



Customer Service Action Plan 2021 – 2024



Comhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe
Galway City Council

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Introduction

This Customer Service Action Plan has been developed following the adoption of Galway City Council's Corporate Plan 2021 – 2024. The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's core values, principle objectives and the strategies for achieving these objectives over its lifetime.

Mission Statement:

“To make Galway the best city in which to Live, Work, Study, Visit & Invest through delivering services in an equal, inclusive and sustainable manner.”

The Customer Service Action Plan has a key role in realising the Mission Statement through the following supporting strategies:

- Ensuring that our services meet the needs of customers, are accessible to all and are in line with our public sector duty on equality and human rights.
- Operating a clear internal and external communications strategy which maximises the potential of modern ICT technology to get important messages and information across to our customers and stakeholders.
- Responding to customers reporting issues in a timely manner.

We will apply the above supporting strategies by:

- Making it clear to all our customers and stakeholders what level of service you should expect from Galway City Council and our staff,
- Using the resources we have efficiently and effectively, to deliver the best standards of services we can,
- Learning from situations where a service is not consistent or does not provide the quality we would like,
- Monitoring and reviewing our performance against recognised standards and through customer feedback.

This Customer Service Action Plan sets out the standards of service you can expect from Galway City Council, the conduct we expect from our customers, the conduct and behaviour that we consider unacceptable and the Customer Service Actions we propose to take over the lifetime of this Plan.

This document also includes key policies and procedures in relation to key areas of customer service and communications, including:

- Customer Charter (Appendix 1)
- Customer Code of Conduct (Appendix 2)
- Customer Complaints & Appeals Procedures (Appendix 3)
- Policy on Abusive, Persistent, Vexatious and Unreasonable Customers and Complaints (Appendix 4)
- Freedom of Information (Appendix 5)
- Data Protection (Appendix 6)

Quality Service Standards

What you can expect when contacting Galway City Council



Visiting our Offices:

- We will ensure that public counters are properly staffed during appropriate counter opening hours.
- We will be polite, courteous and fair in our dealings with you.
- We will deal with your query and provide relevant information as quickly as possible.
- We will provide accessible public offices that are clean and safe, to ensure compliance with occupational and safety standards.
- We will try to keep waiting times to a minimum. If no appointment has been made prior to your visit, the person you wish to speak with may not always be available, in this instance, someone else will try to assist you. If no-one else can provide you with the information you require, your details will be recorded and given to the relevant person to contact you as soon as possible.
- We will meet you punctually if you have an appointment.
- We respect your right to confidentiality and we will try to provide private facilities if you request them, unfortunately this may not always be possible if you have not made an appointment.

Note: For non-routine matters, or if you need to meet a specific person, it is advisable to make an appointment in advance.



Written and Electronic Communication:

- We will acknowledge emails sent to Departmental email addresses within 2 working days.
- We will acknowledge other written and electronic correspondence within 5 working days (except where legislation states otherwise).
- We will issue a comprehensive response to written and electronic correspondence within 20 working days (except where legislation states otherwise). If more time is required we will explain the reasons for the delay and issue you with an update.
- The timeline for responses to requests in relation to non-statutory public consultation events will be dealt with on a project by project basis.
- We will ensure that all responses contain a contact name, telephone number, email address and reference number if applicable.
- We will use clear and simple language and only use technical / legal terms when absolutely necessary.
- If your correspondence relates to a matter that comes within the remit of another public body, we will direct the correspondence to that public body and advise you accordingly.
- We will use automated out-of-hours responses on all emails to advise you of staff return dates or alternative contact details, where the staff member is absent for more than 3 days.



Telephoning our Offices:

- We will respond to your call promptly and will deal with your query in a polite and courteous manner.
- We will be helpful and provide as much information as possible.
- We will try to deal with your query at your first point of contact, if we have to transfer your call we will inform you of the relevant section and contact person, if possible.
- If we cannot deal with your query immediately we will call you back as quickly as possible.
- We will provide a voicemail facility on all extensions to allow you to leave a message out of normal office hours or where staff members are absent. Messages will be responded to promptly.
- We will provide an out-of-hours contact service for emergencies / urgent issues.



Online Services:

- We will respond to you in your preferred format (e.g. electronically, letter, email or telephone).
- We will ensure that as many of our services as possible are made available online so that you can access our services at a time and place that is convenient for you.
- We will provide readily available instructions on the use of our online services in a clear and concise format.
- We will ensure that all security precautions are adhered to.
- We will provide Frequently Asked Questions where appropriate.
- We will ensure that links to other web pages and sites are maintained.



Application Forms and Information Leaflets:

- We will ensure that information provided is relevant, up-to-date, easily understood and widely available at all points of contact, including online.
- We will seek only necessary information, which is essential for a fair and prompt assessment of your application, and explain precisely what is required.
- We will make a decision as quickly as possible on receipt of a valid application (i.e. fully completed and supported by necessary documentation) and within statutory deadlines.
- We will deal with all applications fairly and consistently in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations and give reasons for our decisions.
- We will inform you of your right to appeal and how to appeal a decision.
- We will ensure that personal data acquired by us is used only for the purpose for which it was sought and provided.

Service Requests:

- We will deal with all requests in a fair and consistent manner.
- We will deal with all requests promptly and tell you when you can expect a response.
- We will explain the basis for decisions made.



Complaints / Appeals:

- We will advise you of our complaints and appeals procedure if you are unhappy with the service you have received.
- We will advise you of your rights to appeal.



Services in other Languages:

- We will be happy to facilitate you should you wish to conduct your business in Irish or Irish Sign Language.
- We will ensure all public signs in Council offices / facilities will be in Irish and English.
- If you contact us electronically or in writing through Irish, we will issue a response in Irish.
- We will ensure that our Application forms and Information Leaflets and Brochures are available in Irish and English.

Customer Service Actions



Quality Service Standards

- We will review, update and publish a Customer Charter that outlines the nature and quality of services which customers can expect and display it prominently in all public offices / buildings.
- We will ensure compliance with the quality service standards set out in this Customer Service Action Plan.
- We will ensure customer service is captured within the competency framework for the recruitment of new staff and the promotion of existing staff.
- We will monitor compliance and report annually on progress in achieving targets.



Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

- We will promote equality / diversity awareness among our staff.
- We will ensure that our policies and procedures send a clear equality message of strengthening the principle of diversity and by promoting a culture and ethos that acknowledges and celebrates diversity in our dealings with our customers and in our workplace.



Openness and Impartiality

- We will keep you informed about the services we deliver.
- We will ensure that personal data acquired by us is held safely and securely in accordance with our data commitments.
- We value feedback from our customers and use it to identify areas for improvement.



Physical Access

- We will ensure that accessibility is a priority in all Council offices and public facilities.
- We will ensure that all Galway City Council offices and facilities comply with occupational and safety standards.



Information

- We will train staff to ensure they are equipped with the technical knowledge and skills to deliver a quality service.
- We will take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely, accurate and easily understood.
- We will provide information in formats accessible to people with disabilities.
- We will use social media to keep our customers informed of service issues and especially to provide continuous updates in emergency events or in the event of a disruption to a service.



Timeliness and Courtesy

- We will provide training to all public interfacing staff, in the delivery of quality customer service in a prompt, courteous and sensitive manner.
- We will adhere to the principles of timeliness and courtesy as set out in our Customer Charter.
- We will ensure all staff activate voicemails and utilise automated out-of-hours responses on all emails to advise you of staff return dates or alternative contact details.



Choice

- We will review payment options for relevant services and provide the widest range of options in terms of payments methods.
- We will expand the range of services that can be provided online including e.g.: application and complaint forms, grant and licence applications, booking systems for community centres and other sports facilities.



Consultation and Evaluation

- We will continue to provide public consultation meetings in relation to a range of services / projects through public and online forums.
- We will carry out customer satisfaction surveys.
- We will support civic engagement through participation in relevant bodies, e.g. Galway City Community Network.



Services in other Languages

- We will ensure that all public signs / notices in our offices and facilities are in Irish and English.
- We will ensure measures are in place to meet requests for access to services through the use of Irish Sign Language.
- We will ensure measures are in place to meet requests for access to services through the use of Irish, as per the Official Languages Act and Galway City Council's Language Scheme.



Accountability

- We will provide progress reports on Customer Service to our Elected Members which are published as part of Galway City Council's Annual Report.



Better Co-ordination

- We will simplify and automate, where possible, procedures and forms for accessing services.
- We will develop internal Service Level Agreements and Departmental FAQs to support the Customer Service Centre.



Internal Customer

- We will improve employee engagement through regular team meetings, training and the use of internal communications to identify issues and areas where we can improve our customer service.
- We will introduce a Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) to streamline and co-ordinate the Council's response to customers and Councillor's representations more efficiently.



Complaints and Appeals

- We will review and update our Customer Complaints and Appeals Procedures and publicise it on our website and in our offices (Appendix 3).
- We will provide a Customer feedback form at public counters and on our website.

Customer Participation

Customer participation in the planning and delivery of services is vital to their success.

There are a number of ways you can become involved and influence the delivery of services through:

- Contacting Galway City Council Customer Service Section,
- Contacting your local Elected Representatives,
- Attendance at public consultation meetings,
- As a member of an organisation, voluntary or community group on the Galway City Community Network,
- As a member of an organisation on the Strategic Policy Committees or Joint Policing Committees,
- Through our online Customer Feedback system.

Monitoring our Performance

Through the lifetime of this Customer Service Action Plan, regular internal reviews will take place to assess the effectiveness and compliance with the Quality Service Standards and Actions set out in the Plan.

We are committed to improving on the levels of Customer Service already in place and to review our performance on a regular basis. Customer satisfaction surveys and feedback forms will be an essential element of this review. Progress reports on the Actions set out in the Plan will be provided in the Annual Service Delivery Plans.

Contact Us:

The Customer Service team are available to take your calls on 091-536400 from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Outside of these hours, including Bank Holidays and weekends, calls to 091-536400 automatically route to an out-of-hours emergency call centre service. Emergencies are escalated to on-call staff immediately.

Postal Address: Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway, H91 X4K8

Website: www.galwaycity.ie

Email: customerservice@galwaycity.ie and seirbhisdochustameiri@galwaycity.ie

Appendix 1- Customer Charter

Galway City Council Customer Charter



The provision of high quality Customer Service and Care is a key priority for Galway City Council.

Galway City Council is committed to providing an excellent quality service to all our customers in an effective, fair, respectful, confidential and non-discriminatory manner.

This customer charter sets out the principles of quality customer service you may expect from Galway City Council.



Quality Service Standards

We will ensure compliance with the quality service standards set out in our Customer Service Action Plan 2021 – 2024.



Equality, Diversity & Human Rights

We will ensure equal treatment of all and embrace and foster the city's diversity and strive for equal outcomes for all groups, in line with our Public Sector Duty on equality and human rights. We will work to identify and eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.



Openness and Impartiality

We will deal with you in a fair and open manner. We will discuss any aspects of your dealings with us and we will explain how a decision was reached.



Physical Access

We will provide clean, accessible public offices that comply with occupational and safety standards and facilitate access for people with disabilities and special needs.



Information

We will provide clear, helpful, accurate and up-to-date information that can be easily understood. We will use simple language and only use technical/legal terms when necessary. We will ensure our website and social media are kept up-to-date. We will protect your information in compliance with Data Protection Regulations.



Timeliness and Courtesy

We will treat all customers promptly, courteously and with sensitivity while having due regard to privacy and confidentiality. We will be professional and helpful and will provide staff contact names to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.



Choice

We will aim to provide choice, where feasible, in payment methods, access to services and service delivery. We will maximise the use of technology to improve service delivery and to provide online access to services where we can.



Consultation & Evaluation

We will provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, our customers in relation to the development, delivery and review of services.

We will monitor and evaluate our services and performance against the commitments in this Charter and continue to review our Customer Services.

We will encourage customers to provide feedback (positive or negative) with regard to the quality of service they have received.



Services in other Languages

We will accommodate our customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish or Irish Sign Language and other languages where possible.



Accountability

We will carry out our work with honesty and integrity to the highest professional standards across all our services ensuring decisions are made in the best public interest.

We will monitor compliance and complete annual reviews of standards and performance and publish details of performance achieved against service indicators across the range of Council services in our Annual Report.



Better Co-Ordination

We will encourage a more coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of services to our customers.



Internal Customer

We will ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly trained, supported and consulted in the services they deliver.

We will use communications channels to support and respond to the important representational, corporate governance and community leadership roles of the Elected Members.



Complaints & Appeals

We will provide customers with an accessible, transparent and user-friendly complaints and appeals procedure for people who are unhappy with our quality of service - details of which can be found at <https://www.galwaycity.ie/complaints-appeals>

Appendix 2- Customer Code of Conduct

CUSTOMER CODE OF CONDUCT



Galway City Council aims to provide a high quality service in a safe and secure environment. This code of conduct is for customers, elected members and members of the public who use the offices / facilities and who have dealings with Galway City Council.

In accordance with the Council's Dignity at Work Policy it is our responsibility to treat our customers and staff in a professional, courteous and civil manner at all times. Similarly, it is your responsibility as a customer of Galway City Council to treat employees of the Council in a professional, courteous and civil manner at all times. We ask you to respect our staff and our offices / facilities.

In order to achieve this, we ask our customers to note that the following behaviour will not be accepted in any of our offices / facilities or in any interaction with Council staff.



Behaviour which is disruptive or dangerous and interferes with the use and/or enjoyment of the facility by others or interferes with staff carrying out Council business and/or persons carrying out work on behalf of the Council.



Littering



Harassment of staff or members of the public by engaging in abusive, sexist, racist, obscene, derogatory or threatening language or behaviour, including swearing / shouting at staff members.



Partaking in any illegal activity.



Use of violence or threat of violence or intimidation towards staff and/or members of the public.



Leaving personal property unattended while using Galway City Council's facilities.



Any deliberate damage to or theft of Galway City Council's property or threats to carry out such damage or theft.



Using video and/or audio recordings or taking photographs and/or the inappropriate posting of same on social media, without specific written authorisation.



Intimidating behaviour, including accosting members of staff outside of their relevant office or place of work and attempting to coerce staff in any way.



Allowing children to be unsupervised and disruptive in Galway City Council's offices/ facilities.



The use of alcohol and illicit drugs.



Smoking and vaping, unless in designated areas.



Bringing pets or animals (other than Guide Dogs / Assistance Dogs) into Galway City Council's premises is generally not permitted. The exceptions to this include parks or other recreational facilities, where dogs should be on a lead and under the control of the owner at all times.

Appendix 3- Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Galway City Council is committed to providing a quality service to all our customers and service users. Every effort is made by our staff to ensure that high quality services are delivered in a fair, open, efficient and courteous manner. However, there may be occasions when you feel that we have not achieved this aim and you may not be satisfied with the quality of service provided.

Galway City Council has a complaints and appeals system to assist customers who feel that they have been treated unfairly and not in accordance with the standards of Customer Care outlined in our Customer Charter.

This document sets out the procedures for dealing with Customer Service complaints. It tells you:

- What is a Customer Service complaint,
- Who can make a Customer Service complaint,
- What issues are covered,
- What issues are not covered,
- The standards we have set for dealing with Customer Service complaints,
- How to make a complaint,
- What information to provide,
- How you can appeal if you are unhappy with the response.

What is a Customer Service complaint?

A complaint exists where a person feels that the manner in which they were dealt with by Galway City Council was not in accordance with good administrative practice and/or the standards of Customer Care outlined in our Customer Charter.

Who can make a Customer Service complaint?

All queries / complaints should be made in the first instance at department level. Staff are trained to answer your queries / complaints and every effort is made to resolve them promptly and efficiently.

However, you have a right to make a Customer Service complaint if you believe:

- You have been treated unfairly by Galway City Council,
- That a service to which you believe you are entitled is not being provided or is inadequate,
- That an action carried out by the Council or a decision made by it affects you adversely, or did not take into consideration all of the facts,
- That a request for service / information has been ignored.

A formal complaint will not be accepted unless it has been investigated by the relevant department first.

What Issues are covered?

- Complaints in relation to delays, mistakes, poor customer service – instances where you did not receive the quality of service you feel you are entitled to.
- Complaints under Section 39 of the Disability Act 2005 relating to access to our services, building or information.
- Complaints about discrimination under the Equal Status Acts 2000 – 2018.

What Issues are not covered?

There are separate procedures in respect of the following issues / faults / complaints:

- Where a statutory procedure or right of appeal already exists, e.g. Planning, Traffic Fixed Charge Notices, requests under Freedom of Information, GDPR, Access to Information on the Environment, Ethics, etc.
- Illegal Dumping / Littering / Pollution,
- Abandoned Vehicles,
- Road Maintenance / Potholes,
- Faulty Street Lighting,
- Housing Maintenance,
- Faulty Pay & Display machines.

What are the standards set for handling complaints?

- Complaints will be dealt with in a consistent, impartial, sensitive and transparent manner.
- We will treat all complaints in confidence and only discuss the complaint with the relevant staff on a “need to know” basis.
- Where a Customer Complaint relates to a specific staff member that person will be consulted in relation to the complaint.
- Making a complaint will have no implication for your future dealings and contact with Galway City Council.
- Correspondence about your complaint will be filed separately from other information held in relation to you.
- Your complaint will be acknowledged by the Customer Complaints Co-ordinator within 5 working days.
- An officer of the Council, other than those involved in the original decision or action, will carefully examine your complaint.
- We will examine and review your complaint and send a written reply to you within 20 working days of receipt of your complaint. Sometimes, complaints take longer to resolve but you will be advised of the progress until a response has been issued.
- If it is established that Galway City Council have not acted fairly, an apology and explanation will be offered and every effort will be made to rectify the matter. Any current procedures will be reviewed to ensure that the same issues do not arise in the future.

How do I make a complaint?

Step One:

In the first instance, the complaint should be brought to the attention of our staff in the department concerned, either orally or in writing. The staff there will try to resolve your complaint without delay.

Step Two:

If your complaint cannot be resolved by the staff in the relevant department, or if you are unhappy with the customer service or response you received, you may submit a complaint in writing on our Complaints form, to:

Customer Complaints Co-ordinator,
Customer Services Section,
Galway City Council,
City Hall,
College Road,
Galway,
H91 X4K8.

The complaint form can also be completed online at <https://www.galwaycity.ie/complaints-appeals>

What information should I provide?

- Name, address, email address and/or phone number,
- Galway City Council reference number, if applicable,
- Reason for your complaint and an explanation as to why / how you think Galway City Council did not meet the required standard in this case – please give as much information as possible including dates and supporting documentation, if relevant,
- The name of the section, and if appropriate, the name of the staff member, with whom you were dealing,
- What result do you wish to achieve through this complaint,
- Have you already contacted the section concerned in order to resolve your complaint, please provide details of same.

What can I do if I am not satisfied with response?

If you are not satisfied with the response received, you can appeal the decision by addressing your complaint, in writing, to:

The Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services, Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway, H91 X4K8.

Appeals must be received within 4 weeks of the date of the decision. The Senior Executive Officer will re-examine the complaint and issue a response within 20 working days of your appeal.

What happens if I am still not happy with the outcome?

If you feel that you have been unfairly treated or are not satisfied with our final response, it is open to you to contact the Office of the Ombudsman.

Contact details are as follows:

Office of the Ombudsman,
6 Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2,
D02 W773.

Tel: Lo-call 1890 223030

Tel: 01 6395600

Email: complaints@ombudsman.ie

Website: www.ombudsman.ie

If your complaint relates to a child or young person under the age of 18 then you may contact:

Ombudsman for Children's Office,
Millennium House,
52-56 Great Strand Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 F5P8.

Tel: Lo-call 1800 20 20 40

Tel: 01 865 6800

Email: ococomplaint@oco.ie

Website: www.oco.ie

Appendix 4- Policy on Abusive, Persistent, Vexatious and Unreasonable Customers and Complaints

Galway City Council does not expect our staff or Councillors to accept or tolerate behaviour by our customers that is abusive, offensive, threatening, or due to the frequency of contacts, accounts for a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

The aim of this policy is to identify situations where customer contact, service requests and/or complaints may be considered to be abusive, persistent, vexatious or unreasonable. The policy is intended to support Galway City Council's Customer Complaints and Appeals procedures which sets out the process for customers to make official complaints in relation to the service provided by the Council.

Raising legitimate queries, service requests, complaints or criticisms of a complaints procedure should not in itself lead to someone being regarded as vexatious or an unreasonably persistent complainant. Similarly, the fact that a customer is unhappy with the service provided or the outcome of a complaint and seeks to challenge it should not cause them to be considered vexatious or unreasonably persistent.

For the purpose of this policy, persistent, vexatious and/or unreasonable customers and complaints are those which, because of the nature or frequency of the customer's contacts, impede the Council's consideration of their or other customers' complaints / service requests or otherwise disproportionately impact on the operational capacity of the Council. Single incidents may be unacceptable in themselves, but more often the difficulty may be caused by unreasonably persistent behaviour that is time consuming to manage and interferes with proper consideration of the request / complaint.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour includes behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening and may include:

- Having threatened or used physical violence towards staff or members of the public,
- Using abusive, threatening and/or foul language;
 - on the telephone,
 - at public counters or in face-to-face meetings,
 - in written correspondence, including letters, emails, application forms, social media and online,
- Sending multiple emails to the same section / staff member or to multiple sections / staff members on the same issue,
- Leaving multiple voicemails in relation to the same issue.

Vexatious, Persistent and/or Unreasonable Customers and Complaints:

The description of “vexatious, persistent or unreasonable” may apply separately or jointly to a customer or complaint. The following are examples, but is not an exhaustive list, of vexatious, persistent and/or unreasonable customers or complaints:

- Making an unreasonable number of contacts with the Council, by any means, in relation to a specific (or similar) query/complaint/service request.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous Council staff, submission of unnecessary or unnecessarily large volumes of documentation, detailed letters/emails frequently and expecting immediate responses.
- Having insufficient or no grounds for their complaint.
- Refusing to specify the grounds for the complaint, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to engage or cooperate with a staff member who is providing assistance and demanding the complaint be referred to a more senior officer.
- Making the same complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, and requesting that these are treated as new complaints.
- Introducing trivial and/or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Naming staff members in correspondence circulated to other departments / public bodies and/or publishing staff names on social media without any formal complaint process or before the conclusion of a complaints investigation.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Customer Complaints and Appeals procedure.
- Adopting a ‘scatter gun’ approach: several complainants pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue or one complainant pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with several organisations.
- Persistently approaching the Council, through different routes, about the same issue.
- Electronically recording meetings and conversations, through video, audio or photographic means, without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person/s involved.
- Refusing to accept that their query, service request or complaint is not within the remit of the Council.
- Raising numerous and detailed questions and insisting that they are all answered.
- Presenting irrelevant and/or unreasonable arguments, insisting that their version of events be accepted as fact without any evidence to support their argument, refusing to consider or accept counter-arguments, refusing to accept documented evidence as factual.
- Continuing to ask the same questions which have either been asked and answered previously or are not within the power of the Council to answer.
- Making groundless complaints about the conduct of staff members.
- Refusing to co-operate with or impeding Council staff in carrying out their duties.
- Misusing Council telephone numbers, e.g. phoning staff landline or mobile numbers repeatedly including outside normal working hours.

How the Council will manage this Behaviour

We will ensure that all valid complaints are being, or have been, investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints and Appeals procedures.

When we consider that a customer's behaviour is unacceptable we will tell them why we find their behaviour unacceptable or unreasonable and we will ask them to change it. However, if this behaviour continues, we will take action to restrict the customer's contact with the Council.

The decision to restrict access to the Council will normally be taken after we have reviewed the service/s provided to the customer. The decision will be taken at Section Head level and where more than one department is being contacted, agree a cross-departmental approach and designate a lead officer to co-ordinate the Council's response. Any restrictions imposed will be evidence based, appropriate and proportionate.

The following are details of the restrictions that may be imposed:

- Requesting contact in a particular format i.e. written correspondence only,
- Requiring contact to take place with a named staff member only,
- Banning the customer from sending emails to specific staff members,
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and/or times,
- Refusing access to Council offices and/or facilities or restricting access to appointment only,
- Requiring any face to face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location,
- Requesting that the customer enter into a written agreement about their future conduct,
- Refusal to accept any further calls/complaints from the customer for a specified period of time,
- Letting the customer/complainant know that we will not reply to or acknowledge any further contact from them on that specific topic.

In all cases where we have the customer's contact details, we will write to the customer and explain why we consider their behaviour is unacceptable/unreasonable and inform them of the action we propose to take, the planned duration of the action and how to appeal a decision. We will also enclose a copy of this policy and our Customer Code of Conduct.

Where the contact / complaints are being received anonymously by telephone, we will request contact details from the customer, and

- If the customer provides their name and contact details, they will be informed, in writing, as above of the action we propose to take.
- If the customer refuses to give their name or contact details, they will be informed during the telephone call that as they are not adhering to the Council's Customer Code of Conduct, the action we propose to take, the proposed duration of the action and how they can appeal a decision. We will also inform them where they can obtain a copy of this policy and our Customer Code of Conduct.

Where the behaviour threatens the immediate safety or welfare of the Council's staff, we will consider other options which may include referral of the matter to An Garda Síochána or the instigation of legal action.

New Complaints / Service requests

Any new complaints / service requests from customers who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. Judgement and discretion will be applied to ensure that contact from the customer/complainant about other matters are considered. The Head of Section will decide whether any restrictions which have been previously applied are still appropriate and necessary in relation to the new complaint / service request. We do not support a “blanket policy” of refusing to deal with genuine service requests or complaints.

Recording and Reviewing cases of Unreasonable Behaviour

All cases of unreasonable behaviour, where the provisions of this policy have been invoked, will be recorded on an incident form. Completed incident forms will be signed by the appropriate Head of Function and copied, for attention and retention, to the Head of Corporate Services.

Any restriction that is imposed will be reviewed by the Head of Section on a regular basis. The customer/complainant will be informed of the result of this review if the terms of the decision to apply this policy to them has been changed or extended.

Appendix 5- Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act, 2014 entitles a member of the public to apply for information held by public bodies. It gives individuals the legal right to:

- Access records held by public bodies,
- Have personal information on them corrected or updated where such information is incomplete, incorrect or misleading,
- Be given a reason for decisions taken by the public body that affects them.

You can ask for the following records held by Galway City Council:

- Any records relating to you personally, regardless of when they were created.
- All other records created after 21st October 1998.

The Act sets out certain exceptions which limit the release of records.

To submit a request please email foi@galwaycity.ie and note in the body of the email that you are making a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. You can also send your request to the Freedom of Information Officer, Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway, H91 X4K8.

For more information please visit <https://www.galwaycitycouncil/freedom-of-information>

Appendix 6- Data Protection

Galway City Council will process all customer information in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Data Protection aims to protect individuals' right to privacy in regard to the processing of their personal data by those who control such data. The Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation confer rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons processing personal data. These lay down rules about the safeguarding of the privacy of personal data, covering such areas as the obtaining, processing, keeping, use, disclosure, accuracy, appropriateness, retention and an individual's right to access and correct their personal data. The legislation applies to personal data held in both manual and electronic format.

For more information please visit <https://www.galwaycity.ie/privacy-policy>

Your rights

You have the right to request access to personal data held about you, obtain confirmation as to whether data concerning you exists, be informed of the content and source of data and check its accuracy. In addition, if the data held by us is found to be inaccurate you have the right to change, remove, block, or object to the use of, personal data held by Galway City Council. In certain circumstances blocking access to data may delay or remove access to a service where the data is required by law or for essential purposes related to delivery of a service to you. Please note that to help protect your privacy, we may take steps to verify your identity before granting access to personal data.

Please include any details that could help us to locate your records. This might include:

- Customer account number,
- Staff number,
- Any other information that may help us to identify your records.

To exercise these rights, you should contact:

Email dpo@galwaycity.ie **or** write to us at Data Protection Officer, Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road, Galway, H91 X4K8.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the response you received from Galway City Council in relation to your request, then you are entitled to make a complaint to the Data Protection Commission who may investigate the matter for you.

The Data Protection Commission's website is www.dataprotection.ie. You can also contact their Office:

Data Protection Commission,
21 Fitzwilliam Square South,
Dublin 2
D02 RD28
Ireland
Tel: 01 7650100 / 1800 437 737