



**An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige**
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

**DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
CUSTOMER SERVICE
ACTION PLAN & CHARTER, 2019-2021**

Foreword by the Secretary General

The mission of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs is to lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland. Our vision is for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family. Our mandate is to put in place a unified framework for policy, legislation and service provision across Government for children and young people.

The Department works to ensure that the range of services for which it has responsibility are the very best they can be. The Programme for Government sets out an important range of commitments in respect of children and young people, and the Department has a significant role in implementation.

The many dimensions to the well-being of children and young people require us to work across Government and with a wide range of stakeholders to harmonise policy and service delivery.

We are individually and collectively accountable for what we do, we are open to change, we are customer-focused and we are respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues.

The Customer Service Action Plan & Charter 2019-2021 set out how the Department will seek to ensure that the highest possible standards of service are achieved.

Dr. Fergal Lynch

Secretary General

1. Our Mandate

To put in place a unified framework for policy, legislation and service provision across Government for children and young people.

In doing this, we focus on harmonising policy issues that affect children and young people in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, children in care, child welfare and protection, adoption, family support, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people, youth work and cross-cutting initiatives for children.

1.1 Our Mission – Why we exist

To lead the effort to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ireland

1.2 Our Vision – Where we want to get to

We want Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family. A place where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard; and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.

1.3 Strategic Objectives

- Better Outcomes Brighter Futures is implemented.
- High quality early years care and education is accessible and affordable.
- Child welfare and protection systems are effective and responsive.
- Evidence-based policy is promoted and supported, and children and young people participate in decisions that affect their lives.
- High standards of compliance on governance and accountability are supported and enforced.
- Performance is improved through the effective alignment of resources.

1.4 Our Values, Behaviours and Culture

- We place children, young people and families at the heart of our work, aiming for better outcomes as the centre of policy development and service delivery.
- We value our staff and create an environment where they learn, develop and contribute to the goals of the organisation.
- We place outcomes for children and young people at the centre of policy and service delivery, informed by evidence.
- We support prevention and early intervention approaches.
- We seek to innovate and collaborate with other departments, agencies and sectors.
- We are accountable, open to change, customer-focused and respectful in our dealings with the public and work colleagues.
- We recognise the positive duty to ensure a human rights and equality approach to our work.

2. Working with key external partners and stakeholders

In order to achieve its goals, the Department works in close partnership with other Government Departments, agencies and offices, service providers, members of the public, elected representatives, non-governmental organisations, international organisations and voluntary and representative Groups (including groups representing the interests of children and young people) who do business with the Department.

The Department deals with members of the public in relation to a number of schemes it operates. In relation to the community, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors, the Department has a very wide range of interactions with key organisations.

The provisions of the Customer Service Action Plan & Charter apply in equal measure to the staff of the Department.

3. 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 Action Plan and with the commitments given in our Customer Charter. We are committed to investing in customer service training for all staff and to refresher training where necessary.

4. Statutory Obligations

In addition to undertakings given in our Customer Service Action Plan & Charter, it is important that all Departmental staff are aware of their statutory obligations. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is committed to fulfilling all relevant statutory obligations.

5. Who's Who

If you need to know who to contact in the Department in relation to your specific query our organisation chart is available on our website. For general queries you can contact the Department by email at contact@dcya.gov.ie

6. Our commitment to our customers

Our commitment to our customers, as well as the responsibilities of the customer when contacting the Department, are listed in our Customer Charter at Appendix A.

7. Quality Customer Service

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

(i) 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.

(ii) 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 (on 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.

(iii) 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.

(iv) 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.

(v) 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.

(vi) Complaints

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

(vii) 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.

(viii) 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.

(ix) 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.

(x) 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.

(xi) Better Co-ordination

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

(xii) 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 Customer Charter (Appendix A). 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.

Appendix A

Customer Charter 2019 – 2021 Department of Children and Youth Affairs

1. Our Customers

In order to achieve its goals, the Department works in close partnership with other Government Departments, agencies and offices, service providers, members of the public, elected representatives, non-Governmental organisations, international organisations and voluntary and representative groups (including groups representing the interests of children and young people) who do business with the Department and staff of the Department.

2. Our Commitment to our Customers

Customer satisfaction is very important to us and we aim to achieve this by –

- giving our customers the best possible service and advice;
- treating customers in a proper, fair, impartial and courteous manner;
- aiming to ensure that rights to equal treatment set out by equality legislation are upheld in the delivery of our services;
- aiming, where possible, to meet any special needs our customers may have.

3. Telephone Enquiries

- We will be available to answer telephone calls during normal office hours (9:00am - 5:45pm Monday to Thursday [5:15pm on Friday]). Our aim is to answer all calls quickly. We will identify ourselves and our area of work. We will be polite and helpful and do our best to provide our customers with clear and correct information. If we cannot give an answer straight away, we will take the customer's details and call them back at a suitable time.

4. Written Communications

- We seek to acknowledge written communications, including email, within 5 working days of receiving them, and provide a final reply within 20 working days. In cases where there is going to be a delay, we will explain this to our customers by way of an interim reply within the 20 day period. If the correspondence is for another Government Department or public body, we will, with your consent, pass the correspondence on to same.

5. Personal Callers

- We will be available to meet, by appointment, with our customers during normal office hours. We will greet visitors politely, be fair and helpful, and deal with their enquiries as quickly as possible. We will provide suitable facilities for meetings and will make sure that our offices are clean and safe. We will also make sure that our offices are accessible for people with disabilities.

6. Equal Status Policy

- We are committed to providing a service that all our customers can avail of and that treats all customers equally. We will do our best to make sure that the services we provide take account of the needs that particular groups of customers may have, and we

will consult with our customers to make sure that their accessibility needs are looked after. We will provide suitable staff training to support these commitments.

7. Equality/Diversity

- We will increase the levels of knowledge in the Department about equality and diversity and we will do this through training, information and communication. In our dealings with our customers, we will make sure that their rights to equal treatment, set out by equality legislation, are upheld.

8. Séirbhís Trí Ghaeilge

Tabharfar freagra as Gaeilge ar chomhfreagras a gheofar i nGaeilge. Déanfar gach iarracht freastal ar fhiafraithe teileafóin i nGaeilge agus freastal ar dhaoine a thagann i láthair ar mian leo a ngnó a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge.

9. Service in Irish

We will ensure that customers who wish to deal with us through Irish can do so.

10. Training

We will invest in customer service training for staff, in particular for staff who are in contact with the general public.

11. Our Customers' Responsibilities

- To treat our staff with courtesy and respect and listen to the guidance they are giving as they endeavour to provide the most appropriate response to queries.
- Our staff have the right to make a decision to terminate a telephone call if the caller is considered aggressive or abusive. In the event of this happening the staff member will advise the caller that their behaviour is unacceptable and advise that the call will be terminated should the behaviour continue.

12. Feedback

If a customer wants to make a suggestion on how we could improve our service, they can e-mail our Customer Service Officer, who can be contacted at contact@dcya.gov.ie or eolas@dcya.gov.ie

Customers can also write to the **Customer Service Officer, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, FREEPOST F5055, Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XWI4**

13. Customer Complaints

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs Customer Complaints procedure is outlined below in Appendix B.

Further information on the Inquiry Officer under the Disability Act is available on our website.

Help Us to Help You - We can help you best if you:

- * **Provide any information you have which is relevant to your inquiry**
- * **Provide any relevant documents and reference numbers you have**
- * **Follow any checklists or guidelines which you have been given**
- * **Treat our staff and other customers with courtesy and respect**

CONTACT POINTS/PHONE NUMBERS/EMAIL

Customer Service	Customer Service Officer Department of Children and Youth Affairs FREEPOST F5055 Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XW14 Phone – 6473167 Email – contact@dcya.gov.ie eolas@dcya.gov.ie
Access	Access Officer Department of Children and Youth Affairs FREEPOST F5055 Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XW14 Phone – 6473142 Email – Marcella_Luz@dcya.gov.ie
Freedom of Information	Freedom of Information Officer Department of Children and Youth Affairs FREEPOST F5055 Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XW14 Phone – 6473167 Email – dcyafoi@dcya.gov.ie
Complaints Appeals Officer	Department of Children and Youth Affairs FREEPOST F5055 Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XW14 Phone – 6473000 Email - – contact@dcya.gov.ie eolas@dcya.gov.ie

Appendix B

Department of Children and Youth Affairs Customer Complaints Procedure

What is a complaint?

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction concerning the provision of a service or services by the Department, as laid out under the commitments in our Customer Charter.

How to make a complaint?

- If you have a cause for complaint, it should be directed initially to the relevant section of the Department. Our staff there will try to deal with the problem without delay or, if the complaint does not relate to a service provided by us, direct you to the appropriate body. If you do not know the name of the person in the section to contact or if you are unsure which body you should make your complaint to, our Customer Service Officer (details in the Customer Charter) will be happy to advise you.
- If the staff of the section cannot resolve your complaint, or you are unhappy with their response, you can ask for the matter to be reviewed by a senior member of staff from that section.
- If you are still unhappy with the response, you should make a formal complaint to the Customer Service Officer, who will investigate the complaint on your behalf.

You can make a complaint to the Customer Services Officer in writing or by e-mail.

What information should you provide?

You will help to speed up the investigation of your complaint by providing the following details:

- Your name, address and e-mail address.
- Exactly what you were dissatisfied with.
- The name of the official or section you dealt with.
- A daytime telephone number.

The Department's Commitments when dealing with Formal Complaints

We will acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and try to deal with them within 15 working days. If we need to carry out further investigations, we will let the customer know and will try to have this completed within 20 working days.

- All complaints will be treated promptly, fairly, impartially and in confidence.
- We will keep records of complaints separate from other records.
- We will ensure that no complaint you have made in good faith will be used to your disadvantage in the future.
- We will endeavour to learn from mistakes to ensure that errors are not repeated.

Can you appeal?

If a customer is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation of a complaint, the matter may be appealed to the Appeals Officer. The deadlines for responding to appeals will be the same as those for formal complaints (outlined above).

Appeals Officer	Department of Children and Youth Affairs Freepost F5055 Block 1, Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower, Dublin 2. D02 XW14 Phone – 6473000 Email - contact@dcya.gov.ie eolas@dcya.gov.ie
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If the customer is still not satisfied with the outcome they can write to

The Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2.
Tel. (01) 6395600; LoCall 1890 22 30 30;
email: info@ombudsman.ie