



Roinn an Taoisigh  
Department of the Taoiseach

# Customer Service Action Plan

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<b>The Department and its Customers</b>	

The delivery of effective, quality customer service is a priority for the Department of the Taoiseach and forms an integral part of our [Strategy Statement](#), [Corporate Governance Framework](#) and the business plans of individual Divisions within the Department.

The purpose of this Customer Action Plan, and the External and Internal Customer Charters that accompany it, is to set out in clear and unambiguous terms how we intend

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to ensure that we can continue to provide all our customers with the highest possible level of service. It outlines our commitment to the provision and delivery of customer service and how our performance in this respect will be measured and evaluated.

The quality customer service standards adopted by the Department in relation to the delivery of services to our customers also apply to those services that the Department has committed to delivering in Irish under our [Scheme under the Official Languages Act, 2003](#).

### **The Role of the Department**

The purpose of the Department of the Taoiseach is to help the Taoiseach and the Government to develop a sustainable economy and a successful society, to pursue Ireland's interests abroad, to implement the [Government's Programme](#) and to build a better future for Ireland and all her citizens.

The core activities of the Department are as follows:

- Delivering the Executive functions of the Taoiseach and the Government;
- Providing the Government Secretariat;
- Supporting the Taoiseach in carrying out his duties as Head of Government, including in relation to the Oireachtas, Constitutional issues, Protocol, the European Council, the North/South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council
- Working with the Office of the President and with the Oireachtas;
- Engaging with the formulation and implementation of government policy, mainly through the system of Cabinet Committees, Senior Officials' Groups, the Programme for Government Office and the Parliamentary Liaison Unit;
- Supporting the Office of the Taoiseach;
- Supporting the Office of the Government Chief Whip (who also has responsibility for the Central Statistics Office);
- Support for the Ministers of State assigned to the Department
- Providing the Government Information Service;
- Providing briefing and advice to the Taoiseach on the full range of domestic policy issues and on international affairs (including through the work of the National Economic and Social Council);
- Supporting the Taoiseach and Government in the formulation and implementation of Ireland's EU, Northern Ireland and international policies, including coordination across the whole of Government;

- Delivering support services through Corporate Affairs Division (HR, Finance, ICT and other services).

Across all of our areas of responsibility, considerable time and effort goes into answering parliamentary questions, preparing material for use in the Oireachtas, processing freedom of information requests, answering letters and queries from the public, organising events, preparing speeches and responding to media queries. Carrying out this work to a consistently high standard remains central to our role in serving the Taoiseach and in providing public accountability.

### **Customers of the Department of the Taoiseach**

The Department of the Taoiseach is primarily a policy Department. While the Department does not have the same level of contact with citizens as other Departments, we endeavour to provide a high level of service to all citizens who deal with us.

The Department interacts with a broad spectrum of internal and external customers including:

- the Taoiseach, the Government Chief Whip and the Ministers of State assigned to the Department of the Taoiseach;
- the Government and the Oireachtas;
- other Government Departments, Offices and Agencies;
- serving and retired staff of the Department;
- the institutions and parties in Northern Ireland, the European institutions, other Governments and international institutions;
- community and voluntary bodies, business and sectoral representatives, research forums and institutions; and suppliers<sup>7</sup> of goods and services.

Members of the public also make contact with the Department seeking information on a diverse range of topics. The Taoiseach's Private and Constituency Offices and the Offices of Ministers of State assigned to the Department have regular dealings with members of the public, while the Government Press and Information Services play a role in conveying information to the media and the wider public.

The [National Economic and Social Council](#) provides a forum for multilateral social dialogue with sectoral interests.

### **Quality Customer Service Principles**

The Department is wholly committed to providing the highest levels of service to all our customers in accordance with the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service.

### **12 Principles of Quality Customer Service**

#### **1. Quality Service Standards**

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which the customer can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

#### **2. Equality/Diversity**

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

#### **3. Physical Access**

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

#### **4. Information**

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

#### **5. Timeliness and Courtesy**

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Provide contact details in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

#### **6. Complaints**

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

**7. Appeals**

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

**8. Consultation and Evaluation**

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

**9. Choice**

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

**10. Official Languages**

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

**11. Better Co-ordination**

Foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

**12. Internal Customer**

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

The way in which the Department will honour these principles is set out in our External Customer Charter (Appendix A) and our Internal Customer Charter (Appendix B). To ensure that our Customer Charter commitments are met, the Department has developed a number of standards and performance indicators against which we will measure our performance. These are set out in the 'Measuring and Evaluating Performance' section below.

**Measuring and Evaluating Performance**

The Department employs a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charters, to ensure that we

continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers. The Department is obliged to report on progress made in achieving service standards through our Annual Report.

In monitoring our performance we will:

- Seek feedback and suggestions from our customers on ways in which we can enhance our service provision and delivery;
- Use internal management information systems to inform our customer service policies; and
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable Health and Safety standards or regulations and carry out Annual Safety Audits and Disability Audits, all of which are externally validated by independent experts.

### **Service Standards and Performance Indicators**

Our Customer Charters outline in broad terms the level of service all customers of the Department of the Taoiseach are entitled to expect. To ensure that we can meet the commitments in our Charters, it is important that customers are made aware of the procedures and processes we use. These are defined as our Service Standards and are set out below. To further underpin our commitment to deliver the highest quality of service, the Department will use these Standards as Performance Indicators in measuring and evaluating our performance.

#### **1. Quality Service Standards**

- All customers will be kept fully informed of the standards of service they can expect to receive from us, through the display of our Customer Charters in all our offices; and
- Copies of the Customer Charters and Customer Action Plan will be made available in all our offices and to all customers who wish to have a copy.

#### **2. Equality/Diversity**

- A focus on equality/diversity issues will be maintained throughout the Department;

- All customers will be treated equally and in accordance with relevant legislation; and
- The needs of staff and visitors with disabilities will be identified and fully catered for. For queries in relation to disability issues, customers can email the [Disability Liaison Officer](#) in the Department, or Tel: (01) 619 4505.

### **3. Physical Access**

- Full access to all areas of all our buildings will be maintained for people with disabilities and any other customers with specific needs;
- All areas of our buildings will be clean, comfortable and comply with occupational and safety standards; and
- Any issues or difficulties in relation to physical access will be addressed without delay. Customers can email the [Access Officer](#) in the Department, or Tel: (01) 619 4411.

### **4. Information**

- All information provided by the Department will be clear, timely, accurate and fully accessible for any customers with specific needs;
- Material on each of the Department's websites will follow web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and official languages;
- Information distribution channels will be kept as up-to-date as possible and these channels will keep pace with technological developments and innovations in media and communications; and
- Information will be made available in as many different formats as practicable.

### **5. Timeliness and Courtesy**

- All customers will be treated with courtesy and all enquiries will be dealt with promptly and efficiently;
- All staff will provide their names and sections when answering telephone calls;
- Voicemail messages will be updated regularly and all voicemail messages will be responded to within one working day of receipt; and
- Full contact details will be provided on all written communications from the Department (including email).

### **6. Complaints**

- All complaints will be treated promptly, fairly and impartially;
- All complaints will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt;



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- All complaints will be investigated fully and a reply will issue within 15 working days. Where this is not possible, an interim reply will be given, explaining the reason for the delay and advising when a substantive response will issue;
- Records of complaints will be kept separate from other records; and Full details of our **Customer Complaints Procedure** are available on the Department's website and are attached at Appendix C.

## **7. Appeals**

- The Department of the Taoiseach maintains a formalised system of appeal for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services. Customers who are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation by the Customer Service Officer have an option of appeal to the Head of Corporate Affairs;
- If the matter is still not resolved, the customer has the right to appeal to the Office of the Ombudsman; and
- Nothing in this appeals procedure affects the customer's statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection or any other relevant legislation.

## **8. Consultation and Evaluation**

- The Department of the Taoiseach is committed to ensuring that the views of all of our customers are considered in framing Departmental policy initiatives. Comments or suggestions can be forwarded to our [Quality Customer Service Officer](#);
- The Department is committed to ensuring meaningful consultation with customer representative groups and other interested parties and reflecting their opinions regarding the development, provision and delivery of our services;
- The levels of service provision and delivery by the Department will be evaluated on a regular basis and that the outcomes of these evaluations will be published in our Annual Report.

## **9. Choice**

- Multiple contact options for the Department will be made available, including direct dial, Lo-call telephone numbers, email and website addresses; and
- The Department will make full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to customers.

## **10. Official Languages**

- Staff will be available to cater for callers who may wish to be dealt with through

- Irish;
- The Annual Report, Statement of Strategy and other information publications and key policy documents produced by or on behalf of the Department will continue to be made available in Irish, in accordance to the commitments in our Official Languages Scheme;
- The main pages of all the Department of the Taoiseach websites will be maintained in Irish;  
A focus on Irish language training courses will be encouraged in staff development programmes; and
- Customers who wish to deal with the Department by email through Irish can contact [gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie](mailto:gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie);

**11. Better Co-ordination**

- Cooperation with other Departments and Government Agencies to improve coordination on service provision and delivery will continue; and
- The Department of the Taoiseach will maintain a lead role on those interdepartmental committees and groups on which the Department is represented and ensure strong effective collaboration on policy issues.

**12. Internal Customer**

- Staff are recognised as internal customers and are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues. The Department has agreed an Internal Customer Charter (attached at Appendix B).

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**Training**

We recognise that in order for staff to provide a quality service, they must be familiar with the policies and practices outlined in the Customer Action Plan and with the commitments given in our Customer Charters. We are fully committed to investing in appropriate customer service training for all staff and to regular refresher training where necessary, particularly for those members of staff in regular contact with members of the general public.

**Statutory Obligations**

Department Address	Department of the Taoiseach Government Buildings Upper Merrion Street D02 R583
Telephone	(01) 619 4000 (Main Switchboard)
Department email address	<a href="mailto:webmaster@taoiseach.gov.ie">webmaster@taoiseach.gov.ie</a> <a href="mailto:gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie">gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie</a>
Disability Liaison Officer	(01) 619 4505 <a href="mailto:disabilityliaisonofficer@taoiseach.gov.ie">disabilityliaisonofficer@taoiseach.gov.ie</a>

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Access Officer	(01) 619 4411 <a href="mailto:accessofficer@taoiseach.gov.ie">accessofficer@taoiseach.gov.ie</a>
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In addition to undertakings given in our Customer Action Plan and Customer Charters, we believe it is important that all Departmental staff are aware of their statutory obligations. The Department of the Taoiseach is fully committed to fulfilling all relevant statutory obligations in relation to Data Protection, Equality, Freedom of Information, Prompt Payment of Accounts and Safety, Health & Welfare at Work.

### Consultation

We believe that our customers can make a significant contribution to ongoing service development, leading to continuous enhancement of the services we provide. We welcome and value the views of our customers and responding to their comments allows us to focus appropriate resources on particular aspects of our services, ultimately serving all our customers better.

### How to Contact Us

The business hours of the Department of the Taoiseach are Monday to Thursday 9:00am to 5:45pm and Friday 9:00am to 5:15pm.

## Department of the Taoiseach

## Customer Service Action Plan

Quality Customer Service Officer	(01) 619 4411 (Telephone) <a href="mailto:customer.service@taoiseach.gov.ie">customer.service@taoiseach.gov.ie</a>
Queries in Irish	(01) 619 4261 <a href="mailto:gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie">gaeilge@taoiseach.gov.ie</a>