Peterborough City Council

Customer Engagement Strategy

Contents

216

216

1. Introduction

1.1   Peterborough City Council (the council) is committed to providing accessible, effective and efficient services to its customers. As part of the council's Customer Engagement Strategy - which includes the Digital Front Door Programme - the vision is to make the majority of council services available to our customers through digital channels (i.e. "digital by default").

However, the council also recognises that digital exclusion is an issue which must be addressed, as many customers face challenges that make it difficult for them to access the internet and take advantage of digital services.

1.2   This strategy documents how the council will interact with customers in the future whilst ensuring services remain accessible to our vulnerable customers.

2. Background

2.1   Peterborough City Council has experienced significant reductions in central funding over the last ten years and is facing an uncertain future due to the implications of a set of complex threats and pressures: further cuts in funding, rising demand for services, a population with more complex needs, rapidly evolving technologies and changing socio-economic demographics, to name a few.

2.2   Ever since technology became widely and publicly available, and from the very beginning of e-government, significant efforts have gone into reducing the processing costs of managing customer contact in the so-called 'front office', i.e. where the public first make contact with a council. The new Transformation Strategy, published on 9 February 2017, sets out the Government's intention to serve the customer with a better, more coherent experience when using government services online - one that meets the raised expectations set by the many other digital services and tools customers use every day. From online banking, to downloading music, to ordering groceries on-the-go, digital channels and tools are increasingly allowing people to conduct everyday tasks how, when and where they like.

2.3   By harnessing digital technologies to build and deliver services, over the last five years the Government has transformed the relationship between the customer and itself. Millions of customers now have the convenience of doing business with government from their home, or on the move, at a time of their choosing. From April 2015 to March 2016, over 33 million people taxed their vehicle online (and no longer need a paper record); 93% of vehicle tax and drivers' transactions (about 200 million per year) were done online; over 4 million people applied for a driving licence online and over 5.7 million people used the voter registration digital service, with a peak of 469,000 applications in one day[1].

2.4   The Government have recognised that a digital channel shift should include activities to support greater access to digital channels through 'assisted digital' provision and the fostering of greater digital inclusion. Services must work for the whole of society - not just the 77% of people who have basic digital skills, but for those adults who don't[2]. This is particularly important as financial exclusion and

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[1] Government Transformation Strategy, Government Digital Services, 2017

[2] Office for National Statistics, Statistical Bulletin, Internet Users in the UK: 2016

digital exclusion often go hand in hand. People who are the least online are often heavier users of public services, highlighting the need to design services to include them. For example, the Office for National Statistics established in 2016 that 61% of people aged 75 and over had never used the internet. The most common reason that people give for not being online is that they are not interested in the internet. However, there are also other barriers such as costs, online security and a lack of knowledge and confidence.

2.5   The Government has recognised how a locally-led approach, based on understanding customers, working effectively with all groups (including those who are digitally excluded) and other partners, and thinking creatively about delivery mechanisms really can deliver practical benefits to local people and to the council.

3. Vision and Objectives

3.1   The council's vision for how customers will access services is aligned to the Government's 2016 Digital and Transformation Strategies, where:

The council will re-design its digital services to make them so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them prefer to do so. The council will provide digitalised public services that are personalised, flexible, cost-efficient, save customers time, and allow the customer to transact how, when and where they like.

3.2   As part of this vision the council has embarked on the Digital Front Door (DFD) programme which will change the way customers access council services through new and improved digital channels to deliver savings, avoid unnecessary costs and manage demand for services. An overview of the programme and the links with face-to-face and telephone engagement (Appendix A).

The Digital Front Door Programme sets out to:

- Transform the council's first point of access
- Focus upon promoting digital access channels for council services
- Reduce the cost of customer access across the council
- Build on the council's existing investment in digital platforms
- Provide a holistic customer experience through improved information, advice, guidance, transactions, signposting and referrals

3.3 This approach will:
- Enable self-serve by customers
- Increase self-management by customers
- Divert demand from council services by sign-posting customers to the appropriate service delivery partner
- Improve the customer's experience on digital channels

3.4 The council will complement the availability of its services via digital channels with additional availability of telephone and face-to-face servicing options. Council staff in both of these service areas will work with customers to assist them to self-serve online where possible and appropriate.

4. Our Strategy

4.1 Customers

4.1.1 The council is committed to being "digital by default" and to this end has embarked on a programme to make services available online, alongside the development of the Peterborough portal customer account functionality. This will enable customers to securely transact and interact with the council for a variety of services.

4.1.2 Going forward, the council will run a single public marketing campaign, in parallel with internal comms campaigns, with one overarching brand, slogan and narrative. This will be complemented with shorter sub-campaigns to promote different services as they are due to go live on the council's website.

Our strategy is to:
- provide face to face and web digital assistance;
- provide digital assistance telephony channels;
- makes residents aware of the options for interacting and transacting with the council through digital channels;
- encourages all service users, as far as possible, to move to self-service channels (i.e. Website, automated touch tone telephony);
- mitigate the potential for public confusion regarding the digital self-service options that will become available;
- mitigate reputational risks that exist related to public resistance and consequent negative media commentary;
- improve the User Experience on all the council digital channels; and
- review and, if appropriate, support the revision of business processes behind the customer journey to ensure alignment of 'look and feel' between digital and non-digital customer experience;

Why is this our strategy?
- To raise awareness, and encourage use, of the digital services available.

4.2 Older, Vulnerable and Digitally Excluded Customers

4.2.1 The council's strategy for how older and vulnerable customers will be supported, where required, to use digital services is outlined below. The strategy is divided into key elements which are potential barriers for vulnerable people using digital services. For each, the strategy will be defined, providing the reasons for why the council intends to adopt a certain approach and what the council intends to do.

4.2.2 It is recognised that there are a number of reasons why vulnerable people may be digitally excluded, the key barriers (not an exhaustive list) are detailed below:

Digital Excluded - those who have little or no opportunity of accessing the internet

- No access to the internet

- No access to IT equipment or accessible IT equipment
- Cost of equipment
- Lack of IT skills/knowledge to engage with services online
- Unable to use IT equipment and/or have a nominated person
- Those customers who do not have english as their first language

Digital Dismissive - those who have (or potentially have) a means of accessing the internet but choose not to use it

- Knowledge
- Confidence
- Security concerns
- Trust
- Fear of change / the unknown
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Terminology / jargon
- Lack of ongoing support

4.2.3   Digital Exclusion

4.2.3.1 Peterborough as a whole has an above average internet connection speed, however the cost of internet and IT equipment provision is a barrier for some people. This is likely to be particularly prevalent in the North, Central and Dogsthorpe wards where there is a high level of deprivation[3].

4.2.3.2 It is worth also recognising key wards where there is a high percentage of people over the age of 65. The following wards have over 20% over 65s - Glinton and Castor, Barnack, West and Gunthorpe[4].

4.2.3.3 Customers who are disabled (25% of disabled adults have never used the internet[5]) are far less likely to have access to, or use, the internet. The prevalence of disability increases with age, so this is consistent with the findings on age. It is also quite possible that rates will differ significantly for different impairment types. Some disabilities may require accessibility devices or improvements in design in order to make effective use of technologies. The Government Digital Service have produced general accessibility guidelines which should be adhered to. It is imperative that reasonable adjustments are made so that no person who has protected characteristics is disadvantaged.

4.2.3.4 It is also recognised that those with a learning disability may have a significantly reduced ability to understand complex information or learn new skills[6]. Some of the everyday tasks that people with a learning disability may find difficult include: filling in forms, following instructions or directions, concentrating for long periods of time, keeping appointments, reading, writing and comprehension. Recognition of these difficulties will need to be included in any digital service design and support.

4.2.3.5 Mental health problems can affect the way a person thinks, feels and behaves.

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[3] Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 - Overall Score (Sourced from LG Inform Plus - 25/08/2016)
[4] Mid-2014 Population Estimates (ONS) - Age Group Proportions of Ward Population
[5] Office for National Statistics, Internet users in the UK: 2016
[6] Department of Health, 'Valuing People' White Paper (2001)

They affect around one in four people in Britain, and range from common mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, to problems such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Those with a mental health issue may struggle with day to day activities and need support, particularly when there are unforeseen changes.

4.2.3.6 The council is committed to working with appropriate groups to overcome barriers and issues. For example, the rollout of the digital inclusion programme to older people, completing an audit of digital facilities and support available to vulnerable people.

4.2.4 Digital Dismissive

4.2.5 By far the most common barrier is knowledge and confidence. Computers and the internet are perceived to have a certain amount of 'mystique', making them seem inaccessible and confusing. There is also an issue with terminology and jargon which makes it difficult to understand. However, it was recognised in the Age Concern report, Introducing another World: older people and digital inclusion[7] that if older people could get help they would be willing to use computers and the internet.

4.2.6 A number of high profile national security breaches in recent years have also added to the fear of using the internet and concerns about security of data.

4.2.7 The Age Concern report, also outlined from their research that despite a low level of understanding of how the internet works, awareness of what the internet can do and its benefits is surprisingly high with the older generation. Most of those included in the research acknowledge that the internet is already important (although not necessarily to them) and expect its importance to increase further in the not-too-distant future.

4.2.8 For those who do wish to embrace using computers and the internet, this can often only be maintained by ongoing support and practical help to ensure they continue to remain confident and have support should they come up against any issues or they are likely to disengage.

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[7] Age Concern report, Introducing another World: older people and digital inclusion, 2009

Our strategy is to:

- provide face to face and web digital assistance;
- provide digital assistance telephony channels;
- ensure that the council communicate effectively and sympathetically with the vulnerable and the digitally excluded to minimise any challenges they may face coping with these changes;
- continue to provide face to face support for vulnerable customers;
- continue to provide telephony support for vulnerable customers;
- target family, friends and carers to support vulnerable people to use digital tools whilst increasingly positioning assistive technology at the heart of the care and support offer;
- continue targeting vulnerable people through digital inclusion, whilst also training the trainer in the community to also be able to deliver the training
- ensure any new digital services are tested with vulnerable groups to ensure they are accessible, easy to use and provide a good customer user journey;
- ensure digital services and facilities are accessible for the disabled

Why is this our strategy?
- to help to tackle the issues outlined above in relation to digital exclusion and those who are dismissive of digital.
- to recognise that digital inclusion is about having the right access, skills, motivation and trust, and to engender this for Peterborough customers.

4.3 Customers in Rural Locations

4.3.1 Rural locations in Peterborough generally have good or superfast broadband connectivity (97% of Peterborough have access to superfast broadband)[8], however access to mobile connectivity can be difficult. For the customers that live in rural locations, access to broadband and mobile coverage can lead to increased social and economic disadvantage and is exacerbated in rural communities by the remoteness from those services. This might include reduced job prospects, social and leisure opportunities and difficulty to access essential public services, particularly health care.

4.3.2 Parish Councils play a vital role for many rural communities, sharing local information and shaping local services. Many Parish Councils across the country are taking up the challenge of digital transformation and are therefore able to improve their offer to local people. As a result, Parish Councils that are already taking advantage of digital services have noticed an increase in the number of parishioners attending meetings, more engagement with older parishioners by email and an increase in younger parishioners turning up at meetings wanting to get involved in local democracy.

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[8] Connecting Cambridgeshire

Our strategy is to:

- develop digital "pop ups" to assist customers in rural communities;
- target customers, and work with Parish Council's, in rural communities through digital inclusion, whilst also training the trainer in the community to also be able to deliver the training by transferring skills.

Why is this our strategy?
- to help to tackle the issues outlined above in relation to digital exclusion.

5. Communications

5.1 Peterborough Portal

The following council services are currently available to the public wholly online, via the Peterborough portal:

- Selective Licensing (Houses of Multiple Occupation landlords)

The following council services will be made available to the public online, via the Peterborough portal, over the next year:

- Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Housing Benefits
- Housing Register (tenants)
- Housing Register (landlords)
- Adult Social Care
- Taxi Licences
- Premises Licences
- Licenced Businesses
- Parking Services
- Additional services will be made available in due course as services develop their online self-serve offering.

The council communications dept. must ensure that it:

- makes residents aware of the options for interacting and transacting with the council through the Peterborough portal.
- encourage all service users, as far as possible, to move to self-service channels (i.e. Peterborough portal, automated touch-tone telephony).
- reduce the potential for public confusion regarding the digital self-service options that will become available.
- mitigate reputational risks that exist related to public resistance and consequent negative media commentary.
- improve the user experience on digital channels.
- makes residents aware of alternatives to the digital service options for those unable to access or use the internet.
- makes partner organisations, and those working with vulnerable groups and the financially excluded, aware of the alternatives to the digital service options for those unable to access or use the internet.

5.2 External Campaigns

The Peterborough portal external marketing campaign can be compartmentalised into three separate components: offline, online and media relations. However, messaging and branding across all three areas must be consistent.

5.3 Offline Marketing

There are numerous offline (i.e. "traditional") marketing channels available. However, these usually carry a much higher cost – and likely a lower return on investment – than online marketing and media relations campaigns. However, the council will invest in offline marketing - focusing on only the most historically effective channels - to allow us to reach demographics that are difficult to engage through online campaigns i.e. the digitally excluded. In order of importance, below are the offline marketing channels that will be utilised to promote the Peterborough portal.

1. **Parish Councils** – work with each Parish and programmes already taking place in the community.

2. **Community and Voluntary Sector Groups** – work with groups who already have relationships and programmes in the community to ensure we reach as many groups of the community, especially the hard to reach customers.

3. **Letters / booklets** posted to residents and service users.

4. **Posters** in cash office (bayard place), visitor information centre (bridge street), Vivacity venues (libraries / theatres / gyms), community centres, local shops.

5. **Radio adverts** – limited to community radio stations (PCR, Salaam).

6. **Lamppost and poster boards** advertising (currently controlled by the council).

7. **The council Visitor Guide** – issued by the council pre-Christmas 2017.

8. **YourPeterborough magazine** – issued by the council in March 2018.

9. **City Market brochure** – issued by the council marketing dept.

10. **Newspaper and magazine advertising** in local media.

11. **Posters on public transport** (buses, trains, bus and train station).

12. Advertising in **Doctor's surgeries**.

13. **Roundabout adverts** – controlled by the council marketing dept.

In order to maximise return on investment and utilise budget efficiently, it is recommended that a limited test campaign of radio, newspaper and magazine advertising is conducted to ascertain effectiveness of those channels prior to the commitment of larger budgets.

5.4 Online Marketing

Online campaigns should be a core component of the council's marketing mix, as digital

advertising has the following advantages:

- low hanging fruit i.e. people who are already on the internet.
- typically less expensive than traditional marketing.
- offer greater accountability and ability to track success accurately.

To ensure the Peterborough portal online marketing campaigns are as effective as possible, it is important to follow industry best practices, and where appropriate adapt those practices to the unique needs of the the council portal.

1. Dedicated website address for the Peterborough portal registration/login page. e.g. www.peterborough.gov.uk/Peterboroughportal
Since all our digital marketing will direct click-throughs to this URL, it is important that the registration/login page is aesthetically attractive and sells the benefits of the service options.

2. Prominent message on the council website homepage, and relevant subsidiary pages, encouraging sign-ups to the Peterborough portal.

3. Google advertising (via the Display Network)

4. Geographically targeted to local residents, encouraging signups to Peterborough Portal. Utilise re-marketing to ensure repeat message delivery to target demographics.

4. Social media advertising

In terms of social media campaigning, our Business Intelligence team advises that the dominant channel for customer interaction is Facebook. Twitter and other social media don't appear to be popular channels for the public wishing to contact the council. Therefore, it is recommended that 50% of the budget dedicated to digital marketing be allocated to Facebook advertising campaigns.

(Given the data from our in-house insight team, and the previous experiences of the Transformation Comms Manager running social media campaigns, we do not recommend allocating any budget or resource to advertising on any other social media.)

Facebook customer data:

- 140,000 users in Peterborough
- 80,000 aged 25 to 50
- 33,000 aged 50+

5.5 Media Relations

There are two main objectives for our media relations campaign:

1. Maximising the number of signups to the Peterborough portal by promoting the benefits of the service to our customers and residents.

1. Reaching hard-to-access demographic groups*, making them aware of the Peterborough portal and associated benefits, and the alternative service channels.

* by age, ethnicity, religion, primary language etc.

Note that the delivery of our message through a trusted and independent third party (e.g. BBC, Peterborough Telegraph etc.) can engender confidence in our services that pure advertising cannot hope to equal.

5.6 PR Channels

There is currently a crisis in regional media, mainly due to shrinking advertising revenues, which has led to the consolidation of local channels and downsizing of newsroom teams. From a media relations perspective this presents both challenges and opportunities.

In many ways, it is now easier to ensure that PR messaging is communicated to the public. However, there are fewer channels for delivering that messaging and their popularity (and therefore their reach) is waning. Realistically, there are only a handful of useful media channels with the requisite popularity to warrant our PR focus.

- Local radio, including community radio
  (e.g. PCR and Salaam)
- Local newspapers and magazines:
- (Peterborough Telegraph, Cambs Pride etc.)
- Regional TV: BBC Look East

Acknowledgements

The council would like to thank the following organisations who have reviewed, contributed to or attended focus groups to develop this strategy:

Age UK
Autism and LD Partnership Board
Carers Trust
City College Peterborough
Deafblind UK
DIAL Sport
Family Voice
Healthwatch Peterborough
Mental Health and Governance Board
Older People Partnership Board
Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS)
Peterborough Disability
Peterborough MIND
Peterborough Patient Forum
Public Health
RNIB
SUN Network
Various council (including Serco) officers

APPENDIX A

DRAFT CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - High RIsk version							
Digital Engagement Citizens, Older people, Vulnerable people, Digitally excluded			**Telephony Contact** Auto-attendant, Webchat		**Face-to-Face Services** Payments strategy		
WEBSITE Information and Advice					**Face-to-Face**		
Pay it	*Apply for it*	*Report it*	*Book it*	*Ask it*			
PHASE 1 2017 — *Aug - Sept* Bulky Waste MyAccount (Business Rates, Council Tax, Benefits, Landlords) eMail Marketing Housing		*Oct - Nov* Payments online - (Payments Strategy) MyPeterborough App (to be disabled) Website enhancements Website content updates Auto-attendant enhancements		*Dec - Mar* Taxi Licensing Verification Parking Permits Tip Permits Highways Directory of Services Revs & Bens	*Bridge Street* Service to support citizens to access services online	New ways of working for staff and partners New way of engaging for citizens **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**	**COMMUNICATION** Internal and External
PHASE 2 2018 — *Nov - Feb scoping* *Feb - Apr develop* *May - Jul Deploy* **Service areas to be considered** Home Services Delivery Model Prevention Enforcement Service (PES) Transfer of Care ASC Review Team Homelessness Concessionary Fares		*May - Jun scoping* *Jun - Sept develop* *Sept - Nov Deploy* **Service areas to be considered** First Response Team Family Support Regulatory Services Passenger Transport		*Dec* Health & Social Care Portal	*Fletton Quays* Appointments *ASC Front Door*		
PHASE 3 2019 - 2020 — *Nov - Feb scoping* *Feb - Apr develop* *May - Jul Deploy* **Service areas to be considered** Planning & Development Regulatory Services SEN 0-25 School Admissions		*May - Jun scoping* *Jun - Sept develop* *Sept - Nov Deploy* **Service areas to be considered** Targetted Youth YOS Bereavement Services School Improvement Electoral Services		*Sept - Oct scoping* *Nov - Jan develop* *Feb - Mar Deploy* **Service areas to be considered** Democratic Services Register Office Land Charges			