

We want to put our customers at the heart of everything we do and we are working with our partners to make Southampton: a city of opportunity where everyone thrives.

In this digital age, most people would prefer to do things for themselves, at times that suit them. So we are changing the way we work and delivering more services online, making it easier for you to access information and services in ways that are quick, efficient and convenient. We call this 'digital by default'. We want you to get involved, so that we can get your feedback to help us improve our customer services, making them more efficient and cost effective.

Did you know that it costs the council:



£12

to deal with a letter



£15

for each face to face transaction



10p

for a website visit



£1

for each online transaction



£5

for each telephone call



Most people contact us by telephone at an estimated cost of

£21M

per year

Who are our customers?

We deal with a wide range of people across Southampton, and our customers include everyone living, working and studying in, or visiting, Southampton, as well as businesses, community and voluntary sector groups and other organisations.

- Residents
- Businesses
- Visitors
- Students
- Community, charity and voluntary sector
- People who work in the city
- Council employees



How do you want to contact us?

You might need to contact us to:

- Find out information from us
- Provide us with information, or updating the information we have about you
- Apply for, book or arrange services
- Make a payment
- Access intensive or regular help and support

Currently people contact us in a range of ways; telephone, online forms, face to face, email and post. The services we receive the most calls about are housing, adult social care, children and families, council tax, benefits and waste.

The way you want to contact us, and access services, has changed a lot over the last few years, and will continue to do so. In the past, people contacted us by post, or by visiting one of our offices. Now, many people expect, and want, to access services online. You have told us that this is quicker and more convenient for you. It is also much more cost effective, meaning we can make sure our resources are used where they are needed most.

We know that:

89% of people in Southampton currently use the internet

71% of residents use a smart phone to access the internet

73% of face to face and **64%** of telephone transactions are done by customers who would interact with us digitally if they could

Evidence from other councils also shows that moving to more online services reduces demand and cost, and results in improved customer satisfaction.

So, one of our key priorities is improving our online and digital services so that you can access information, apply for and pay for services more quickly and easily online. We also need to provide support to help customers get online, while making sure that other channels are available for customers who really need them.

Our customer commitment

We have developed a set of key principles to make sure that our customers are at the heart of everything we do.



First time resolution

- We will get things right first time.
- When services are delivered with partners, customers will receive a seamless, joined up service.



Easy as 1, 2, 3

- Services will be simple, efficient and allow you to 'self-serve' and do more for yourself.
- Services will be accessible and designed around your needs rather than ours.



Assisted digital

- Services will be designed so that they are fast, convenient and easy to access digitally – via a smartphone, tablet, PC or other device.
- Other channels such as telephony and face to face will be available for people who really need them, including customers with disabilities or language barriers.
- Support will be available if you are not able to use digital channels, to help you to get online.



Empower customers, communities and employees

- Residents and businesses will be able to sign on to a 'customer account' offering a more personal service and making it easier for you to contact and interact with us.
- We will support customers and communities to become more self-reliant, with better access to information and more opportunities to take control of the services they receive.



Informed by insight

- Customers will be involved in the design, development and review of services, and we will use your feedback to make services better, faster and easier to use.
- Customers will be involved in developing new ways of delivering services that will reduce costs and improve outcomes.
- We will use feedback from compliments and complaints to improve our services.



Value for money

- Our services will be cost effective, ensuring that we can continue to keep customers at the heart of what we do.
- We will work together with other organisations in the city to improve services, offering you choice and value for money.

Working together to improve services:



Us

- Engaging with and understanding our customers
- Designing efficient, easy to use services
- Delivering value for money



Customer service excellence

- High quality services that meet the needs of the customers
- Ensuring that frontline services are protected and support is available to those who really need it



You

- Working with the council to try new ways of interacting with services
- Becoming more self-sufficient and only seeking help when it's really needed
- Getting involved in shaping services

Getting involved

We want to hear from you to help us understand how you use our services, how we can work together to make improvements, and how we can prioritise our resources so they are used where they are most needed.

Over the last few years, we have made some real improvements in this area, for example:

- We conduct a City Survey every two years to gather feedback about your views on public services.
- We conduct regular surveys so that you can help inform our strategies and plans.
- We have changed the way we consult on our budget and key service changes to make our consultations simpler and clearer.
- We have developed a People's Panel: a large group of residents who work with us to inform policy and service development, and a Youth Forum to engage with children and young people in the city.

We want to:

- Make it quicker and easier for you to give us feedback, including via social media and online.
- Use the information we have better: we already collect a lot of data and feedback from our customers, but we can improve the way we use this, so that we understand how we can work together better.
- Engage our customers more in service development and design.

Sign up to the People's Panel to get involved:

southampton.gov.uk/peoples-panel



What are we going to do?



First time resolution

- Work with customers to improve our processes for customer transactions to make them simpler.
- Develop mechanisms to monitor the number of transactions resolved at first contact and increase these year on year.
- Make sure that customers are kept informed about what is happening at each stage of the process, and provide automatic feedback to customers when they report problems or issues.



Easy as 1, 2, 3

- Improve our online forms to make it easier to request and access services.
- Develop the MySouthampton customer account so that customers can be in control of their information and access the services they need easily.
- Launch a MySouthampton account for businesses.



Assisted digital

- Develop services which operate online 24/7, and increase the number of services offering online payment options.
- Simplify online payments and increase the number of transactions that can be done online, including for more complex services such as parking permits and care services.
- Assist those who find it difficult to use digital channels with face to face support, developing options for online support (including a web chat pilot) and ensuring our customer service advisers are ready and able to help.



Empower customers, communities and employees

- Develop an online community hub where people can share local information and knowledge.
- Make it easier for customers and staff to give us their views, including making greater use of social media and online tools.
- Make our workforce flexible and mobile with the right equipment and technology to deliver our services as efficiently as possible.



Informed by insight

- Work with our customers to develop and design future services.
- Develop the People's Panel: a large group of residents who will work with us to inform policy and service development.
- Develop the Youth Forum, so that children and young people can provide feedback and help design our services.



Value for money

- Review all our spending to identify and reduce duplication and inefficiency.
- Redesign our services to ensure they provide the best value for money.
- Review high volume transactions to ensure they meet customer needs in the most efficient way.
- Integrate teams and share accommodation with others to help us work together more effectively and save money.
- Work with Health to provide integrated care coordination, planning and seven day working.

What are our success measures?

To make sure that we deliver continuous improvements in customer service we will monitor our performance against the following key success measures:

- Customer satisfaction.
- Customers feel informed about council services.
- Number of unanswered calls.
- Number of complaints.

- Numbers of website hits and online transactions.
- Increased % of digital contacts.
- Value for money and costs related to customer contacts.