



# **CUSTOMER CARE POLICY**

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## II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

<b>Customer</b>	Any individual who utilises the department's resources or services, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or disability, internal and external
<b>Customer care</b>	Customer care comprises initiatives and measures aimed at providing good quality service in a friendly and efficient manner.
<b>Customer service</b>	The customer service aims to provide a competent, efficient, and timely effective solution that supports the department's mission.
<b>Presidential Hotline</b>	The Presidential Hotline is a service for members of the to raise their concerns about the service they are receiving from government departments and agencies.
<b>Service Rating Card</b>	A process to measure customer satisfaction with the service rendered by the departmental official to receive feedback.
<b>District Programme Managers</b>	Deputy Directors in Districts who are responsible for programmes.

## III. ACRONYMS

<b>MEC</b>	Member of the Executive Council.
<b>AO</b>	Accounting Officer
<b>CCMS</b>	Customer Care Management System.
<b>CRM</b>	Customer Relationship Management.
<b>SLA</b>	Service Level Agreement.
<b>SMS</b>	Senior Management Services

#### **IV. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS**

- a) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- b) White Paper on Transforming Public Service delivery, 1997.
- c) White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997.
- d) Department of Social Development Customer Care Policy 2017
- e) Employment Equity (EE) Amendment Act, No 4 of 2022
- f) Public Service Regulations, 2001.
- g) Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999.
- h) Inter-Governmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005.
- i) Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000.
- j) Promotion of Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000.
- k) Public Service Act 1994 as amended by Act 30 of 2007

## 1. PREAMBLE

The department of Social Development is committed to ensuring that customer satisfaction is integral to planning, programming, budgeting and delivery of services<sup>6</sup>. The department is mandated to provide a range of integrated developmental social welfare services aimed at alleviating the plight of needy, vulnerable groups and is required to set realistic achievable service standards to ensure equitable access to departmental resources. Interaction with public, the department shall develop and maintain complaint-handling mechanisms to ensure redress and customer satisfaction, to transform society by building conscious and capable citizens through provision of integrated social development services.

The department continuous monitored by interested parties such as media institutions and advocacy groups whose role is critical in influencing public opinion and prioritise structured meetings with stakeholders to foster the sense of a shared vision through platforms of roadshows and strive to provide quality, timely and cost-effective service. The departmental employees shall provide customers with information on the complaint-handling procedure.

The department is dedicated to delivering services that adhere to cost-effective standards, prioritise quality, user-friendly, and operate efficiently. The service rating card shall indicate the degree to which staff adopt and embody the values and mission statement of the department.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to promote an integrated approach towards customer service by encouraging adherence to basic Batho Pele principles.

## **3. OBJECTIVES**

- a) To stimulate a sense of customer service excellence.
- b) To ensure improved customer and public satisfaction.
- c) To promote staff professionalism and respect for human dignity.
- d) To contribute towards strengthening a platform for effective employee and stakeholder engagement.
- e) To build strong relations to reduce potential future conflict.

## **4. SCOPE OF APLICABILITY**

The scope of this policy applies to internal and external customers utilise departmental resources and services, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or disability.

## **5. POLICY STATEMENT**

This policy aims to maintain an environment where public, internal staff are valued, and services are tailored to meet customers' needs and feedback. Despite the department's mandate to deliver equitable, responsive, and people-centred services, challenges in customer care practices continue to undermine service quality and public trust. Current challenges include inconsistent adherence to service standards across service delivery points, limited staff capacity and training in customer service, low resolution rate of complaints, and inadequate communication channels, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Fragmented monitoring and feedback systems make it difficult to track client satisfaction and address recurring issues effectively.

These shortcomings result in client frustration, reduced accessibility of services, reputational risk to the department, and hindered achievement of strategic goals aligned with the Batho Pele principles. Hence, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive, well-implemented Customer Care Policy to ensure a uniform service

delivery standard, enhance accountability, and foster a culture of respect, empathy, and responsiveness in interactions with clients.

## 6. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

- a) **Service provision:** outline how the department shall provide services to citizens, including the quality standards to be maintained, response times for queries or service requests, and procedures for handling complaints or feedback.
- b) **Accessibility:** ensure services and information shall be accessible to citizens, including people with disabilities or language barriers. This shall involve providing alternative formats, language translation services, or assistance for individuals with special needs.
- c) **Communication channels:** define the channels through which citizens interact with the department, such as in-person, phone, email, website, or social media platforms. Clarify the availability of these channels and expected turnaround time.
- d) **Complaints and feedback mechanisms:** establish procedures for citizens to submit complaints, feedback, or suggestions, and outline how these shall be acknowledged, investigated, and addressed promptly.
- e) **Staff training and support:** ensure staff members are trained in customer service principles and equipped with necessary resources to assist citizens effectively. This shall include training in communication skills, conflict resolution, and acknowledgement of departmental policies and procedures.
- f) **Transparency and accountability:** commit to transparency in decision-making processes and provide citizens with access to relevant information on departmental activities, policies, and performance metrics. Establish mechanisms for accountability to ensure commitments outlined in customer care policy.
- g) **Continuous improvement:** Implement processes for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of customer care policy, including gathering feedback from citizens and staff, analysing trends in complaints or inquiries, and adjusting as needed to improve service delivery.

- h) **Legal and ethical considerations:** ensure customer care policy complies with relevant legislations, regulations, and ethical standards, particularly regarding data privacy, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. By addressing these areas, a customer care policy shall enhance quality of services provided by department and foster positive relationships with citizens.

## **7. POLICY PROVISIONS**

The service delivery charter by total quality assurance shall support the execution approach for each service delivery point, serving commitment to customers, regarding service provisions.

### **7.1. Customer Service Commitments**

The department provides exceptional services, guided by values expressed in the Batho Pele Principles:

- a) The Customer care unit shall develop and implement an annual customer care action plan with specific deliverables.
- b) Customer care unit shall monitor performance through continuous assessment, benchmarking against other sector departments.
- c) Customer care shall develop methods of receiving customer feedback to find whether customers are satisfied with the standard of services received.
- d) The unit shall ensure customer complaints are addressed promptly, timeously, and to satisfaction of clients.

### **7.2. Complaints handling procedure**

- a) The complaints shall be registered in the complaint registers allocated at the provincial customer care and district customer care offices.
- b) Complaint registers shall be kept updated concerning progress on the reported cases.
- c) The departmental complaints registers shall be available for easily retrieval.
- d) A job card shall be opened together with reference number and assigned to a relevant office to address complaint.



- e) Depending on the complexity of the matter coupled with availability of resources, a complaint shall be attended to within set timeframes of 21 working days as expressed in the service delivery charter.
- f) An assigned officials failed to attend to complaints within set timelines; complaints shall be escalated to the relevant programme manager and ultimately to the Head of department.
- g) Complaint resolution meetings shall be conducted when necessary.

### **7.3.Redress Procedure**

- a) Redress mechanisms shall be adopted for clients to render feedback to department on services received.
- b) The staff shall be trained to deal with complaints in a friendly and helpful manner.
- c) An apology, full explanation, and effective speedy remedial shall be offered when promised standards of service are not delivered.
- d) When complaints are logged, Customer care shall give customers a sympathetic approach.
- e) Customer care shall have positive and clear response to complaints.

### **7.4.Customer Interaction**

- a) The department interacts with customers through walk-in.
- b) The customer shall be greeted politely.
- c) The departmental staff shall give full attention to the customer.
- d) Staff shall resolve the customer's inquiry at first contact.
- e) Customer care shall ensure customers are catered for and appropriate arrangements are in place.
- f) Staff meetings with customers, the first point of contact, shall ensure adequate information regarding customer inquiry is obtained.
- g) Ensure confidentiality, especially when dealing with sensitive enquiries in reception using consulting rooms.
- h) At first contact, staff shall ensure customers are not left unattended for more than five (5) minutes in reception areas.

- i) In unavailability of staff, the customer shall be made aware of expected waiting period.

### **7.5. Waiting time**

- a) After the initial contact, the customer shall be informed of a waiting period.
- b) When a waiting period exceeds 10 minutes, customer service staff shall inform the customer.

### **7.6. Telephone etiquette**

- a) The switchboard shall be fully staffed and operational daily.
- b) Switchboard shall only be used for inbound calls.
- c) The phone calls shall be picked up within 3 - 5 rings, and the official shall note the details of the calls.
- d) The messages shall be recorded and reach intended recipients within a day, and responses shall be made within 3 days.
- e) When answering departmental telephone, official shall include name of the department, officials name and help.
- f) Telephone shall be attended during published operating hours.
- g) Calls put on 'hold', the customer shall be kept updated on a waiting period.
- h) Voice recorded messages shall be responded to within 24 hours, the next working day message left over a weekend, after hours and on public holidays.
- i) Staff shall update voicemail each working day.

### **7.7. Written correspondence**

- a) Incoming written correspondence shall be acknowledged within three working days maximum and responded to within ten working days.
- b) The content of a written correspondence shall be clear, easy to understand, free of jargon words, accurate, and include a contact name and number.

### **7.8. Publications**

The following information shall be available in the departmental publications:

- a) A service standard.
- b) The progress on projects undertaken by the department.
- c) Changes made to services due to feedback, complaints, or consultations with stakeholders.
- d) The published information shall be accessible to customers with specific needs.

### **7.9. Staff name badges**

- a) The staff shall be neatly dressed to meet a customer.
- b) Departmental staff shall wear name badges specified with departmental logo, name and surname.

### **7.10. Branding and Reception Area**

- a) Provincial and district offices shall be branded internally and externally.
- b) Reception points shall be attended during operating hours.
- c) Reception points shall be welcoming, clean and tidy.
- d) Reception points shall display clear and accurate opening times.
- e) Details of services and personnel available shall be displayed clearly in reception areas.

### **7.11. Information**

The public information shall be clear, reviewed regularly, and sent timeously. Customer care shall ensure customers have access to information on:

- a) Opening time.

- b) Building office address.
- c) Names of managers.
- d) Facilities/services available.
- e) Access details.
- f) Means on contacts be made.

#### **7.12. Staff conduct, awareness, and safety**

- a) Staff working at information centres shall arrive on time for work and shall not leave centres unattended.
- b) Timely permission shall be sought from the immediate supervisor when a staff member leaves the Information Centre.

### **8. APPROVAL AUTHORITY**

The responsibility and accountability for development and review of this policy rest on the Director: Communications. The final approval of the policy rests with the Executive Authority.

### **9. ADMINISTRATIVE OF THE POLICY**

The function of administration and enforcement of this policy shall rest on officials in the management and implementation of this policy. The Director: Communications shall guide the management in the administration and enforcement of this policy.

### **10. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **10.1. Customer Care Unit**

- a) Customer care shall oversee implementation of the Customer Care Policy.
- b) The unit shall manage customer care operation.
- c) Customer care unit shall support service delivery points and provide feedback on customer care.

- d) The unit shall coordinate with programmes at local service delivery points.
- e) The unit shall receive public complaints or enquiries and refer to relevant components for intervention within stipulated timeframes.
- f) The unit shall facilitate formal sessions depending on nature of complaint resolved in service delivery-related matters.

#### **10.2. District Programme Managers**

- a) Programme managers shall ensure employees under their supervision incorporate client orientation on signed work plan agreements.
- b) Programme managers shall ensure referred service delivery-related complaints are resolved within stipulated timeframes.
- c) Programme management meetings shall allocate a slot to discuss emerging customer care issues.
- d) Programme managers shall be accountable for customer service performance of units.

#### **10.3. Directors**

- a) Directors shall be responsible for finalisation of referred complaints or queries in line with set service delivery standards.
- b) Directors shall ensure employees under their supervision incorporate generic assessment factors stimulating service delivery innovation on signed workplan agreements.
- c) The directors shall ensure staff are oriented and trained in customer care to ensure improved service delivery.

#### **10.4. Risk Management Unit**

- a) Risk management unit shall conduct risk awareness workshops targeting employees and projects funded by department.
- b) Risk management unit shall be responsible for investigating allegations of financial misconduct involving employees or community-based projects funded by department.

#### **10.5. Labour Relations Unit**

- a) Labour relations unit shall conduct awareness campaigns on grievance procedures and ensure adherence to the Public Service Code of Conduct.
- b) The unit shall institute disciplinary proceedings against employee charged with a breach of ethical Code of Conduct.
- c) The unit shall maintain a principle of fairness and transparency towards administrative processes.

#### **10.6. Security Management Unit**

- a) The unit shall conduct awareness workshops on security management-related matters targeting staff.
- b) The unit shall be responsible for management of contracted security service providers to ensure improved safety of visitors and assets of department.
- c) Security management unit shall collaborate with Customer care unit to ensure improved customer service in reception areas.

#### **10.7. Integrated Employee Wellness Programme**

- a) Integrated employee wellness unit shall be responsible for implementing strategies to improve staff morale and productivity.
- b) Wellness programs shall address personal well-being of employees, for employees to feel valued, and results for better service delivery.

#### **10.8. Chief Directors**

- a) Chief directors shall be responsible for finalisation of referred cases to enhance service delivery turnaround time.

- b) Chief directors shall enhance customer expectations through development of strategies to improve customer experience at service delivery points, at initial inquiries to post-resolution follow-ups.

#### **10.9. Head of the department**

- a) The Head of department shall be responsible for resolving escalated disagreements arising from complaints handling procedure.
- b) The HOD shall authorise an investigation of service delivery-related complaints upon recommendation from Customer care unit.

#### **10.10. Member of the Executive Council**

The Member of the Executive Council shall be responsible for adjudicating any unresolved disagreement arising from administrative injustice.

### **11. MONITORING MECHANISM**

The monitoring and evaluating on implementation of this policy shall assess the impact; the department shall ensure consistency to meet needs and expectations of clients, fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. Customer care unit shall design a customer service rating tool, quarterly, to ensure services are measured against agreed key standards such as speedy service, accessibility, customer choice, quality, and value for money.

Continuously collect and analyse data to assess policy implementation and impact. Quarterly shall make use of surveys, feedback forms, direct client interviews to gather qualitative and quantitative data on customer satisfaction and service quality. Ensure effective channels for receiving and addressing feedback from clients and staff. The unit shall provide multiple feedback channels, including online forms, suggestion boxes, and customer service hotlines.

Customer care shall establish a process of reviewing and responding to feedback promptly. Encourage staff to provide input on policy effectiveness and suggest improvements. The unit shall maintain transparency and accountability on the implementation of Customer Care Policy.

The unit shall analyse trends and identify areas for improvement through regular reporting. Prepare monthly and quarterly reports on customer care performance, highlighting successes and areas need improvement. Commission customer perception surveys target internal and external service beneficiaries to determine overall customer satisfaction. The department shall ensure systems are in place to monitor service performance against set standards. Information shall be collected from internal staff, service providers, and public to obtain inputs for improving system. Feedback and data collected from external customers shall be shared with staff to help them shape their actions to better meet the needs of public.

## 12. POLICY REVIEW

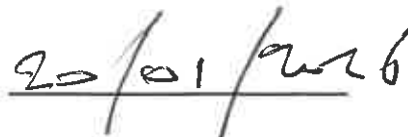
This policy shall be reviewed after 3 years of its effective date and when there are changes in legislation.

## 13. POLICY APPROVAL

  
Recommended/Not Recommended

Head of Department

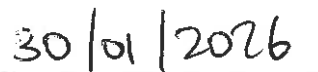
Dept of Social Development

  
Date

  
Approved/Not Approved

Member of the Executive Council

Dept. Social Development

  
Date