



## 1. Welcoming a customer

If a customer contacts you directly – either by phone or email – first welcome them.

- Give an appropriate greeting (introduce your service, then introduce yourself). Use [te reo Māori](#) if you are able and it is appropriate .
- Build rapport through your tone - warm, welcoming and respectful.
- Listen with empathy.

## Eliminate barriers to effective communication

There can be many barriers to effective communication, from language to environmental factors.

Do whatever is possible to eliminate, or minimise the effect of, any barriers to effective communication so the customer can focus and participate fully in your shared interaction.

For example, if a customer has language or literacy issues, you could:

- offer them the opportunity to have a support person or family member with them when they come to meet you
- use simple or plain language
- use [Ezispēak](#) to interpret telephone calls.

## 2. Determining a customer's need

Actively listen to the customer. This means listening to understand rather than listening with an intent to reply.

- Listen with an open mind, free from preconceptions or assumptions about people, situations or possible outcomes.
- Look at the situation from the customer's perspective.
- Be engaged and pay attention.
- Don't interrupt unnecessarily.
- Listen without judging.

Ask yourself: "Do I have all of the relevant information I need to make a decision?" If not, ways of getting the information and making sure you have understood correctly are:

- paraphrasing (express the meaning using different words)
- summarising
- repeating the details of the situation.

Make sure you clearly acknowledge the customer's request for information or for a tangible thing (e.g. dog tag, licence, official document). Our aim is to exchange information simply, easily and quickly.

Make sure you provide an invoice or receipt for any money.



### 3. Deciding how best to help a customer

Aim to resolve things at the first point of contact. This is the best possible experience for a customer.

#### Digital first

We know that many of our customers prefer to use digital and self-service solutions so they can pursue their goals at a time that suits them, 24/7. Make sure you make customers aware of digital and self-service solutions available to them.

#### Do your research

##### i-Know

Dedicated customer service people can use our knowledgebase tool, [i-Know](#). For most tasks or types of enquiry, i-Know lists the process to follow and the team or person to contact for further information or help.

Use i-Know to:

- ensure we are consistent
- prevent duplication
- inform your decision making.

##### Kotahi and [www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

Everyone who works at the council can use Kotahi and the Auckland Council website to do their research before deciding how best to help a customer.

When you finish researching, make sure you have all the relevant information and disregard anything that's not relevant.

##### Mana whenua and mataawaka

Remember that mana whenua and mataawaka are unique customers because of our statutory obligations to them. Ask your people leader or Te Waka Anga Mua ki Uta if you need help to meet a mana whenua or mataawaka need.

Mana whenua are Māori whose ancestral relationships are in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland, where they exercise customary authority.

Mataawaka are Māori living in the Auckland Council region who are not in a mana whenua group.

#### If you're not sure how to help or respond to the customer

Ask for:

- peer review - advice or oversight from a colleague
- subject matter expert advice
- input, supervision or support from your people leader.

Locate the best person to answer their question - ask colleagues or search Kotahi.

Ask whether the customer has talked to other people from the council.

Focus on the customer's issue at hand. Help them keep their focus on the issue.



## Make good decisions

Be fair and independent: don't allow yourself to be unreasonably influenced by something or someone else. Make decisions free of [conflicts of interest](#); if there is a perceived, actual or potential conflict, declare it.

When you are deciding how to prioritise your time and budgetary resources in resolving an issue, consider:

- the issue's merit
- its complexity
- the degree of risk
- the degree of urgency.

## Inform the customer

Tell the customer from the start what they can realistically expect. Provide clear information about how their specific issue will be dealt with:

- what can and cannot be done
- what our processes are
- what role you will play
- the customer's level of involvement
- likely and unlikely outcomes
- what priority the request will be given
- how long things are going to take
- next steps.

Keep the customer informed of progress, particularly if there is a delay and the outcome is likely to take longer than first expected. Every customer needs to know where they are in relation to your service, at every point, and at any time.

## 4. Meeting a customer's needs

Make sure the customer understands what you are providing and when by, and understands any next steps in the process to its completion.

Make sure they have a contact name and number for any follow-up required, or if they are not happy with the time taken or the quality of the result.

Do everything you reasonably can to make sure information you give to customers is accurate.

Check that the information you enter into our systems in handling their request is accurate.

## Responding to a customer

- Deliver answers clearly and make sure they understand.
- Explain the reasons behind the way we do things - why you can or cannot do something.
- Act in a timely way. If you can do it today, do it today!



- If you have made a mistake or made a problem worse, identify this, apologise and make it right.
- Respond in the way which best suits the customer - this could include:
  - in writing
  - by telephone
  - by text message
  - via social media.
- Record the reasons for decisions and outcomes, and keep or record the relevant correspondence.

## Adding value to a customer interaction

Try to identify your customer's unstated needs. Answer their question, or resolve their issue, but don't just leave it there: give them additional relevant assistance, for example:

- Someone calls to ask what the rubbish collection day is in their area. You tell them, and you let them know that there will soon be a change to the kind of bin they should use in their area and what they can do about that.
- Someone calls to ask for a licence to have tables on the footpath outside their cafe. You tell them how, and you make sure they know that they will also need to extend their liquor license.

## Serving Aucklanders and keeping safe

Our goal is to give the customer the best possible experience. In the rare times when customers are having difficulties interacting with you, or when you feel uncomfortable with their behaviour, make sure you ask for help:

- If you feel physically threatened, remove yourself from the situation and call [Security Services](#) immediately on **S 7(2)(a) Privacy**. In an emergency dial 111.
- If you experience or see a near miss, an unsafe act or an incident, your need to report it in [Risk Manager](#).
- If you are unsure about how best to serve the person:
  - ask your people leader
  - use one of our [Speak up channels](#).
- If you feel there is an issue to resolve with the customer, contact the Complaints and Issues Resolution Team on **S 7(2)(a) Privacy** or [complaints@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:complaints@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz).
- If you can see a way of preventing this happening again through a better service, submit your ideas to [The Big Brainstorm](#).

Customers may be upset or angry about an issue. Read our [tips for dealing with difficult customers](#).



## 5. Ending an interaction with a customer

Make sure the customer has received everything your service promises to deliver them.

- Confirm that the customer understands the outcome. Tell them the next steps, if appropriate.
- Ask them for feedback. Share it with your team members and people leader. If your department or unit has a continuous improvement programme, contribute the feedback.
- Record the customer interaction and feedback in keeping with your department's systems.
- To avoid duplication and ensure consistency, make sure you inform affected colleagues within the council and CCOs when resolving a customer's issues.

## If you need help or more information

- Email the Customer Services Team: [complaints@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:complaints@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)
- Phone the Customer Services Team on **S 7(2)(a) Privacy**
- [Contact a Councillor Support Advisor](#)

## You may also be interested in

- [Serving Aucklanders guide](#)
- ['Who do we serve?' graphic / poster \(PDF 1.1MB\)](#)
- [Māori language guide](#)
- [Cash handling, receipting and banking guide](#)
- [Social media guide](#)
- [Our Voice](#)

## Our Charter feedback

[Tell us what you think.](#)