Customer Experience Strategy

Getting things right first time, every time

Brighton & Hove City Council

Our Vision

Getting things right first time, every time

Contents

Context	2
Our Customers	4
Our Customer Promise	6
Customer Experience Vision	7
Learning from Customer Feedback	8
What actions are we taking?	11
What will we do next?	14
How will we know that we are improving?	17
Contact us	18

Appendices

Current levels of satisfaction with council services	19
Demographics and Equal Opportunities	20
How do our customers contact us?	21
Customer Experience Strategy Engagement	23

Context

Why do we need a Customer Experience strategy?

Our customers include everyone who lives, works, visits or does business in Brighton & Hove; we all use council services such as street cleaning and lighting, parks and culture. This also includes those who actively interact with the council (for example, residents who live in council housing) as well as those the council has to interact with, such as where we have a duty of care.

We are committed to ensuring that all our customers, whatever their needs have a good experience when they interact with Brighton & Hove City Council.

The way we deliver customer service is core to providing public services efficiently and effectively. This is relevant to all staff, not just those whose role involves answering phone calls, or seeing customers face to face.

Whilst we strive to provide high quality services, there are currently varied levels of customer satisfaction with the range of services delivered by the council. We have created this strategy as a means to

- Ensure a shared understanding of what a good customer experience feels like
- Plan the actions needed to achieve good customer experience, learning from best practice both internally and externally.
- Embed a consistently good standard of service delivery with resilience and efficiency, in a fair and inclusive way.

Customer Experience Steering Group

The Customer Experience Steering Group consists of all key front line and support services across the council. The group has developed this strategy, taking account of the feedback we receive from customers and staff. The group will be responsible for implementing the strategy and monitoring its effectiveness through continuous engagement with staff and taking on board customer feedback gathered in a range of ways including through focus groups and other engagement activities.

Brighton & Hove is a satisfying place to live

Levels of satisfaction with the local area are higher in Brighton & Hove than nationally. In the most recent Local Government Association survey, 78% of residents at a national level are satisfied – well below the Brighton & Hove figure of 89%. User satisfaction with the services provided by Brighton & Hove City Council (55%) 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 tells us that customers think Brighton & Hove is a great place to live, but that this is not reflected in improved customer satisfaction with the way that the council runs things.

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 the council's 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 and providing alternative access for those who need it.

Listening to our customers

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

Community Collaboration

We need to work in partnership with residents to enable them to play an active role in their communities.

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

Equality of Access

Our city's communities are becoming increasingly diverse. We work hard to understand our communities and the barriers to access and support needs people may have. Knowing this enables us to better anticipate all customers' needs and respond respectfully, appropriately and efficiently.

Our Customers

By customer we mean, any user of council services, active or passive. 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 registered 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

10,500 Business rate payers

624km of carriageway

1,020km of footpaths

12km of coastline

98 parks and open spaces

1,437,316 visits to libraries

Our Services

City Environment

- 92,881 individual refuse collections per week
- 45,050 individual recycling collections per week

Parking and Transport

- Over 340,000 visitor permits issued per year
- Over 37,000 resident permits currently on issue
- 6,357 Concessionary Bus passes issued in18/19.
- 4,287 Blue Badge issued in 18/19
- 1,178 business permits issued in 18/19
- 14,462 permits for roadworks granted

Development Management (Planning)

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

Housing Management

- 11,571 total council owned dwellings
- 13,067 Council tenants
- 2,915 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

Health & 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

Families, Children & Learning

- 5,432 children with special education need receive support in schools
- 2,135 children attend our children's centres and nurseries
- 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

- 18,400 receiving help with council tax
- 3,138 new claims assessed a year
- 1,156 applications assessed for emergency help

Our Customer Promise

Our promise to you

Our vision of *Getting things right first time, every time* is the driving force behind our customer promise.

Initially developed in 2015, our promise sets out the standards and principles of how we deliver services to our customers, providing the council with a framework to monitor and measure our performance.

The promise has been recently refreshed, to ensure that the services we deliver continue to be aligned to the needs of our customers, following engagement with customers through online and paper surveys and face to face interviews conducted in Customer Service Centres and Libraries across the city.

Customers were asked to identify what they valued most when interacting with council services from the below options:

1. That you receive quick responses but may not get all the information straight away
2. That you receive the right information first time, even if it takes longer to respond
3. That information is clear and easy to understand
4. That the council is open about what it can and can't deliver
5. That council services are easy to understand and clear to reach for everyone
6. That you are given all options and are involved in decisions that affect you
7. That the council is friendly, respectful and understanding

Of those engaged:

- 35% indicated they would rather receive the correct information first time, even if it takes longer
- 21% identified responsive communication as their priority
- 12% stated that information being clear and easy to understand was most important to them

We also asked customers to select their preferred method of communicating with the council, irrespective of why they are communicating with the council. They were asked to choose from the councils current communication methods below:

- Social Media
- Website
- Email
- Telephone
- By post
- In person

Of those surveyed:

- 65% indicated they would prefer to communicate through digital channels (email 44%, website 18%, and social media 3%)
- 30% indicated they would prefer to communicate over the phone, 20%, or in person, 10%.
- 4% indicated they would prefer to communicate via post

In addition to the above information, we have reviewed feedback on our customer promise, provided by customers as part of the recent engagement, online customer satisfaction survey responses, customer complaints and compliments.

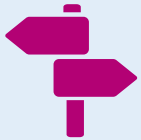
Our Customer Promise has been jointly developed, from these priorities, in collaboration with representatives from front line services.

The standards and principles within the promise do not only apply to staff who work directly with customers, but all staff who work for the council, including those in support services such as Human Resources, IT & Digital, Finance, Business Operations, Health & Safety. This ensures a consistency of approach and provides staff who do deal directly with customers the appropriate infrastructure, tools and support to deliver the best customer experience.

Our customer promise to you

Brighton & Hove City Council

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



- Communicate with you online (email/ website/social media) where possible and appropriate. This is often quicker and more convenient for you
- If you have specific access needs, work with you to find the best way to get the help you need
- Ensure our services are inclusive and responsive to your needs

We will be clear and treat you with respect

- Be honest and easy to understand in all our communication with you
- Keep your personal data secure
- Work together with other services across the council and city to meet your needs and make it easier for you to get the help you need

We will understand and get things done

- Aim to answer your query at first point of contact. When we can't do this, tell you clearly what will happen next so you know what to expect
- Make sure our staff have the skills, behaviours and tools to deliver the service you need
- Keep you informed with up to date information about the services you use

You can help us to keep our promise by

- Treating us, and other customers, with respect
- Letting us know if you have any specific needs
- Giving us all the information we require to help us meet your needs
- Giving us feedback on our service so we can learn and improve

Please tell us how we are doing

- We welcome all feedback, including when things don't go right. 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 about two minutes
- If you would like to provide a detailed compliment or complaint please contact the Customer Feedback team

Checking our performance against this promise

- We check our performance through monitoring:
  -customer satisfaction and ease of access
  -compliments and complaints
  -information about how our customers contact us
  -survey of Brighton & Hove residents and service users
- The results will be published through our Customer Insight Report annually

Different ways to contact us

Brighton & Hove City Council

Website

We will:

- aim to have the council website available for 24 hours a day all year round
- continually improve our online services to meet your needs
- ensure our online services are accessible and simple to use
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Face to face

We will:

- make sure our customer service buildings are welcoming, safe, fully accessible and designed to make it easy to get the help you need
- aim to greet you within five minutes of arrival and see you on average within 20 minutes. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Written communication

We will:

- ensure all service email addresses have an 'automatic reply' which clearly explains what will happen next
- aim to keep average response times within 10 working days. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Social media

We will:

- be clear how we will respond to any queries received
- share relevant information and keep this up to date
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

Telephones

We will:

- aim to keep average waiting times under 10 minutes. At busier times, we will aim to let you know how long you may have to wait
- update voicemails and telephone messages regularly to hold accurate information
- aim to respond to voicemails within one working day
- let you know about other ways of contacting us

We have listened to our customers and updated this promise using their suggestions and priorities. September 2019

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 and confident in delivering customer service, including being able to resolve customer dissatisfaction quickly and fairly

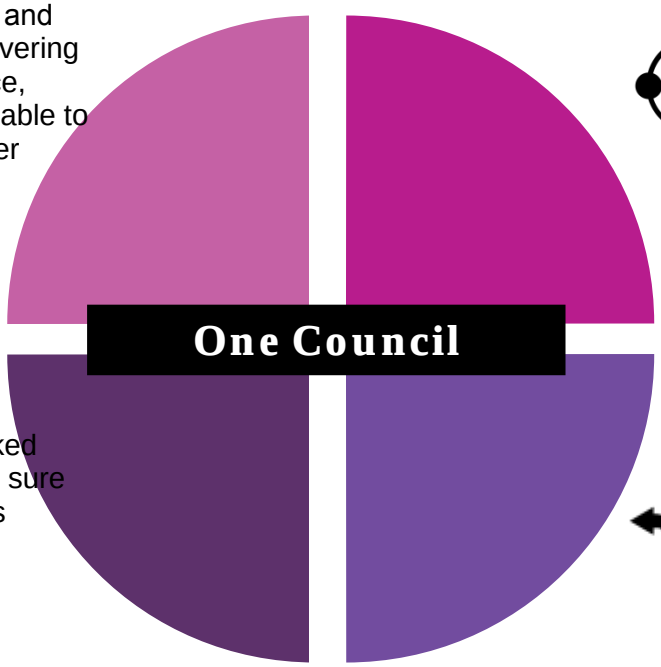
Improvements

Improving the customer experience is the top 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 council uses data and information to plan service improvements

Services work together for the benefit of the customer



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

Council resources are used to meet customer needs through all contact methods

Consistency

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

Customers are confident that all services keep the Customer Promise

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

Resilience

All services support each other positively to fulfill the Customer Promise

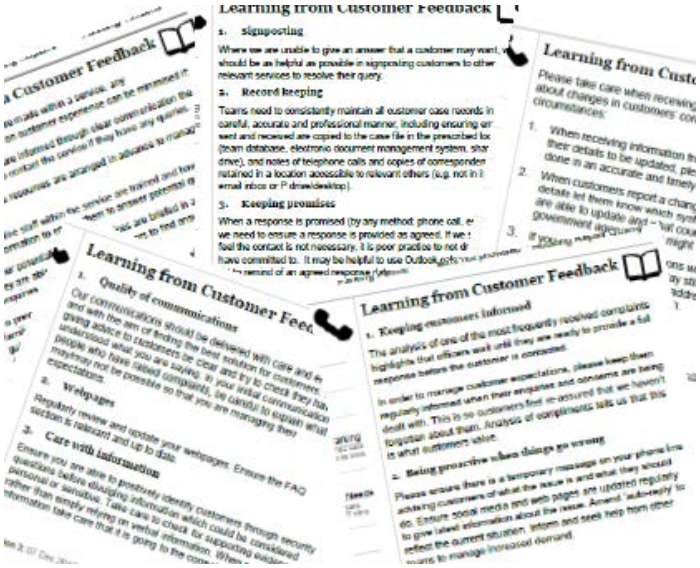
All staff are able to offer basic advice, support or signposting to other council services and external support.

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

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 web-pages up to date and clear to navigate.
- 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.

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 issue, we have introduced the concept of a 'One Council' approach to service delivery.

A One Council approach means working together collaboratively for the benefit of our customers; being explicitly aware that the customer is a council customer and not a customer of an individual service; being explicitly aware that we work for the council and not for an individual service.

To embed this approach across the organisation this we have introduced a Customer Experience Ambassador role to systematically enable joint working.

Customer Experience Ambassadors

We have so far appointed 80 Customer Experience Ambassadors from a wide range of services across the organisation. We have worked closely with these Ambassadors to develop this strategy and the 'One Council' approach. The Ambassadors are 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.

Examples of delivering your service within a One Council Approach:

- A customer has a query which is for our service, once we have resolved that query, the customer asks about another service area, such as how they order a new wheelie bin. Rather than transferring or forwarding that query to CityClean, we should look on the website and either talk the customer through the online process of ordering a bin, or send them a link to that form. There may be some complex queries which we may not be able to answer on behalf of other service but at least we have to try our best.

- A customer contacts us by telephone, they then have another query, and we aren't sure which team they need to speak to, rather than transferring them to switchboard, we need to use the search function on the council website to see if we can find the information they need, or the contact details for the team that they need to speak to. Try adding more words to your search or using different terminology if we can't find what we are looking for immediately

- Each one of us to take a proactive approach to collaborating with other teams where there could be potential confusion for customers e.g. licencing for filming in the city isn't part of the Licencing team responsibility, but sits with the Events team, or queries about car parks on council housing owned land which are dealt with by the Housing team, rather than Parking services.

  We all need to consider whether to best serve our customers we need information from other service/s and suggest to appropriate colleagues in our service (e.g. manager) to explore this further. An example:

- A customer needs to prove their residency and identity to purchase a parking permit for someone coming to visit them. Instead of the customer having to come to Hove Town Hall with a paper copy of their Council Tax bill, Parking Services have the technological ability to check Council Tax records directly. This is GDPR compliant.

What actions are we taking?

Improving our communication with customers

Communication

We will continue to improve and refine the ways that we communicate with residents and key stakeholders, enhancing understanding and awareness of how the council is delivering, progressing and achieving its services and its commitments to residents and the principles which underpin our decision making. By putting people at the heart of our communications and by actively listening and keeping the customer at the forefront of our minds when we are replying, we will enable a genuinely two way relationship based on trust.

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.

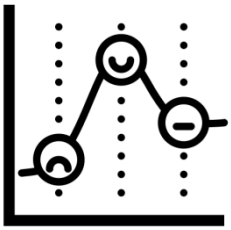
Training in Better Complaints Handling

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 monthly update

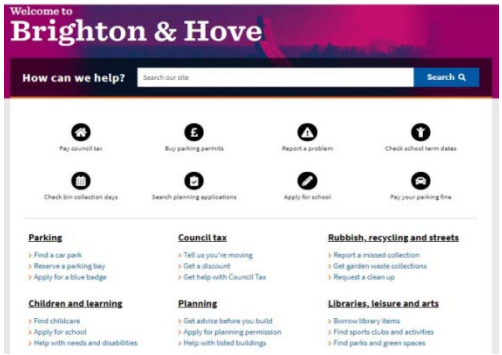
Each month the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meet to discuss and manage the highest priority matters of the organisation. A new standing item has been introduced, which focuses on issues affecting the customer, and allows for swift action and decision at a strategic level.

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 have introduced 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. 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 engagement in a range of ways, we will seek views from a variety of customers who represent the diversity of our city.

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 consolidated view of customer information 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 and controlled public facing interfaces could allow for managed and high quality customer data in the source systems (subject to technical constraints), as well as enabling an effective and consistent management 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.

Technology solutions have the potential to provide the Council with consolidated customer, property and organisation data. 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 systems 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

Case Study - technology to help departments work together

In 2019 the renewal process for concessionary travel passes was automated by utilising data held across multiple council systems to iteratively update and maintain customer records within the FareDeal system (Brighton & Hove City Council's bus pass system) providing a significantly improved customer journey whereby they don't have to take any action to renew their concessionary travel pass, as well as:

- Reducing letters sent to and from the council by approximately 60,000 over the next five years
- Significantly reducing footfall within Hove Customer Service centre
- Improving customer data quality (45,000 names & addresses) and further strengthening GDPR compliance
- Providing an estimated £25k recurrent efficiency, allowing the service to focus resource on managing new demands due to expanded blue badge criteria at no additional cost to the council

This improvement to the customer experience was enabled by the creation of a customer index that allowed various data sources to be cross referenced against a single customer record, further improving the customers' experience across council services by reducing avoidable and repeat contact.

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 against this strategy, 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 feedback at the end of each intervention or interaction.
- Using complaints information

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.

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

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)

Contact us

We welcome any comments, questions or other feedback about this strategy, please contact:-

Luke.Hamblin@brighton-hove.gov.uk – Customer Experience Manager

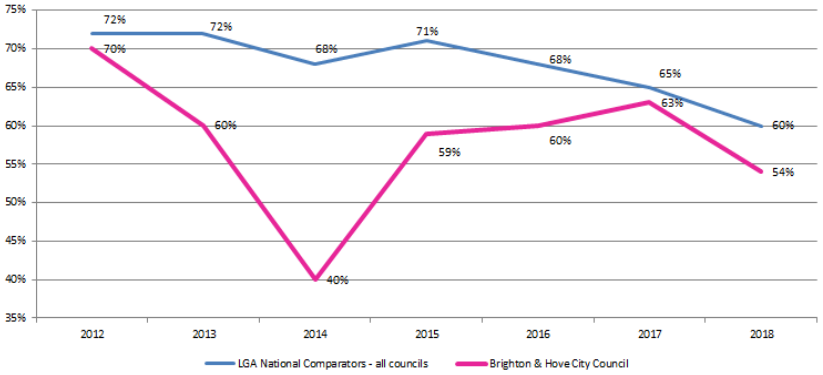
Victoria.Paling@brighton-hove.gov.uk – Customer Experience Lead

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

Appendices

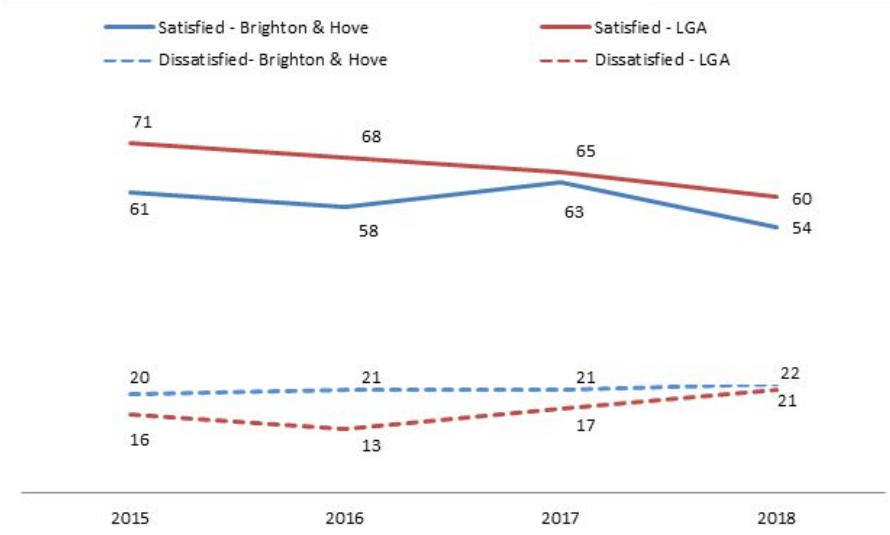
Current levels of satisfaction with council services

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%. National comparator is the Local Government Association's Resident survey, carried out quarterly.



Satisfaction with Brighton & Hove City Council varies across age, ethnicity and location categories:

- The youngest age group (18-34s) report the highest level of *very satisfied* ratings (20%), significantly above the level reported by 35-54s (11%)
- The proportion reporting a *very satisfied* rating amongst BAME residents (29%) is higher than among white British residents (13%)
- Residents living in BN3 (58% *very/fairly satisfied*) and BN41 (65% *very/fairly satisfied*) have an overall higher level of satisfaction with the council than residents in BN2 (48% *very/fairly satisfied*)



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.

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.

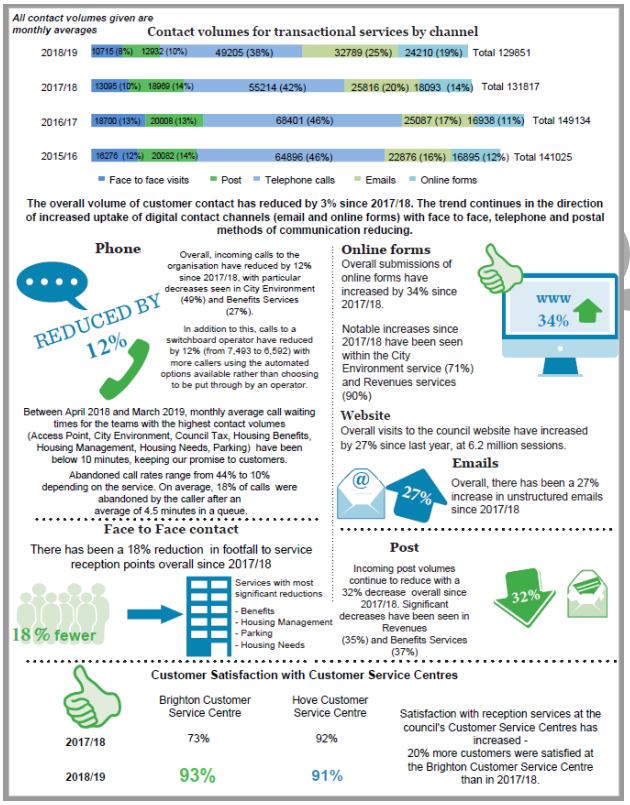
The following information is taken from the last census which was in 2011. We know from surveys carried out in schools that the profile of people living in the city is changing but these are the most up to date figures we have.

- There is an even gender distribution of males (50%, 144,200 people) and females (50%, 143,400 people). Apart from a disparity caused by a higher number of female students there is an relative even distribution of males and females across all age groups up until the age of 75. Beyond the age of 75 the proportion of females increases with age.
- There are an estimated 245,000 adult residents (16+) living in an estimated 130,800 households.
- We have a high proportion of residents aged 19–42 years old (42%, 120,900 people). More than a fifth of Brighton & Hove's total population (22%, 63,200 people) are aged 19 to 28.
- An estimated 27,000 - 36,800 (11% – 15%) of residents (16+) are lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- An estimated 2,800 adults are trans.
- At the time of the 2011 census a fifth of residents (53,400 people, 20%) were from a BME background
- We have a higher proportion of people of non-white British ethnicity (19.5%) than the South East (14.8%) and similar to the value for England as a whole. However, Brighton & Hove has a lower proportion of people of non-white ethnicity (10.9%) than in England overall (14.5%).
- We have a higher proportion of people of mixed ethnicity (3.8%) than the England average (2.3%), with the proportion of people of mixed white and Asian (1.2%) and other mixed ethnicity double the value across the country. Other ethnicities that are more prevalent in Brighton & Hove than across England include white Irish (1.4%), Chinese (1.1%) and Arab (0.8%).
- Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of people born outside of England (18.9%), than the corresponding figure for areas across the South East (15.2%) and England (16.5%).

- More than one in four children in Brighton & Hove were born to mothers who were born outside of the UK (27.4%) in 2015. This is above the figure for the South East (24.3%) but below the proportion across England as a whole (28.4%).
- For one in 12 residents (21,833 or 8.3 per cent) aged over three English is not their main or preferred language.
- At the time of the 2011 census, 44,600 residents (16%) had a health problem or disability that affects their day to day activities, lower than England (18%) but higher than South East (15.7%). 24,000 (9%) of residents provide unpaid care for a family member or friend
- Among adults, 10% (26,200 people) have depression and more than one in a hundred (1.2%, 2,900 people) have a severe mental illness
- One in ten residents (9%, 3,400 people) aged 65 or older have a moderate or severe visual impairment
- More than one in a hundred adults (2%, 4,200 people) have severe hearing loss
- There are an estimated 11,750 military veterans in the city

How do our customers contact us?

We receive more than 60,000 phone calls, 25,000 emails, 18,000 pieces of post, 13,000 visits and 18,000 online forms to public contact points each year.



We publish an annual report which summarises and tracks our contact, monitoring the return on investment in digital services and the trend for fewer customers contacting the council in the traditional (often slower, less flexible and more expensive) methods of contact, such as postal and face to face communication. This data points towards the trend for increased contact through digital channels, and decreased contact through more traditional means such as post, personal visits or telephones.

DRAFT

Digital exclusion

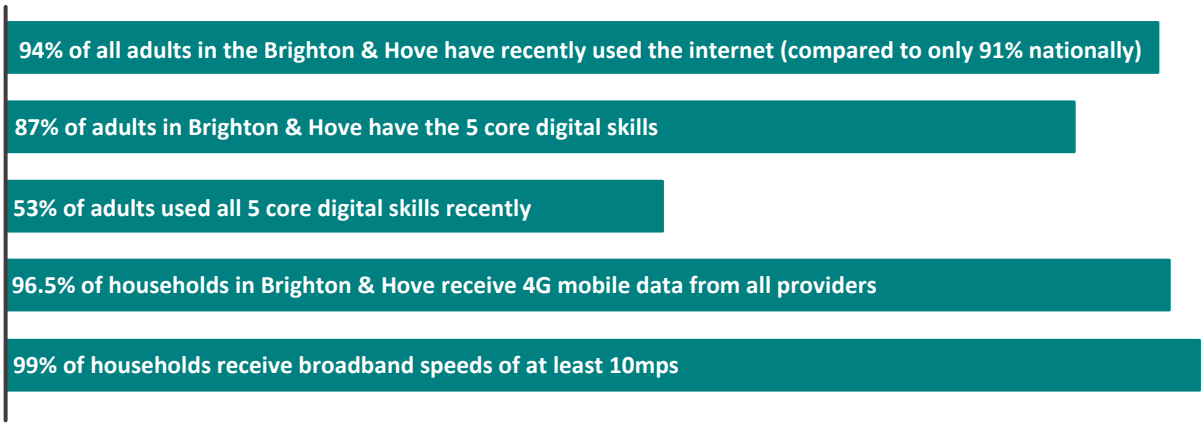
Internet usage is higher within Brighton and Hove (94%) than the national average (91%) (source: Internet users, UK: 2019, ONS) and digital exclusion within Brighton and Hove is considered low (source: Digital Brighton & Hove) based on eight core digital and social metrics:

Digital:

- infrastructure
- the number of people who have never been online
- basic digital skills (managing information, communicating, transacting, problem solving and creating)
- basic digital skills used

Social:

- age
- education
- income
- health



Trends identified in the recent Internet users, UK: 2019 survey show that the largest increase in recent internet users are those aged over 65 years, with 29.05% increase in recent usage when compared to the same data from 2011.

Customer Experience Strategy Engagement

September 2019

Our customer promise to you

We will make it clear how you can contact or access our services
We will understand and get things done
We will be clear and treat you with respect

Contents

Introduction 3

Recent Contact with the council 4

Your Customer Experience 4

What did you like 5

What did you dislike 5

What makes a good customer experience 6

Preferred communication channels 8

- Communicating with the council 8
- Receiving news, information & service updates 9

Our Customer Promise 10

Further Information 11

Contacts 11

Glossary 11

Introduction

In September 2019 we carried out engagement with our customers (by customer, we mean any user of council services, including; residents, visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives) n their experience of using and contacting council services with the purpose of collecting insights on what they value (what is most important to them) and what they believe a good service is to inform the council's future strategy on Customer Experience.

The survey was publicised through the council website, the employee intranet, social media channels, at city libraries and through various community groups.

There were 304 respondents to the survey; 218 via the online consultation portal and 86 through face to face interviews conducted within Bartholomew House and Hove Town Hall Customer Service Centres and Jubilee Library.

The insights collected during this engagement will inform the development of our Customer Experience Strategy to be approved by Policy & Resources committee in December 19.

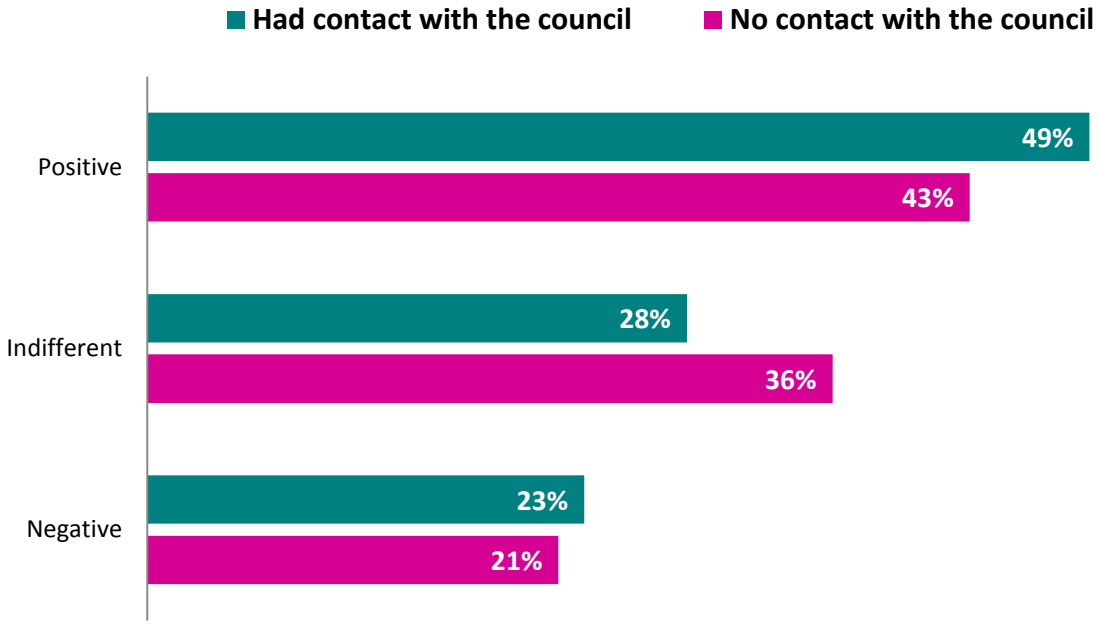
It is anticipated that this work will form a foundation for future customer engagement, supporting in the formation of optimal channels for feedback and enabling the council to collect, analyse and transform on an iterative basis aligned with the shifting customer needs of our demographic.

Recent Contact with the council

We are asked customers if they'd had contact with the council within the past 12 months through any method of communication, such as an email, in person or an online form.

Your Customer Experience

Customers were asked what their experience of the council was, whether it was through a recent contact or more generally. They were able to select positive, indifferent or negative experience.



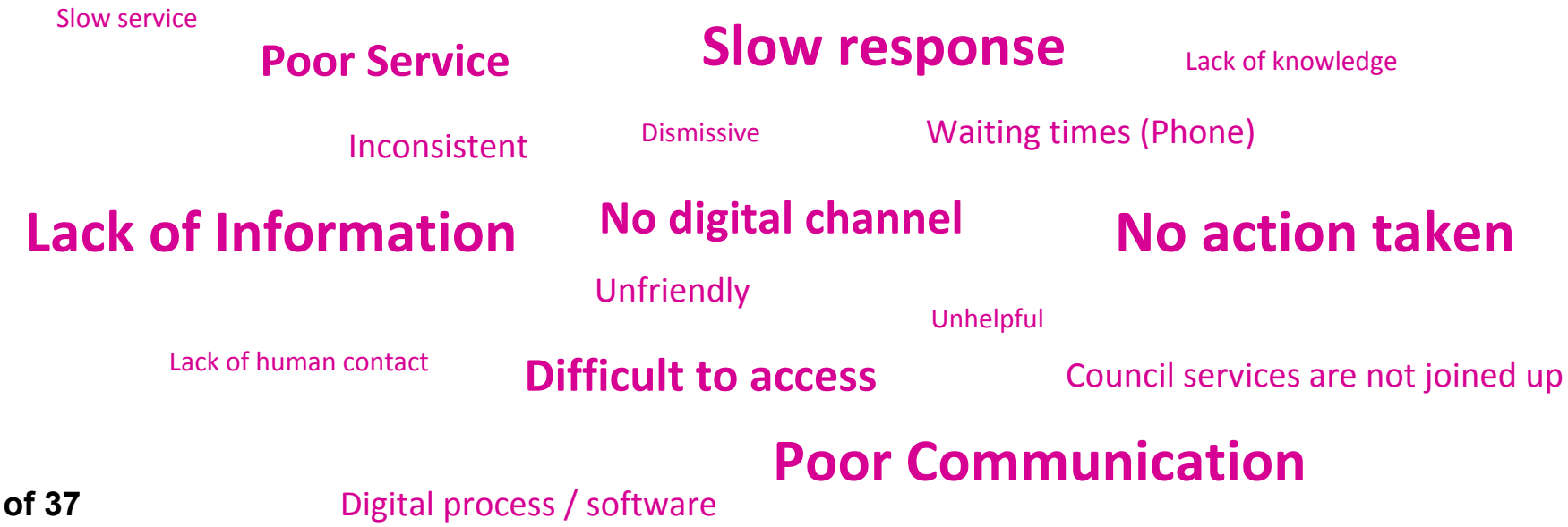
Of the customers who'd had recent contact with the council only 22.8% had a negative experience with 49.1% indicating it had been positive.

17.2% of respondents who indicated they had not contacted, or been contacted by, the council in the past 12 months provided feedback on their experience, with 42.9% having a positive experience and 21.4% having a negative experience.

Customers were asked to provide a description of what they liked or disliked during their experience with the council. The below graphs represent a summary of those responses thematically, with the font size indicating the frequency.

What did you like or dislike

What did you dislike

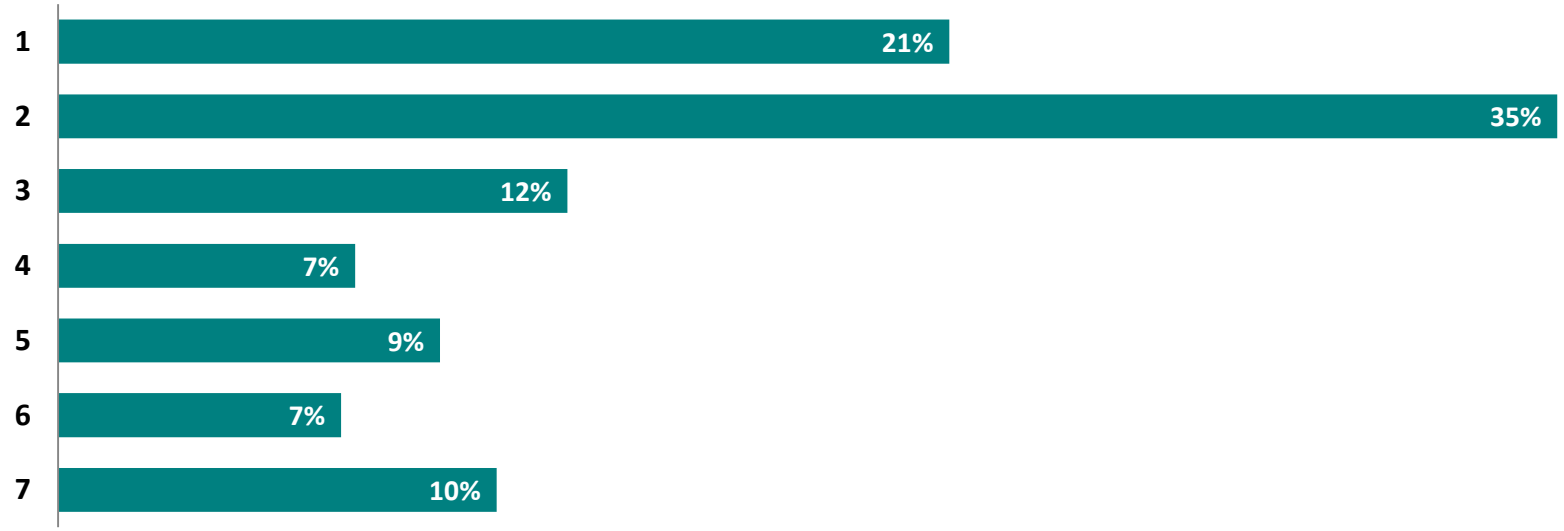


What makes a good customer experience

We asked customers to identify what they valued most when interacting with council services. They were asked to select their top three priorities in order of most valued (i.e. with 1 being their most valued).

- 35% indicated they would rather receive the correct information first time, even if it takes longer
- 21% identified responsive communication as their priority
- 12% stated that information being clear and easy to understand was most important to them
- 10% see the council being friendly, respectful and understanding as their highest priority

What our customers value most



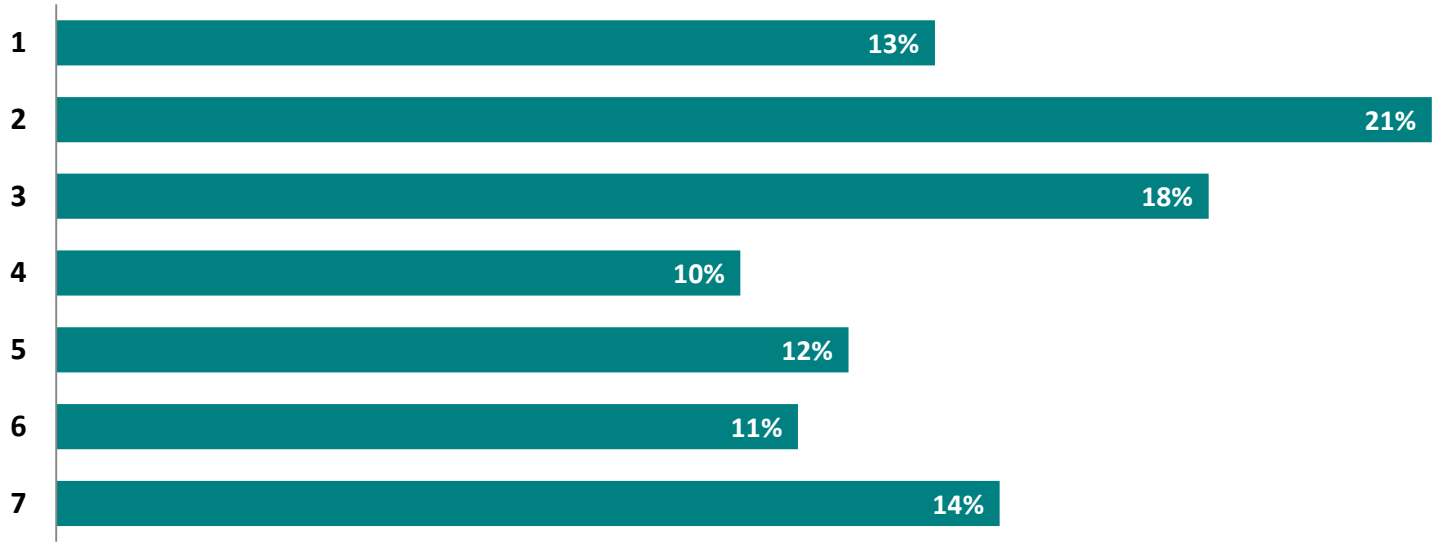
1 That you receive quick responses but may not get all the information straight away
2 That you receive the right information first time, even if it takes longer to respond
3 That information is clear and easy to understand
4 That the council is open about what it can and can't deliver
5 That council services are easy to understand and clear to reach for everyone
6 That you are given all options and are involved in decisions that affect you
7 That the council is friendly, respectful and understanding

When looking at all votes as equal (i.e. all three votes for each respondent), the results remain largely the same however there is more significance given to the council being friendly, respectful and understanding.

In both variations of the results, the council being open about what it can and cannot deliver and customers being given all options and being involved in decisions (4 & 6 respectively on the charts) received the fewest selections.

- 20.9% indicated they would rather receive the correct information first time, even if it takes longer
- 17.5% stated that information being clear and easy to understand was most important to them
- 13.4% identified responsive communication as their priority
- 14% see the council being friendly, respectful and understanding as their highest priority

All selections given equal ranking



1 That you receive quick responses but may not get all the information straight away
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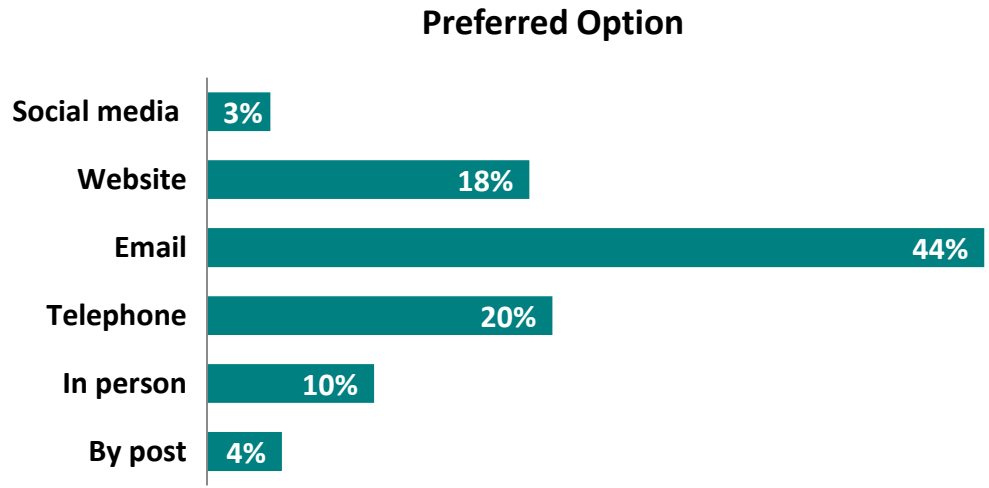
5 That council services are easy to understand and clear to reach for everyone
6 That you are given all options and are involved in decisions that affect you
7 That the council is friendly, respectful and understanding

Preferred communication channels

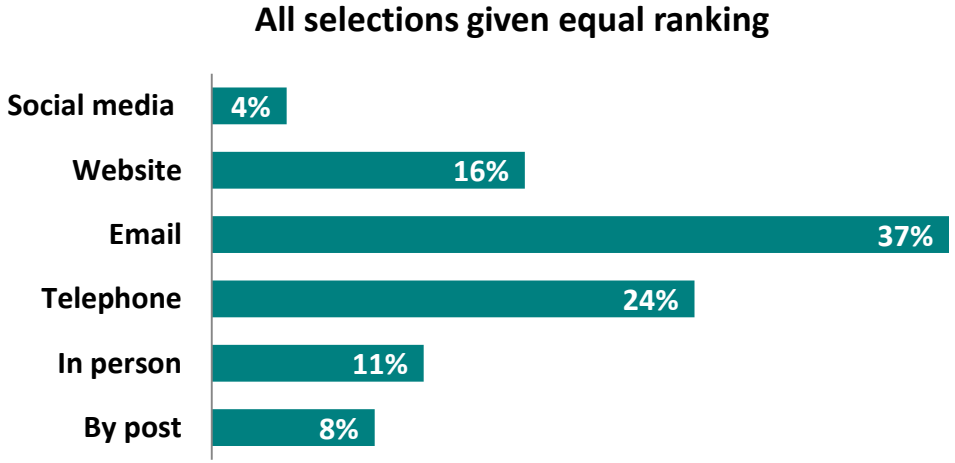
Communicating with the council

We asked customers to select their two preferred methods of contacting, or being contacted by, the council irrespective of why they are communicating the council.



65% stated they prefer digital communication (website, email & social media)

30% indicated they would prefer speak over the phone or face to face



With all selections considered equal there is a slight shift toward communication over the phone or face to face

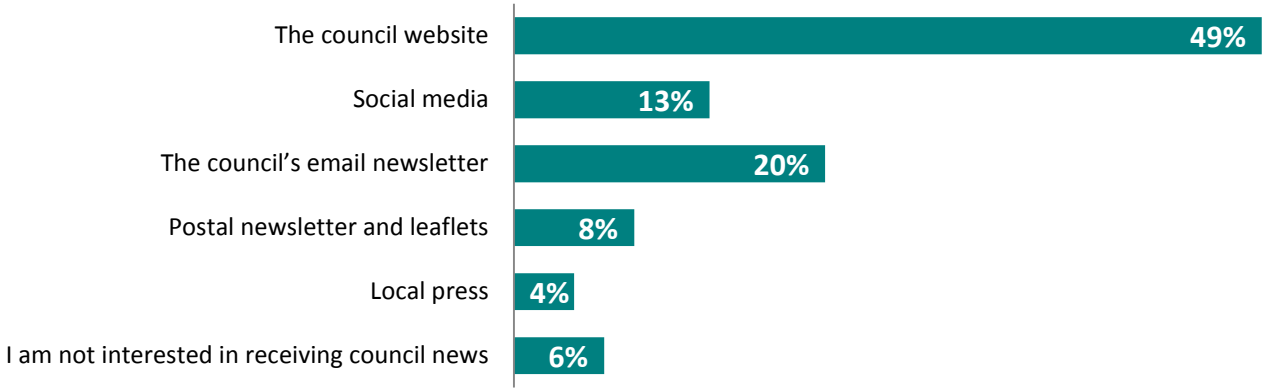
57% stated they prefer digital communication (website, email & social media)

35% indicated they would prefer speak over the phone or face to face

Receiving news, information & service updates

We asked customers to select their two preferred methods of contacting, or being contacted by, the council irrespective of why they are communicating the council.

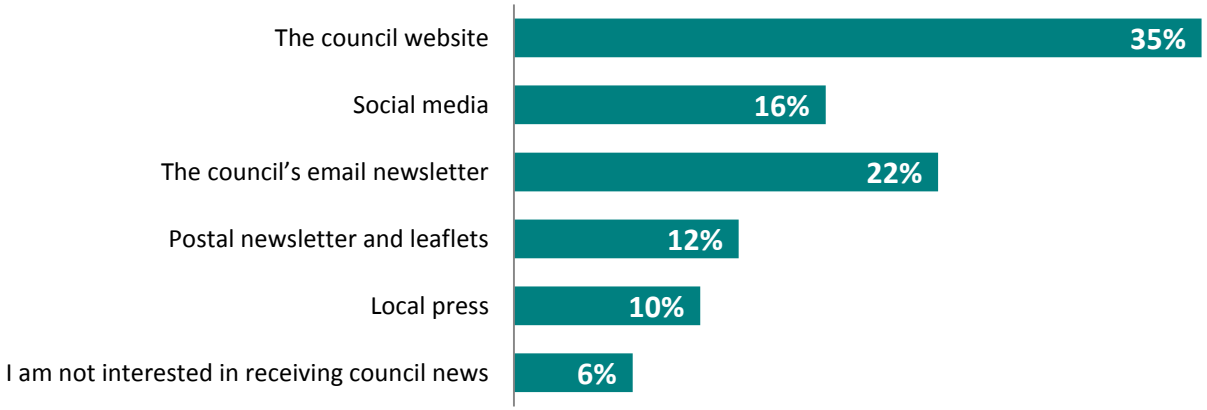
Preferred Option



83% specified they would prefer to receive council information & services updates through digital channels (website, email & social media)

Only 12% indicated that their preference would be to receive information & service updates via non-digital channels

All selections given equal ranking



When considering all selections with equal ranking there is a slight increase in preference for non-digital channels

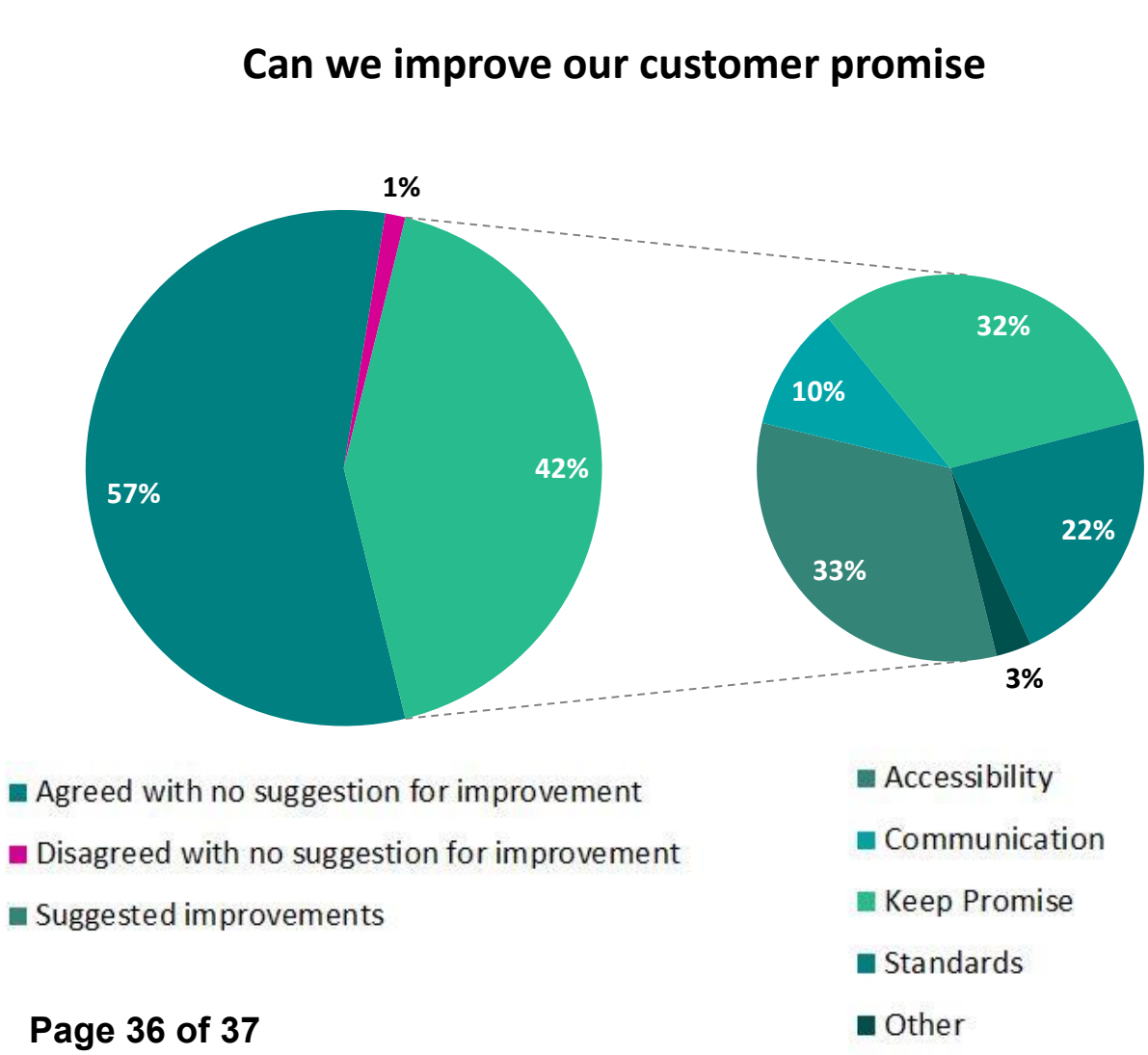
73% specified they would prefer to receive council information & services updates through digital channels (website, email & social media)

22% indicated they would prefer to receive council information & services updates via postal newsletters and leaflets or the local press

Our Customer Promise

We asked customers if our customer promise met their priorities and if not, what they would change. 57% of respondents had no suggestions for further improvement, 42% agreed in principle but provided suggestions and/or feedback on the promise and 1% explicitly said they disagree with promise but didn't say why.

Suggestions for improvement provided from the 42% who provided additional comments were mainly focused around four themes; Accessibility, Communication, Standards & Keep the Promise.



Further Information

This survey was carried out through the council's online consultation portal hosted on the council website and internal intranet site, face to face in Hove Town Hall and Bartholomew House Customer Service Centres and through paper forms provided to people without access to the internet.

The survey was conducted between Monday 26th August and Sunday 15th September 2019.

Contacts

Customer Experience Lead: Victoria.paling@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Customer Experience Manager: Luke.hamblin@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Glossary

Customer	For the purpose of this survey the term customer means any user of council services, including; residents, visitors to the city, businesses, students, service users and their representatives
Digital	Digital refers to contact methods through a digital channel, such as; online, email or social media
Equal Ranking	A number of the questions within the survey requested respondents to provide 2 or 3 answers. This allowed us to collect a preference of most valued as well as get a broader understanding of what is valued by our customers. Where results are displayed as equal ranking, this means we have counted each response and given it equal weight in the results.
Non-digital	Non-digital refers to contact methods that do not go through a digital channel, such as; telephone, face to face or postal letter.