



CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN 2016 – 2019

INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) is committed to providing a quality service to its customers. This Customer Action Plan sets out a range of aims and actions the LGMA strives to achieve in relation to its customer service, based on the 12 Principles of Quality Customer Service used by Government Departments. The LGMA delivers its services to customers through a number of channels – telephone, website, extranet, intranet, twitter, email and written correspondence.

The LGMA Customer Charter, which is based on this Customer Action Plan, sets out, at a high level, the commitments and the standards of service customers can expect from the LGMA. The services and commitments set out in the Customer Charter are measured to determine customer satisfaction and to highlight areas for improvement. The LGMA strives to continually improve its services.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY

The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) is a State agency established in 2012 following the merger of the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB), the Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB) and the integration of An Comhairle Leabharlanna (ACL) functions.

The LGMA is an agency of Local Authorities, primarily funded by Local Authorities, and operates in the local government sector, reporting on performance as required to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The Agency aims to meet the needs of Local Authorities and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, in delivering on the public sector reform agenda in the local government sector (particularly in terms of sectoral approaches to service delivery), researching emerging and identified issues, assisting local authorities in the implementation and measurement of change and supporting, in general, enhanced performance by the local government sector.

The statutory remit of the Agency extends to include:

- The delivery of advisory services to Local Authorities to assist and co-ordinate the business of these Local Authorities;
- The delivery of such services as may be required by Local Authorities in the Industrial Relations (IR) and Human Resource Management (HR) domain;
- The delivery of such services as may be required by Local Authorities for the purpose of coordinating and securing compatibility in, the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT);
- The provision of advice, assistance and services to Library Authorities in relation to the public library service;
- The provision of such other management services as may be required by Local Authorities;

- The provision of such services for meetings of Local Authority Chief Executives and such other support services required by the County and City Management Association (CCMA);
- Provide such services as required as Registrar of Public Lending Remuneration;
- The provision of such advice, information and assistance required by the Minister of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

CUSTOMERS OF THE LGMA

External Customers

The LGMA has a wide range of external customers and is committed to providing a quality service to meet their individual needs. LGMA customers include:

- Local Authorities
- Government Departments
- Public representatives and members of the Oireachtas
- Other Government Agencies/Offices
- A wide range of stakeholders from outside the public service including employers, trade unions and other representative bodies.

Internal Customers

The LGMA recognises staff as the internal customer and is committed to supporting staff in delivering business services. (See Principle 12 in the following section).

QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

The LGMA 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.

LGMA Action

- Ensure that the Customer Charter, outlining the standards of service that can be expected from us, is displayed in our offices and on our website.
- Ensure that this Customer Action Plan is made available on our website and in other formats on request.

2. Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation and accommodate diversity, 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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA is committed to ensuring equal service delivery to all its customers and will strive to ensure no one is discriminated against.
- The LGMA is committed to adhering to the principles as defined by Employment Equality and Equal Status legislation. The Agency promotes staff awareness of equality and diversity through dissemination of policy and procedural information, publishing information on the staff intranet and training as required.

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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA offices are maintained to a standard that meets business needs, are acceptable to our customers and staff and comply with health, safety and accessibility standards.
- The LGMA has established roles of Health and Safety Officer, Access Officer, Fire Wardens and trained first aid personnel and commit to annual training or more frequently, as required. The LGMA Health and Safety Statement is in place and available on the staff intranet and to customers on request.
- The LGMA provide suitable communication aids for people with hearing impairments in our meeting rooms.
- The Access/Disability Liaison Officer may be contacted at kgleeson@lgma.ie and is available to ensure that any issues or difficulties in relation to physical access can be addressed without delay.

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.

LGMA Action

- Ensure that all information provided by the LGMA is clear, timely, accurate and fully accessible for any customers with specific needs.
- Ensure that material on LGMA's website follows all web publication guidelines in terms of accessibility and official languages equality.
- Ensure that our information distribution channels are kept as up-to-date as possible and maintain pace with the technological developments and innovations in media and communications.
- Make every effort to ensure that information is made available in as many different formats as practicable.

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.

LGMA Action

- Ensure that all customers are treated with courtesy and that all enquiries are dealt with promptly and efficiently.
- Ensure that statutory requirements in relation to responding to Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests are met.
- Aim to continue to reduce the amount of late payments.
- Ensure that all staff provide their names and sections when answering telephone calls.
- Ensure that voicemail messages are updated regularly and that all voicemail messages are responded to within 1 working day of receipt.
- Ensure that full contact details are provided on all written or e-mail communication from the LGMA.

6. Complaints

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

LGMA Actions

- Ensure that all complaints are treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- Ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt.
- Ensure that all complaints are investigated fully and that a reply to your complaint is issued 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.

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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA will ensure that customers are aware of the options available to them when they are dissatisfied with a decision made by the Agency in relation requests under Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation.
- The LGMA offer an escalating appeal process to customers dissatisfied with services. Customers dissatisfied at the Section Manager stage have the option to appeal to the divisional Assistant Chief Executive Officer.

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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA will continue to consult with stakeholders in relation to the effectiveness of the services provided by the Agency using customer feedback to improve services and address areas of concern.
- The LGMA will proactively seek feedback from service users via networks and workshop consultation.

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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA provide choice of options in terms of accessing the services of the Agency by including contact by telephone, email or via our website. The LGMA website is updated regularly and Twitter pages monitored at regular intervals.
- The LGMA provides services regionally in addition to providing services from its Dublin bases.
- The LGMA will ensure to make full use of new and emerging technologies to broaden the choice of services available to customers

10. Official Languages Equality

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.

LGMA Action

- The LGMA will engage with the Office of An Comisínéir Teanga and ensure commitments under our Official Languages Scheme are implemented.
- The LGMA Annual Report will be available in both Irish and English.
- The LGMA will aim to have staff available to deal with callers who may wish to be dealt with through Irish.

11. Better Co-ordination

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

LGMA Action

- The LGMA will continue to strengthen communication and consultation with the local government sector to ensure optimal delivery of services to the citizen.
- The LGMA will continue ongoing co-operation with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, other Government Departments and Agencies to improve co-ordination on service provision and delivery.

12. Internal Customer

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

LGMA Action

- The LGMA will continue to promote collaboration and consultation on our service delivery model, establishing cross divisional work groups to address specific issues.
- The LGMA will continue to enhance internal communications using the sharepoint intranet, staff information sessions and divisional meetings.

- The LGMA will promote awareness of the Code of Business Conduct.
- The LGMA will ensure that the training and development needs of each staff member are provided for through the implementation of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS).

MEASURING AND EVALUATING PERFORMANCE

The LGMA employs a range of mechanisms to measure and evaluate our performance against the standards set out in our Customer Charter, to ensure that we continue to deliver the highest levels of service to our customers.

In monitoring our performance we will:

- Benchmark our performance against previous results.
- Seek feedback and suggestions from our customers on ways in which we can enhance our service provision and delivery.
- Consult our customers through a variety of methods, including direct interviews, discussion fora and focus groups.
- Use internal management information systems to inform our customer service policies.
- Ensure full compliance with all applicable Health and Safety standards and regulations.

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Customers who are not satisfied with the services provided by the LGMA or who believe the services they have received fall short of expectations, have a right to complain.

The LGMA operates a formal procedure for dealing with customer complaints:

How to make a complaint?

All complaints will be acknowledged within three working days and we will try to respond to your complaint in writing within ten working days. If we need to carry out further enquiries, we will let you know and try to have them completed within twenty working days.

All complaints will be dealt with fairly and independently and we will do our best to put things right if we have made a mistake.

If you have a cause for complaint, it should be directed in the first instance to the Manager of the relevant section of the LGMA. If the complaint cannot be resolved at that stage or you are dissatisfied with the response, the complaint may be escalated formally to the Assistant Chief Executive Officer responsible for the division, who will investigate the complaint on your behalf.

Complaints should be addressed to:

Headquarters

LGMA

Local Government House

35-39 Usher's Quay

Dublin 8

D08 XKP7

Tel: 01-6332200

Email: info@lgma.ie

Can you appeal?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of an investigation by the respective Assistant Chief Executive Officer, the matter may be appealed to another member of the Senior Manager Team for further review. The deadline for responding to an appeal will be twenty working days.

If the matter is still not resolved?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your appeal, you have a right to appeal to the Chief Executive Officer. Nothing in this complaints procedure affects your statutory rights under Freedom of Information, Data Protection, or other relevant legislation.

Office of the Ombudsman

A customer who feels that s/he has been unfairly treated or is not satisfied with our decision on his/her complaint may contact the Office of the Ombudsman. By law, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about any of our administrative actions or procedures as well as delays or inaction in your dealings with us. However, the Ombudsman will normally expect the complaint to be referred to the LGMA in the first instance.

The Ombudsman provides a free, impartial and independent dispute resolution service and may be contacted as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman

18 Lower Leeson Street,

Dublin 2 D02 HE97

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 Charter. 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 our customers.