaths



12km of coastline



98 parks and open spaces



1,318,517 visits to libraries

Our Services



City Environment

- Almost 5 million refuse collections per year
- 2.5 million recycling collections per year
- 700 miles of pavement cleaned



Parking and Transport

- 343,977 visitor permits issued per year
- 37,321 resident permits issued per year
- 6,357 Concessionary Bus pass holders
- 3,765 Blue Badge issued per year
- 1,387 Business permits issued per year
- 14,462 permits for roadworks granted



Development Management (Planning)

- 3,671 applications received in 2018
- 2,667 applications approved in 2018



Housing Management

- 13,097 Council tenancies supported
- 2,807 Leasehold properties managed



Housing Needs

- 2,800 Applications for social housing per year
- 1,785 Units of temporary Accommodation per year
- 1,700 open cases for prevention, intervention, advice
- 1,128 Emergency placements and transfers per year



Adult Social Care

- 4,726 care assessments or reviews conducted per year
- 4,361 people receiving long term adult social care service
- 1,306 people receive short term intensive support
- 30,274 terms of daily living equipment issued



Early Years

- 2,135 children attend our children's centres and nurseries

Schools

- 5,432 children with special education need receive support in schools

Children's Social Care

- 1,985 children supported by social work to be safe (including 414 children in care)
- 531 receive family support



Registrars

- 3,400 births registered per year
- 2,500 deaths register per year
- 1,300 marriages registered and officiated
- 580 new British naturalisation certificates issued

Bereavement

- 1,992 cremations in 2017/18
- 281 burials in 2017/18
- 1,233 deaths reported to the Coroner's Office in 2018



Benefits

- 18,700 receiving help with council tax
- 3,236 new claims assessed a year
- 1,500 applications assessed for emergency help

Demographics and Equal Opportunities

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of the following 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation.

All customers have the right to be protected from discrimination, harassment or victimisation based on our protected characteristics.

Understanding the protected characteristics of people living, working in and visiting the city helps us to be fair, accessible, and appropriate when we make policies, deliver services, and employ people. In addition, the council has an aim of 'Tackling Inequality'.

Supporting and developing good customer experience in relation to all the city's diverse communities is a central aim of the council. Customers may experience numerous barriers to accessing services or need different support to get the right outcomes from them. Where these barriers or needs are related to legally protected characteristics, the council has a duty to consider how to remove these barriers, reduce disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity.

This strategy will support the development of a culture of responsive services that anticipate diverse customers' needs and respond respectfully and appropriately. Providing the right services, in the right way, at the right time to the right people will result in better, more efficient, more appropriate services for everyone.

The following information is taken from the last census which was in 2011.

- The ratio of women to men is almost exactly equal and is very similar at every age group.
- There are 286,000 adult residents living in 120,000 households.
- We have a high proportion of residents in the age range 20-30, a further peak in the range 40 to 50 and a slight increase in people aged 65 compared to national averages.
- Around 37,000 (13%) of residents are lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- An estimated 3,000 adults are trans.
- At the time of the census 55,000 people were from a BME background.

More recent data from Health research tells that

- 45,000 people(16%) have a health problem or disability that affects their day to day activities and 25,000 (9%) residents provide unpaid care for a family member of friend
- 26,500 (1 in 10) people have depression and 1 in 100 have severe mental illness
- More than 3,000 people have visual impairment
- More than 20,000 have a hearing problem
- There are an estimated 11,750 ex-service personnel in the city

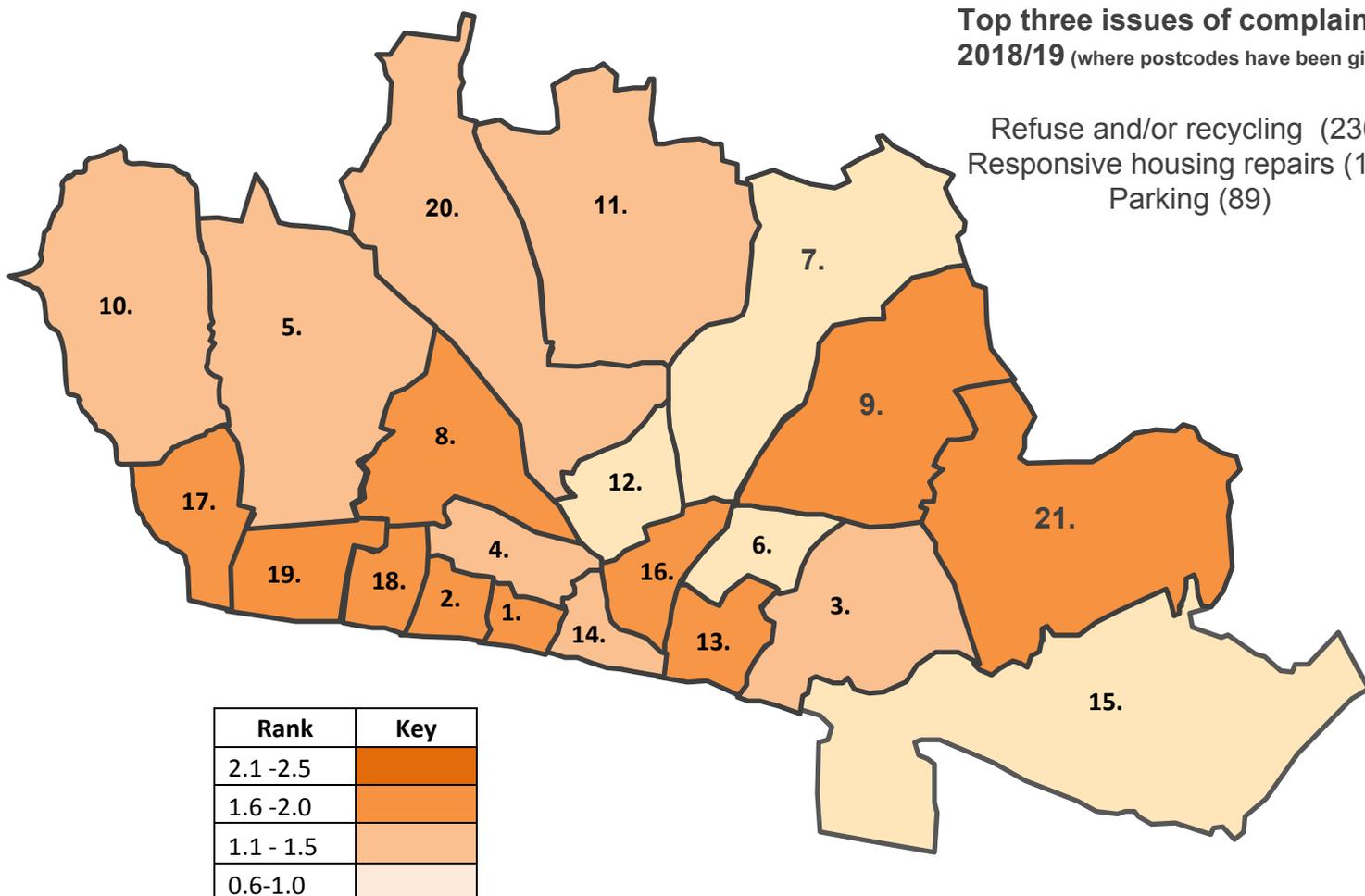
The latest published Schools Census data (January 2018) reports that 27% of primary school pupils are from a minority ethnic background, giving us an insight into the future demographic of the city.

Where do we receive complaints from

The map and table below show the number of complaints across the city's main areas (wards) per 1,000 head of the population. We have also shown the actual number of complaints in each ward.

Top three issues of complaint in 2018/19 (where postcodes have been given)

Refuse and/or recycling (230)
Responsive housing repairs (193)
Parking (89)

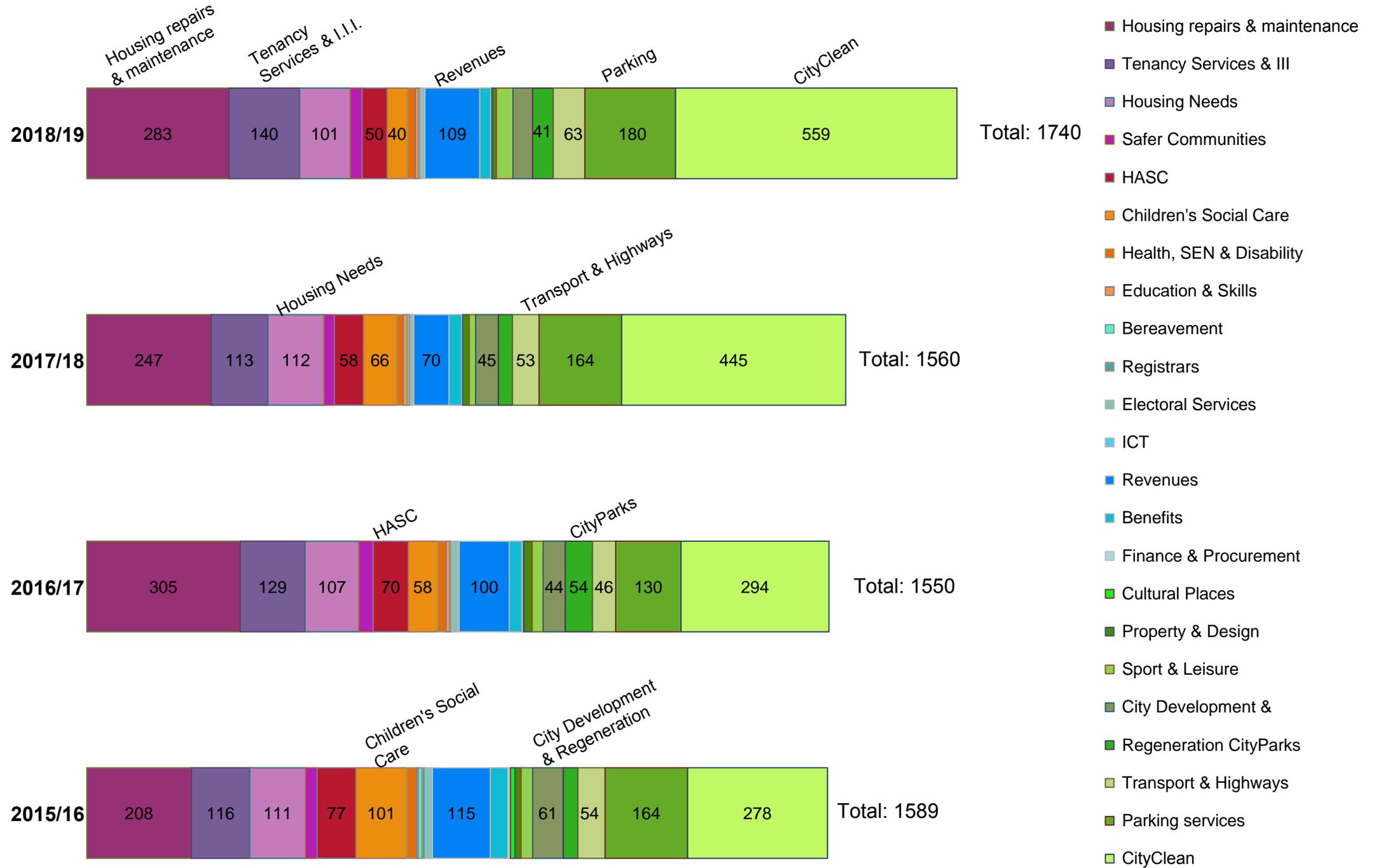


Rank	Key
2.1 -2.5	
1.6 -2.0	
1.1 - 1.5	
0.6-1.0	

Ward	Complaints per 1,000 head of population	Number of complaints	Top three issues of complaint
1. Brunswick and Adelaide	1.6	17	Parking Permits (4) Council Tax billing and recovery (3) Refuse and recycling (3)
2. Central Hove	1.8	36	Parking (7) Refuse and recycling (7) Tenancy services (3)
3. East Brighton	1.2	71	Housing repairs (28) Refuse and recycling (8) Housing Needs (7)
4. Goldsmid	1.1	27	Housing repairs (5) Parking (4) Tenancy services (4)
5. Hangleton and Knoll	1.2	43	Housing repairs (10) Refuse and recycling 12) Tenancy services (4)
6. Hanover and Elm Grove	1.0	45	Housing repairs (8) Refuse and recycling (11) Council Tax billing and recovery (5)

7. Hollingdean and Stanmer	1.0	47	Housing repairs (16) Refuse and recycling (9) Highways services (3)
8. Hove Park	0.9	29	Garden Waste (4) Refuse & recycling (13) Highway Maintenance (2)
9. Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	1.7	73	Housing repairs (18) Refuse and recycling (15) Housing Needs (4)
10. North Portslade	1.2	32	Refuse and recycling (9) Housing repairs (7) Tenancy services (6)
11. Patcham	1.2	45	Recycling and Refuse (12) Housing repairs (10) Garden Waste (6)
12. Preston Park	1.1	32	Refuse and recycling (8) Parking (5) Council Tax (3)
13. Queens Park	1.6	81	Housing repairs (31) Recycling and Refuse (13) Housing Needs (5)
14. Regency	1.2	18	Housing repairs (3) Refuse(6) Highways services (3)
15. Rottingdean Coastal	0.9	31	Refuse and recycling (11) Parking management (2) Arboriculture (3)
16. St Peters and North Laine	1.6	53	Refuse (7) Street cleaning (4) Parking (10)
17. South Portslade	1.8	41	Refuse and recycling (23) Housing repairs (7) Garden waste (3)
18. Westbourne	1.7	22	Refuse (6) Benefits service (2) Housing needs (3)
19. Wish	1.7	28	Refuse and recycling (6) Housing repairs (6) Tenancy services (2)
20. Withdean	1.1	28	Refuse and recycling (14) Council Tax billing (3) Tenancy services (3)
21. Woodingdean	1.7	34	Housing repairs (11) Refuse and recycling (8) Garden Waste (4)

Stage 1 complaints by service



Who do we receive complaints from?

251 customers making a Stage 1 complaint provided equalities information in 2018/19 which is 14% of all complainants and 60% of those making on-line complaints; this is a significant increase from 2017/18 where only 8% gave equalities information.

The data received compared to city demographic information (based on 2011 census) shows:

We received fewer complaints from people in the age ranges 18-24, and higher complaints from people aged between 55-64 than should be expected. All other age ranges are within range that we would expect.

Complaints from men and women were nearly equal, 4% of complaints preferred not to say what their gender was, 1% said they were transgender.

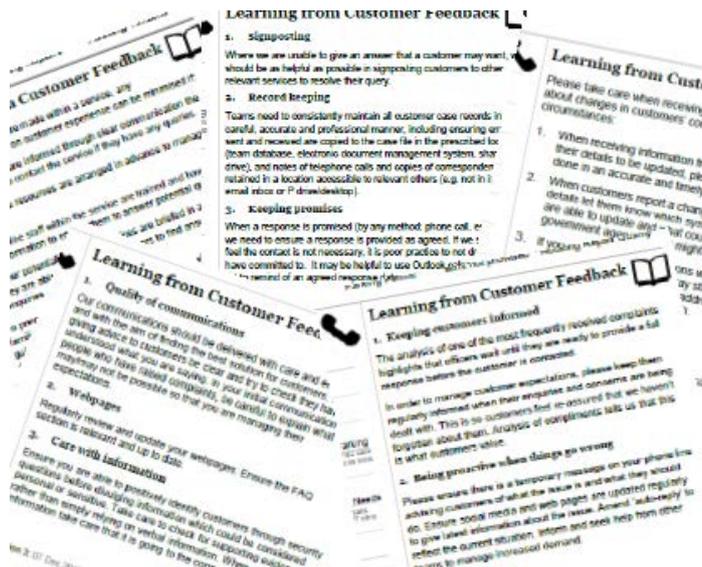
The percentage of LGB customers who raised complaints was 7%, which is lower than the city demographic of 11.5%; 2% said they were bi-sexual; 21% preferred not to say; and 71% were heterosexual.

For ethnicity, there were no particular observations; the proportions were broadly similar to the demographic of the city.

Learning from Customer Feedback

We receive feedback from customers in a variety of ways, such as comments on surveys, compliments and complaints. To improve the experience of our customers, it is essential that we are proactive in understanding and acting on this feedback.

To make sure that all staff are aware of what is important to customers, and the ways in which we can improve our service delivery, we create a monthly summary of information relating to customer contact referred to as the Customer Insight dashboard. This dashboard is shared across the organisation.



Key learning themes

- Ensure good practice with email correspondence e.g. send clear, timely responses.
- Keep our contact details up to date on the intranet to improve joint working, and include them in our email signature.
- Keep our webpages up to date and clear to navigate, including frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Aim to resolve all matters raised during customer contact, rather than rushing to pick up the next enquiry.
- Deliver what has been promised e.g. call a customer back at the time agreed, even if you don't have any new information for them.
- Consider the wider impact of your work e.g. if you are unable to do something as agreed, make sure anyone who may be affected is informed, such as other service teams, customers or other professionals.
- Be proactive when things go wrong e.g. tell affected parties what has happened as soon as possible, and what will be done to put it right and keep them informed throughout
- Be aware of and regularly review your Business Continuity Plan especially in relation to customer facing aspects.
- Be aware of how to report and record incidents of alleged discrimination or hate crimes.
- Handle personal or sensitive data with care and in accordance with agreed governance standards and guidance.

What actions are we taking?

One Council Approach

One of the council's core values is 'Customer Focus', this means we want to put our customers at the heart of everything we do,. 'Meeting customer needs' is an integral part of our Behaviour Framework which describes how all staff in the council are expected to perform their roles.

As a public body which delivers around 700 different services for its customers, the way that the organisation is structured can be complex to understand and navigate. Knowing which department does what and how or where to contact them shouldn't be something that our customers have to learn in order to receive the help that they need.

We have a committed staff team who are passionate about providing high quality services. Our Staff Survey results show that 89% of council staff care about how the organisation is perceived by citizens. However, only 23% feel that the council works as one big team working collaboratively for the good of our customers. To address this we have introduced a Customer Experience Ambassador role to systematically enable joint working and embed a 'One Council' approach across the organisation. A 'One Council' approach will create a way of working where customers experience a response which is similar in 'style' and consistently helpful, regardless of the service they approach.

Customer Experience Ambassadors

We have so far appointed 80 Customer Experience Ambassadors from a wide range of services across the organisation. We will work closely with these Ambassadors to further develop this strategy and the 'One Council' approach. The Ambassadors will then be responsible for embedding what has been developed within their teams, working closely with their head of service and the Customer Experience Steering Group representative from their service.

These are some examples of how a 'One Council' approach could improve customer experience.

- Customers only have to contact us once to have their service request resolved.
- Customers receive a consistently set standard of service from the council, regardless of their query.
- Customers receive a 'joined up' service as appropriate where teams communicate with each other to resolve customer queries, rather than the customer having to liaise with different departments for each element of their query to be resolved.
- Customers can expect council officers to have appropriate access to information that has been provided to other council departments to help resolve their query/verify their identity/assess their application e.g. Parking teams can check council tax records to prove residency.

- Customers can expect council officers to be able to accurately signpost them to other council services/public services/third sector partners to help resolve their query

Improving our communication with customers

Nudge Toolkit



A toolkit has been developed for use by services to make communication with residents more effective. Nudge (also known as behavioural insights) is a concept which promotes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestion as ways to influence the behaviour and decision making of groups or individuals. An example would be rearranging the layout of our Council Tax bills to make it easier to find the information about setting up a Direct Debit. Behavioural insight research has found that when we read letters, we tend to see the information in the top right hand corner first, so by promoting the benefits of paying by Direct Debit in that space, more people notice and read that information than when it was on the reverse-side of the bill.

Improving complaint response quality

We have begun regularly conducting quality assurance on our responses to formal complaints, to ensure they are meeting the agreed standards. This will improve the quality of responses that customers receive as well as reducing the number of complaints that are escalated to the next stage, which can be frustrating for customers, and costly for the organisation.

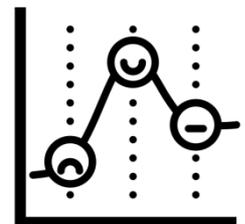
Training in Better Complaints Handling

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman LGSCO is the public body established to advise on best practice in Local Government and regulates the way that councils respond to complaints. A number of officers across the council have attended training delivered by the Ombudsman and facilitated by the Customer Feedback Team to improve their complaints investigation skills. This will result in improved quality of complaint responses to customers, as well as a reduction in the need for customers to escalate their complaints.

Understanding the needs and experiences of our customers

Customer journey mapping

Customer journey mapping is a method of getting a better understanding of what a customer's experience of interacting with an organisation is like. We are in the process of embedding the regular use of this methodology by front line service managers, to ensure we are continually checking how we could improve the customer experience. The next step is to map what the ideal 'journey' looks like for each transaction and work towards matching the real experience of customers to these ideal states.



Executive Leadership Team weekly update

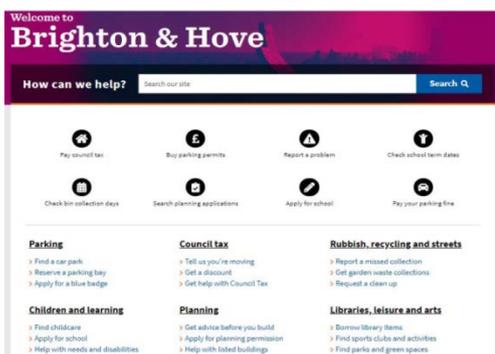
Each week the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meet to discuss and manage the highest priority matters of the organisation. A new standing item has been introduced to that agenda, which focuses on issues affecting the customer, and allows for swift action and decision at a strategic level.

Coordinating significant changes which affect residents

We recognise that some changes or new initiatives can affect a large number of residents who will need to contact or transact with the council as a result, such as the introduction of a new parking zone or a change to the way refuse or recycling is collected. To ensure that the organisation is as prepared as possible to continue to provide a high level of customer service, in spite of increased contact, we are introducing a timetable which outlines all planned events and initiatives which will affect residents. This helps us identify where there are opportunities to coordinate activities, minimising the impact on residents and enabling services to manage the resulting demands.

Making services fit for the future

Website re-design



Work is ongoing to improve the council's website and the new style home page went live in October 2018. The new design is based on the principles established by the award winning Government Digital Service – ensuring that the site is easy for people to do the things they need to do. User experience techniques were used to make sure that we understand why customers visit the website and to arrive at a design which enables customers to transact with us easily.

Self-service days for Revenues & Benefits services

As customers increasingly expect to be able to transact with organisations digitally, the Revenues and Benefits service have changed the way that their services can be accessed, and introduced a range of online facilities and contact methods. They now offer customers support in accessing these services online in the Brighton Customer Service Centre on certain days of the week, so that in future, customers will know how to transact with the service at a time and in a place which suits them, rather than travelling to the city centre and queuing to hand in forms or documents. This initiative also promotes the need for customers to have experience of accessing benefits services digitally, as with the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) introduction of Universal Credit in Brighton & Hove all contact with the DWP must be online. Positive feedback has been received from customers who have been shown how send their documents by email, or to fill in an online application form, so the service continues to adapt and evolve its digital offer, informed by the feedback received from customers. We are now exploring extending this approach to other

departments that have developed a strong online service for customers, this may result in a review of our overall delivery model.

What will we do next?

Delivering excellent customer service isn't just a one off initiative, it's a continual process of culture change - reviewing, redesigning, monitoring, training, learning and listening. We will continue to embed and reinforce the good practices that are already in place across the organisation, and will keep improving the way that services are delivered. These are some examples of the actions already planned.

Work with customers to identify what excellent service looks like to them

We want our customers to be satisfied with the way that the council delivers services, but need to be sure that we know what our customers value, and what excellent customer service means to them. Through consultation and engagement in a range of ways, we will seek views from a variety of customers who represent the diversity of our city. This feedback will inform our Customer Experience Strategy, which is being developed in consultation with customers and staff.

Develop and promote digital by design communications and transactions

To deliver services in ways which are convenient for customers and to create capacity for the council to help those who need more intensive support or have more complex queries, we continue to invest in and promote the use of simple and intuitive online services so that customers can self-serve.

Some service areas have developed their technological capability to ensure their whole process is digital, eliminating any delay for customers in their account being updated. This functionality is currently live for new council tax accounts for those moving into the area. Work continues to extend this to those who move within Brighton & Hove and to investigate other customer-facing processes and systems that are of this kind and are suitable for integration into a single digital customer experience. We also continue to work towards the longer term goal of a simple, single sign on to all digital council services as well as a single 'golden' customer record instead of records spread across many council systems.

In order to make most efficient use of the investment in technology, it is vital that we understand our customer's needs as well as the detail of the transactions and interactions that they have with the council; it isn't always most effective or efficient to use digital channels of communication, and so we will look in detail at which interactions are suitable, and ensure that any digitisation of service is also supported by digital inclusion work, ensuring accessibility for all.

Technology to help departments work together

The council currently has many separate systems and databases used by different teams and services which contain information about the identity, accessibility needs and contact preferences of a customer and their related case history and transactions. One of the key areas of focus is to locate these disparate systems and match the identity of a customer across all systems to create a Customer and Property Index, so that:

- A customer only needs to 'tell us once' when their address or name details change
- A customer can make a Subject Access Request and request deletion of their information
- Internal BHCC teams can better manage the needs of a customer e.g. debt programmes, fraud prevention etc.
- Property information can be more accurately relied upon e.g. the empty property register

The lack of a single shared system is currently a barrier to embedding a truly 'One Council' approach and prevents real-time reporting that would provide BHCC with greater intelligence, to make data-led decisions. With further exploration of future business requirements, the Customer and Property Index project could allow for the automatic population of changes back into the source systems (subject to technical constraints), as well as enabling a single view of case work.

The benefits of effectively implementing this technology will be reduced effort for the customer, minimising the requirement for them to provide the same information to multiple departments. It will also assist with the detection of fraud by identifying mismatched data, such as discrepancies between council tax single person discounts, parking permits and housing applications. The single view of a customer is also being used to provide verification functionality, whereby customer-facing transactions 'lookup' into the Customer and Property Index to prove identity details. This is more efficient for the customer (e.g. not having to provide the council with a copy of a Council Tax statement) and reduces the overhead of third party credit reference agencies, where we are able to prove an identity using our own data.

The technology also has the potential to feed the up to date information into a single system. We will be exploring the benefits of this further, whilst being mindful of the organisational culture change that will be a significant factor in the successful implementation of such a system. Any such system will also help us explore a wider range of options for our future service delivery model, and could also provide a single point of data collection for all customer transactions and contact which would provide far more sophisticated intelligence than is currently available – allowing for greater analysis and flexible resource planning

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

We analyse information that we collect to understand the reasons that customers contact the council, this analysis has identified that customers often email, phone or visit the council to get information which is readily available on our website, or from leaflets, letters and other publicity. This can be frustrating for customers who have taken the time to wait for a response, only to be

given signposting information about how they can find the details that they need for themselves. To make things more convenient for customers, and to increase the council's capacity to help those who need more intensive support, each of the key service areas have undertaken to compile information sheets which give the answers to their area's most frequently asked questions. These FAQs will be prominently available on the website, and all staff will be made aware of how to access them, so customers may be able to get assistance with a range of basic queries, no matter which reception point or phone number they call. To better manage customer expectations, these FAQs will also include advice and/or signposting in circumstances where the council is unable to help.

Understanding customer needs and preferences

We will be exploring the use of data, based on the postcodes of each service area's customers. This type of analysis can offer insights into, amongst other things, their preferred methods of communication.

Customer Service Centre changes



We have developed some inexpensive, yet important changes which should make it easier for customers to find and access the help they need at our Customer Service Centres. These changes include a clearer exterior, changing the reception area to make it more accessible, and making it easier for customers to understand where to go to get the help they need. These changes will also make the free digital access facilities easier for customers to locate and access, promoting our digital by design approach, maximising our investment in digital services and providing better support for customers who may not have other ways of getting online.

We need to continue to examine and review the council's customer access points carefully balancing meeting customer needs, versus efficient use of council assets and resources.

How will we know that we are improving?

To track our progress in improving the experience of interacting with the council for customers, we will use multiple sources of data and information, to assess whether things are improving.

Listening to our customers

The most important way for us to know that the work we are doing is making things better for customers, is to listen to the customers themselves. We will ask for, analyse and make recommendations from various sources of customer feedback, including:

- Results from the City Tracker annual survey, which measures resident satisfaction levels, these can be benchmarked against national results, through the Local Government Association's Resident survey
- Service specific satisfaction surveys
- Service user evaluation forms, some services which have a more intensive or complex relationship with their customers such as youth services and the Integrated Team for Families, ask for detailed feedback at the end of each intervention or interaction.
- Using complaints information

Listening to our staff

Our staff have a keen sense of what is and isn't working for our customers, so their feedback is an important part of measuring our improvements. We will regularly collect staff feedback in these, amongst other ways.

- Feedback from the Customer Experience Ambassador network
- Annual Internal customer satisfaction survey
- Annual staff survey

Listening to our councillors

The city's elected representatives are often made aware of issues that are important to their ward residents. A new case management system is being introduced to improve the way in which councillors can get assistance for their residents from the council. The system will provide an enhanced ability to identify themes or trends in these enquiries, both at ward level and city-wide, and enable us to identify areas of improvement which can be shared across the organisation as appropriate.

Making good use of our data

In the course of conducting our business, we gather a lot of data about our customer transactions and contact, in order to make best use of this data we will regularly measure and analyse metrics which relate to customer contact. These include:

- Volumes of complaints and compliments and analysis of themes and trends
- Phone, email and complaint response times - through the monthly dashboard
- Contact volumes by channel of communication – through the annual Customer insight report
- Customer journey mapping (both ideal states and current experiences)