

Customer Experience Strategy 2025-2027



Foreword



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'We're set on making Staffordshire a remarkable place where people thrive, stay healthy, and are happy'

I am pleased to introduce our Customer Experience Strategy. This plan shows how much we care about putting our residents first in everything we do.

We recognise that customer expectations have evolved. With increased access to technology and information, our residents expect services to be inclusive and straightforward. Our new strategy is all about making things simpler and more efficient, ensuring that we address real concerns in a cost-effective way.

Developing this strategy was a collective effort. We received a lot of feedback from our residents on what we do well and where we can improve. We also worked closely with our staff, whose insights were key in identifying areas for improvement and innovation. It is this feedback that we used to shape our new vision.

'Our customer is at the heart of what we do, how we act, and what we plan. We will create services that anyone can use, and we will show our commitment to customer excellence'

We have a lot of work ahead of us to turn our vision and our new priorities into action. We will focus on leading our teams to bring this strategy to life, as well as making sure our people have the right skills to deliver our services in the best way.

Thank you to everyone that took the time to provide their thoughts.



Contents

Customer Experience

Customer is our focus 5

Customer experience 6

The Staffordshire customer

Who is the Staffordshire 'customer'? 8

The Staffordshire customer 9

Developing the strategy

What our people said 11

Developing the strategy 12

Alignment across the organisation 13

Customer experience vision

Our vision 15

Our pillars 16

Our leadership 17

Our people 18

Our delivery 19

Our Promise

Our customer experience promise 21

Plan on a page 22



Customer experience

Customer is our focus

We're set on making Staffordshire a remarkable place where people thrive, stay healthy, and are happy. Something we've committed to is listening to our communities, partners, and local businesses to improve our county.

Customer service is crucial. With the cost of living going up there is considerable pressure on the residents of Staffordshire and it's affecting us in local government too. We've also got rising costs, the challenge of understanding and embedding new technology, and people expect different things from their local council, which means we've got to do much more with a lot less.

Technology is great for making our work quicker, more efficient and cost effective, but let's not forget how important real, human touch is when it comes to giving people the kind of customer service that makes them feel good and helps them to thrive, when things go wrong. Our challenge is to effectively combine the many benefits that technology can offer us with excellent customer service to help us get it right first time.

'Customer service is crucial. With the cost of living going up there is considerable pressure on the residents of Staffordshire'



Customer experience

Information and advice are often accessed through a range of channels and research shows that many customers are happy to self-serve, especially for familiar transactions and experiences. However, evidence in the UKCSI suggests that when customers are unable to easily access self-service they often want to speak to a person.

The number of customers who have had a problem or bad experience with an organisation has also been markedly higher than it was prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bad service that causes problems and complaints can have a significant adverse impact on our financial performance as well as customer satisfaction.

Evidence from the ICS indicates that investigating and responding to problems requires an estimated 3.5 business days per employee, per month, to resolve. This means that limited and valuable resources are not available to deliver service directly and instead are spent fixing mistakes.

Regardless of the channel used to engage with an organisation, the most common factor that results in a positive experience is the **speed and overall handling of which a problem or query is resolved.**

Customer Experience is all about **putting our customers first**, making their experience easier when they use our services and helping them when they need it.

A Customer Experience approach helps us to be ambitious for our people and places, it gives us a way to be brave and make brave choices and it empowers our people to do their jobs well.



The Staffordshire customer

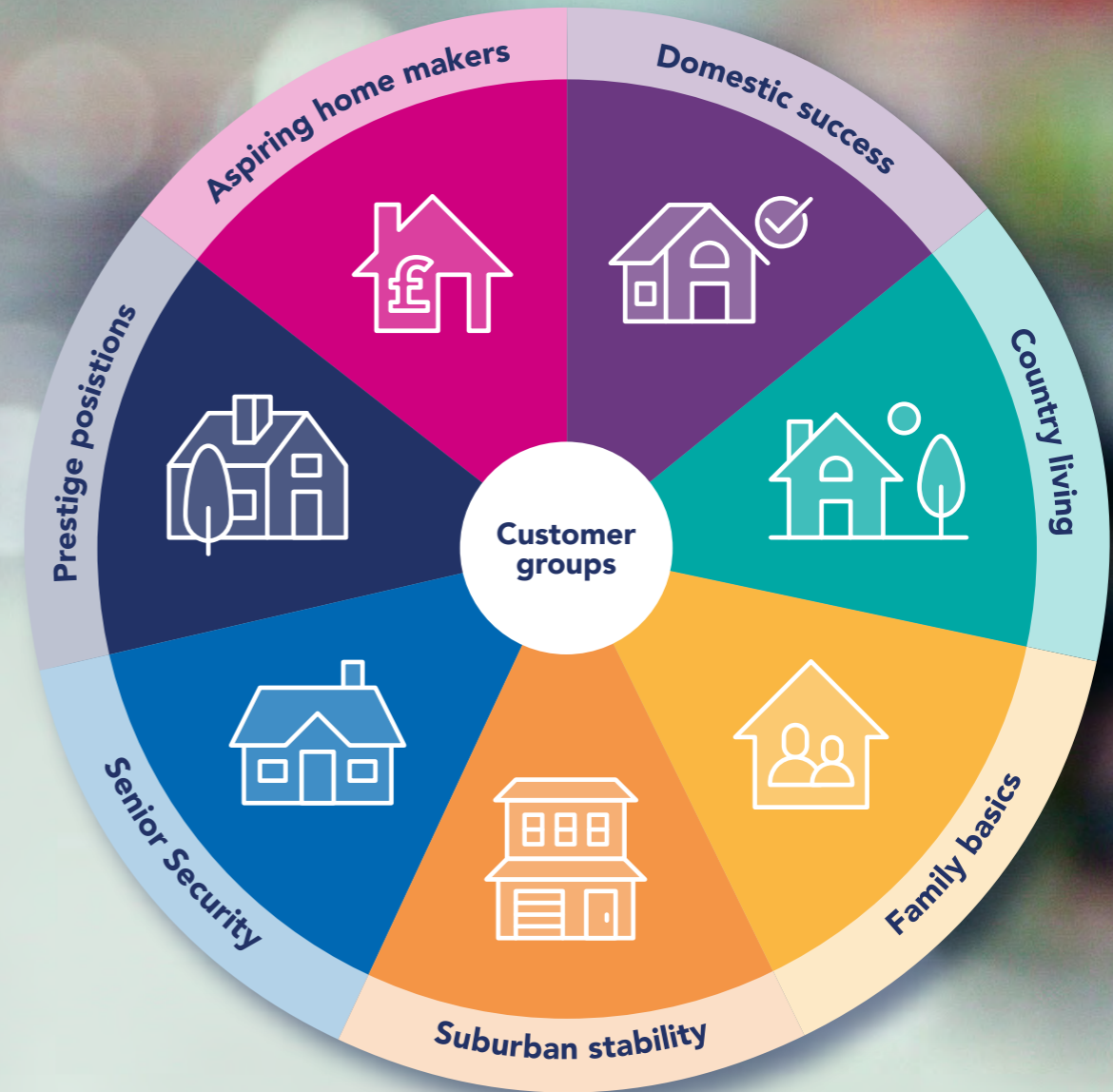
Who is the Staffordshire 'customer'?

As such a large organisation, we have many terms for the individuals that we serve. Resident, customer, service user, partner, business, stakeholder, community member, volunteer; and so on.

Having one collective term enables us to be consistent in our approach, policies and procedures. The term 'customer' recognises the financial relationship between the individual and the authority. It also recognises the authority's responsibility as the provider of key services to the individual. Feedback from our own and national surveys suggest that individuals see themselves as customers of the local authority – therefore using 'customer' as the collective term is simple and recognises how our customers see themselves.

With an estimated population of over **880,000** Staffordshire County Council's customers are multi-cultural and economically diverse. Understanding our customers' needs and ability is key in designing services that work best for them.

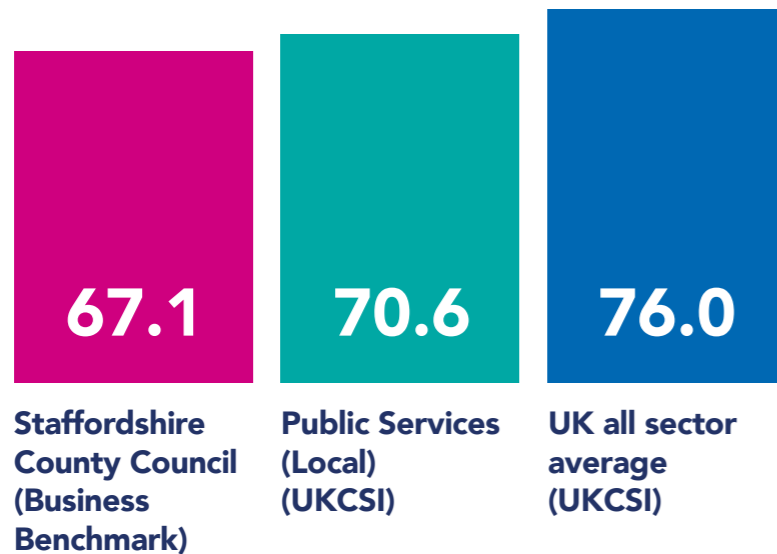
Our customers are individuals, and their lives are complex. We do however recognise that research has shown that we have seven main groups in Staffordshire. By having a better understanding of who our customer is, and how they live their lives, we can design services to be easy to use, quicker to navigate, and reduce our processing time and costs.



In April 2024 we launched a customer survey here in Staffordshire and here's what we learnt:

- our Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score is 67.1
- the customer experience is much better when speaking to us in person or over the phone
- In general, customers find it neither easy nor difficult to do business with us

Our Business Benchmarking CSI






Customers are most satisfied with:

-  The competence of our people
-  The helpfulness of our people
-  Our approach to billing and invoicing



Three things our customers want us to improve are:

-  How we handle and respond to problems
-  How well we communicate with customers online
-  The quality of our emails and auto-responses



Developing the strategy

What our people said

In May 2024 we launched an employee survey and over **40% of Staffordshire County Council employees** took part, at all levels across the organisation.

What our employees think we do well:

My line manager believes that great customer service is important to our business performance

I am empowered to do the right thing to help resolve customer problems

We have a vision, a mission and goals that deliver great customer experience

What our employees think we can improve:

Recognising our people based on customer satisfaction performance

Sharing our customer experience performance with others

Involving customers in the development of new products/services



Developing the strategy

Our journey started by assessing the council's approach, culture and responsiveness to our customer so we could understand where we are starting from and what our strengths and weaknesses are. To do this we utilised our membership with the ICS to undertake two key assessments in 2024. One assessment focussed on the customer experience and the other focused on the employee experience of how customer focused we truly are.

Our employees said...	(Aim 70)	Our customers said...	(Aim 70)
Our organisation builds customer relationships that are based on trust	69	How much do you trust Staffordshire County Council?	61
It is easy for our customers to do business with us	66	How easy is it to deal with Staffordshire County Council?	68
Customers are kept informed about progress when dealing with us	66	How well do Staffordshire County Council keep you informed?	67
Our organisation encourages people to take ownership to solve customer issues and problems	81	How well does Staffordshire County Council keep its promises?	57

The results of which have been shared with our senior leadership and operational management teams and group exercises have already been undertaken to creatively explore the challenges we face and how we might address them.

Using a **Customer Experience Maturity Model**, we were able to determine how well we have done in making our services match the customer experience that we want to create. As an organisation we understand the need for, and support, a customer experience strategy and we show a desire to be more customer centric in our processes and decision making.

Our aim is to use this strategy to develop aims and objectives that demonstrate our commitment to an excellent CX that is embedded in the way we do things. Our people have the necessary tools and skills to prioritise customer centricity and we are putting the customer at the heart of everything we do.



Alignment across the organisation

The **Customer experience strategy** will be part of the big picture of what we want to achieve and how for our customers. For us to show that the customer experience is as important as other business priorities we will work with colleagues to ensure we effectively coordinate our efforts to support our strategic priorities.

Crucial to achieving this is showing we understand the linkages between our strategies and working together. Customer Experience will become a key aim in already established boards so we can make the most of our time and act quickly for our customers.

People strategy		Information governance & compliance		Digital Innovation Strategy		Communities Strategy	
Support the development of training, aimed to improve our CX skills	Design employee recognition activities that deliver on our customer experience aims	Customer initiatives adhere to governance standards and legal regulations to protect your data	Ensure the ethical use of data across all customer programmes	Making information and services more accessible for our customers	Optimising our services to protect our customers time and how easy we are to do business with	Working together to make sure community and customer initiatives meet the needs of individuals and groups	Ensuring the most vulnerable customers can still participate and make use of our services
SCC Customer experience strategy							

Customer experience vision

Our vision

Our vision for our customer is that they are the heart of what we do, how we act, and what we plan. We will create services that anyone can use, and we will show our commitment to customer excellence.

We want to make sure that the services we offer meet the needs of our customers and are shaped to deliver the best possible outcomes whilst maintaining financial stability. We want to make sure our most vulnerable customers can access our services in a way that is designed to deliver equity of service and outcomes. We also want to make sure that our people and culture has the customer at its core and that our people have the confidence and skills to deliver change.

'Our customer is at the heart of what we do, how we act, and what we plan. We will create services that anyone can use, and we will show our commitment to customer excellence'



Our pillars

To achieve our vision for the customer experience we have established three pillars.

These pillars ensure that all aspects of our interactions and decisions deliver our vision, making our action purposeful.

They will help us to create an organisational customer experience that is led and accountable at our most senior levels, invests in our people and is outside-in looking. Through these pillars we will know what success will look like and how we measure it.

Our leadership



Our people



Our delivery





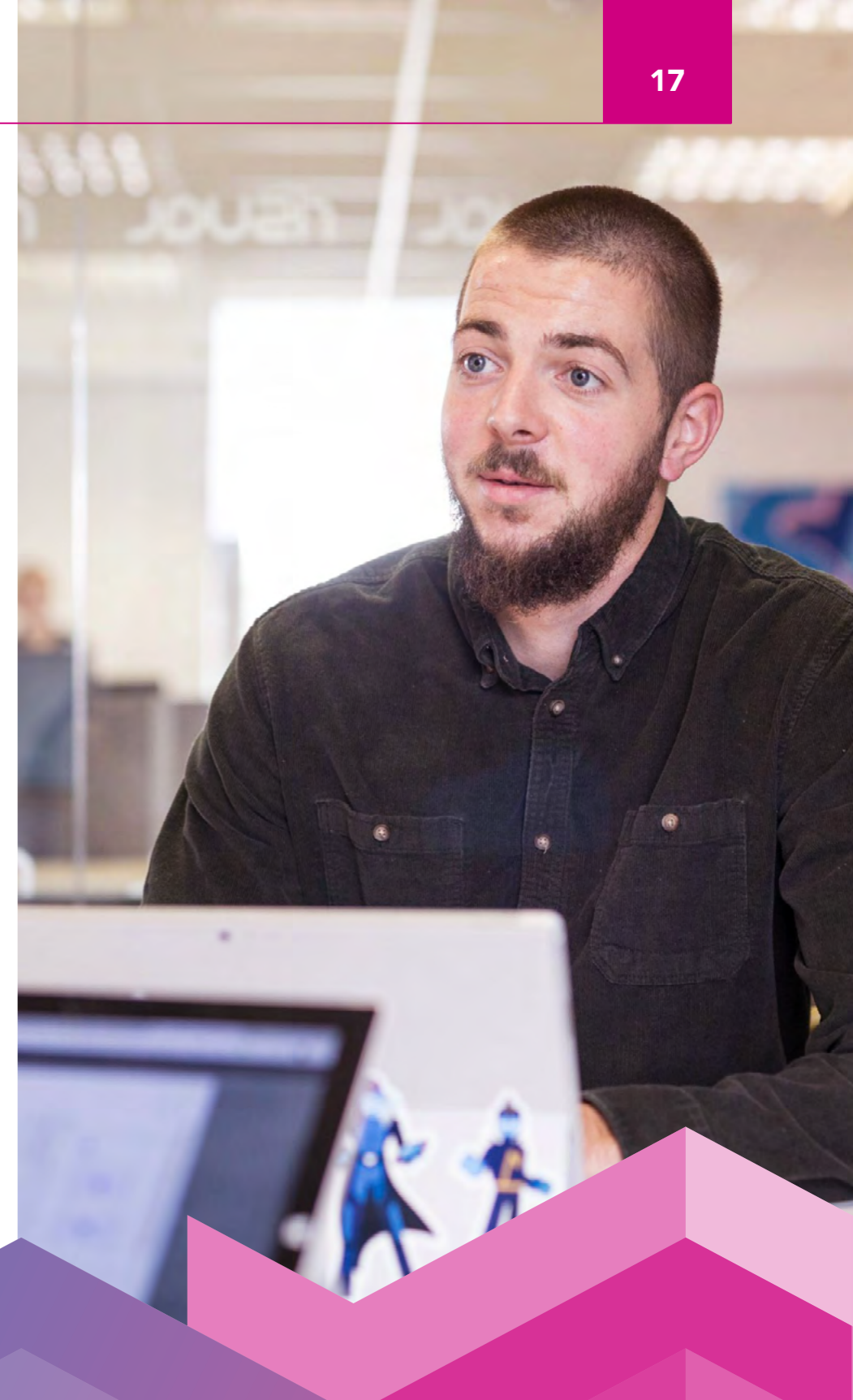
Our leadership

Today's world is complicated, and that's why the customer experience matters so much. Customer experience goals need to be part of the big picture of what we want to achieve and how.

This pillar demonstrates our commitment to making customer experience a key organisational goal with senior level leadership – ensuring it is embedded throughout the organisation. It also supports our credibility by showing we do the right thing for our customers, our people and the wider community.

To do this, we will:

- **deliver a customer experience strategy that support our organisational objectives**
- **establish customer experience metrics that will measure what is important to customers and what they think**
- **ensure our approach to customer experience is as important as other business priorities and is balanced appropriately**
- **make it easy for customers to do business with us and challenge our peers when it is not**
- **establish a Customer Experience Maturity Model that will help everyone in our organisation to understand how they contribute to the customer experience, even if they do not deal directly with customers**





Our people

It's fundamental that our people, whether customer or colleague-facing, have the skills, tools, ability, and motivation to deliver our customer experience aims. Having the right culture and engaged teams is key to achieving this aim.

Our capability will be strengthened by having the right people, with the right skills, doing the right thing for our customers. This pillar will demonstrate our continuity by ensuring our people feel valued and organising our recognition activities to reflect our commitment to the customer experience.



To do this, we will:

- **ensure people are recruited and developed to deliver the organisation-wide customer experience strategy**
- **build our customer experience objectives into our corporate induction**
- **be committed to the professional development of our people, and ensure they have the right skills to deliver an excellent customer experience, in their role**
- **support each other to resolve customer problems and queries and demonstrate a culture of curiosity, learning from our mistakes**
- **design employee recognition activities that re-enforce the organisation's customer experience promise**





Our delivery

Continuous improvement and ongoing innovation, based on regular customer feedback, will help improve the overall experience and ensure that the customer is at the heart of what we do.

This pillar promotes our creativity so that innovation will be nurtured and embedded. It will also ensure that there is consistency in our process and system designs so that standards across all our access channels are maintained.

To do this, we will:

- **design processes and systems from the customer's perspective, having an outside-in view**
- **consistently review the way we do things, to make sure we have the right resources in place**
- **design and integrate customer feedback technology, providing customers with the opportunity to tell us what they think**
- **ensure that the services we offer are inclusive to all our customers**
- **proactively involve customers in the development and design of new services**
- **'regularly learn customer experience best practice from others, inside and outside of our industry**



Our Promise

Our customer experience promise

An organisational Customer Experience Promise is our way of showing our commitment to this strategy and will help our customers to understand what experience they can expect from us. The services we offer are as diverse as our customers and so a one-size-fits-all approach would not work. By committing to a Customer Promise and incorporating this alongside other initiatives, like the Staffordshire Co-Production Promise, we set a shared and consistent experience that our customers can always rely upon.



We will treat every customer with respect and fairness



We will remove barriers and make it easier for you to do business with us; reducing the effort it takes



We will communicate clearly and with transparency



We will listen to your feedback and respond quickly; getting it right first time



We'll make sure to be smart when designing and improving customer journeys, making the best use of what we've got

Plan on a page

Our vision	Achieved through the core pillars	Delivering	Guided by our 'Customer Promise'	To become a leader in the customer experience
<p>Customers are at the heart of what we do, how we act, and what we plan. We will create services that anyone can use, and we will show our commitment to customer excellence</p>	<p>Our Leadership</p>  <p>Our People</p>  <p>Our Delivery</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A commitment to Customer Experience being as important as other business goals • A credible council that does the right thing for our customers • a workforce with the capabilities needed to get it right first time • Recognition for our people who put the customer first • A creative council that turns problems into opportunities • a consistent service across our access channels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will treat every customer with respect and fairness • We will remove barriers and make it easier for you to do business with us • We will communicate clearly and with transparency • We will listen to your feedback and respond quickly • We'll make sure to be smart when designing and improving customer journeys, making the best use of what we've got 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Experience shapes our strategic objectives • Customer insights drive process and system innovation • Our people are customer experience innovators • Customer needs and perspective steer our decision making • Completely customer centric

