

DRAFT #7

## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY STATEMENT & STANDARDS

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## 1. Policy Statement

This Customer Care Policy & Standards document sets out how our staff will respond to the needs of our customers, that is our patients, relatives, carers, visitors and colleagues. It has been developed from our organisational values and aims to support our staff to deliver a high quality, consistent service that meets our customers' needs at all times to enable them to easily access our services.

## 2. Organisational Values

2.1 NHS Lanarkshire has developed a set of organisational values through work with the public and our staff. They can be found at:

[www.nhslanarkshire.co.uk/Organisational+Values/Organisational+Values.htm](http://www.nhslanarkshire.co.uk/Organisational+Values/Organisational+Values.htm)

2.2 These values influence how we deliver our services and commit us to continuously improving them. We value:

Quality, patient-focused services  
Quality healthcare environment  
Continuous improvement  
Involvement  
Communications  
Respect  
Fairness and consistency  
Competence and continuous learning

2.3 These values are underpinned by a set of commitments, each of which is relevant to the delivery of a customer-focused service.

## 3. Customer Care Standards

3.1 NHS Lanarkshire staff provide services to patients, their relatives, visitors and colleagues who are our "customers". These services may be provided face-to-face, by telephone, through electronic means or in writing. Our customers are entitled to receive good customer care, that is a courteous, helpful and friendly service at all times that treats them as individuals and with respect.

3.2 These Customer Care Standards have been agreed by NHS Lanarkshire and will be upheld by all staff. Specific service standards may be issued by Directorates in line with these guidelines but providing greater local accountability by individual services.

3.3 NHS Lanarkshire is committed to providing a safe, healthy environment for all its staff. The organisation recognises that violence and aggression towards any healthcare staff is unacceptable and acknowledges its responsibility to protect the welfare of staff in relation to the actual and potential risk of violence and aggression. The organisation will manage risks from violence and aggression using a systematic approach and through a range of measures designed to ensure safe working practices. This includes the assessment of risk, both actual and potential, of violence and aggression to staff, patients and others and ensuring that, where practicable, the risk of injury is eliminated

or at least minimised. (Extract from the NHS Lanarkshire Policy for the Prevention and Management of Violence and Aggression to Staff which can be found at <http://firstport/sites/humanresources/Policies-Procedures-Guidelines/Forms/AllItems.aspx>).

#### **4. Data Protection**

NHS Lanarkshire abides by the terms and conditions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will ensure that all information provided by or to a customer does not contravene the provisions of this Act. All new employees will receive Data Protection training. (Details of the Data Protection Act and Information Governance can be found at <http://firstport/sites/IMT/informationgovernance/default.aspx>)

#### **5. Freedom of Information**

Employees will be aware of Freedom of Information legislation and procedures required if requests are made by the public. Details of the Freedom of Information Act and NHS Lanarkshire's Freedom of Information protocol are available on the intranet. (<http://firstport/sites/IMT/informationgovernance/default.aspx>)

#### **6. Security of Information**

6.1 Employees will ensure that every effort is made to keep customer information secure in line with NHS Scotland Information Governance Standards and NHS Lanarkshire's Records Management Policy (<http://firstport/sites/IMT/informationgovernance/default.aspx>).

- Files will not be left where they could be accessible to the public
- Passwords will not be given out to other staff or the public
- Computers will be locked whilst staff are away from their workstation
- Appropriate stationery will be controlled and kept secure
- Confidential information will be destroyed in line with NHS Lanarkshire's Record Retention Policy
- Customers and / or their business will not be discussed with any unauthorized person or within earshot of other customers.

6.2 Tips on how to keep information secure can be found in the IT security section of FirstPort at <http://firstport/sites/IMT/default.aspx> . For further guidance contact the IM&T Helpdesk at <http://helpdesk/internetdesk/> or by telephone on 01698 258787.

#### **7. Telephones**

For the majority of NHS Lanarkshire's customers the first contact is by telephone. They will expect a quick response to their enquiries.

★ Good Practice Standards ★

## 7.1 Answering a call



- We will aim to answer all telephone calls within 5 rings/15 seconds.
- We will answer all telephone calls courteously, sensitively and with:
  - Main hospital switchboards – Good morning/afternoon/evening and the name of the location being contacted
  - General Enquiry Line – NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line, staff member's name speaking and how can I help you.
  - All other numbers – Department, staff member's name speaking and how can I help you.
- All staff will deal with all customer enquiries to the best of their ability and attempt to resolve enquiries fully. If an answer cannot be given, calls will be referred to the appropriate service.
- If the call is not answered within 5 rings it should be set to automatically divert to a colleague or voicemail where available (see note on voicemail).
- If the customer query will take some time for the staff member to deal with we will ring them back.
- Staff will ensure they minimise delays for telephone and face-to-face customers when dealing with both at the same time. Where delays occur staff will offer an apology to the customer.
- If the customer needs to speak to someone else, we will make sure they are connected to them giving the name, number and department to which they are being transferred. Ring back will be offered if the person is not available and the caller will be given the original contact's number in case the call is cut off.
- If we fail to meet the standards we will always apologise and try to put it right.
- If the customer doesn't know who or what area they need to speak to, contact and enquiry details should be taken and reasonable efforts should be made to identify the relevant section. The customer should then be called back with the contact details of the person the enquiry has been passed to.
- Automatic Call Distribution technology will be used by our Referral Management Service to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of call handling.

## 7.2 Transferring a call



- If calls need to be transferred then the caller should be told what is going to happen and the call released only when it is connected to the relevant member of staff.
- Any information already given by the caller will be given to the colleague to whom the call is being passed, to avoid the customer having to repeat it.
- If a call cannot be transferred the customer will be given the option to call back or for the customer's name and contact details to be taken and passed to the relevant staff member who will call them back.

## 7.3 Receiving a Call



- Telephones should not be left for any length of time unattended; transfer functions should be used. Always set your telephone to divert to another

extension. When setting up a call divert we will inform our colleague(s) who are taking the calls.

- If we answer a colleague's telephone we will inform the caller that the staff member is not available and offer a return call saying when this is likely to be and if necessary take a message.
- It may be helpful to repeat back the callers details, such as their telephone number, to ensure accuracy when taking messages.
- End the call politely. For example "Thank you for your call."

#### 7.4 Answer Phones/ Voice Mail ★

- The use of answer phones and voice mail (where available) should be kept to a minimum and in the majority of cases should not be used between normal office hours of 9.00 to 5.00 Monday – Friday. However, they may be used in certain circumstances such as outlying offices where no transfer of calls facility is available. This should be with the approval of the service manager ensuring that it is the best option to maintain customer care standards.
- In some telephone systems it is possible for a call to automatically divert to voicemail if the line is engaged or for the call to divert to another extension if the number called is engaged.
- Answer phones and voice mail messages (where available) should include as a minimum:  
"Thank you for calling, Name/Section in Service/unit of NHS Lanarkshire. Unfortunately there is no one available to take your call. Please leave a message with your name and number after the tone and I will get back to you on my return".
- Messages should be checked as soon as possible on return.

#### 7.5 Text Messaging ★

There is no formal text format, therefore, incoming text messaging by mobile phone must be treated with extreme caution and should not be acted on unless the receiver is sure about the message being conveyed. The call will be treated as a telephone call but, wherever possible, confirmation should be obtained by telephone, letter or electronic means. Text messages will not be returned but a response will be given by telephone, letter or e-mail with standards for those access means being applied. The use of text will be reviewed quarterly to assess whether standards for this method of access should change.

#### 7.6 Typetalk ★

Hearing impaired people will be encouraged to use Typetalk/Textdirect which is a national relay service run by the RNID. BT funds the relay service and calls are charged at local BT rates. Callers dial 18001 before the number of the member of staff being contacted. Staff will dial 18002 before the number of the caller to return the call. If staff have not used the service before BT will provide instructions at the start of the call.

## 7.7 Telephone Directory ★

- We will maintain an up-to-date internal telephone directory. Employees with an NHS Lanarkshire computer account will have self-service access to amend their own contact details. Those without a computer account will inform the General Enquiry Line on 08453 130 130 about any changes. Processes will be established and implemented for services to update telephone numbers.
- Other key service telephone numbers will be published in various external directories. Amendments should be sent to the Communications Department (Amendments to: [Calvin.brown@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:Calvin.brown@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk) or telephone 01698 245006)

## 7.8 Emergency Contacts/Out of Hours ★

- Employees dealing with emergencies will stay calm and provide/co-ordinate needs in a quick efficient manner.
- The emergency telephone number within the three acute hospital sites is 2222.
- Employees taking emergency calls will be trained to deal with emergencies and be able to provide a response or make arrangements or face to face emergency units/ services immediately.
- Back up systems will be available in the event of normal emergency contact failure.
- On-call staff can be contacted through the switchboards at Hairmyres, Monklands or Wishaw General Hospitals.

## 8. **Email/electronic Access**

- 8.1 People measure the effectiveness of an organisation by the speed, efficiency, quality and appropriateness of response. This expectation grows with the introduction of technology and needs to be reflected in the standards we set for electronic access.
- 8.2 Good practice guidelines are set out in the NHS Lanarkshire Good Practice Guide to Written Communications ([link to Firstport once approved](#)) Staff should adhere to these when producing information.

## 9. **Written Enquiries**

### ★ Good Practice Standards ★

- 9.1 Where a request for information falls under the Data Protection Act 1998 (see section 4) or the Freedom of Information legislation (see section 5) we will respond within the time-scales required.
- 9.2 Separate arrangements are in place for responding to complaints. The NHS Lanarkshire Complaints policy can be found at [http://firstport/C16/Complaints%20Handling/Policies%20Procedures%20%20Guidelines/Complaints%20Policy%20\(141206\).pdf](http://firstport/C16/Complaints%20Handling/Policies%20Procedures%20%20Guidelines/Complaints%20Policy%20(141206).pdf)

#### 9.4 Incoming Correspondence ★

- Incoming correspondence will be prioritised according to importance and urgency.
- If you receive a letter that has been misdirected, it should be passed immediately to the appropriate service or member of staff.

#### 9.5 Outgoing Correspondence ★

- NHS Lanarkshire has separate guidance on the production of written information, the Good Practice Guide to Written Communication. ([link to Firstport once approved](#)) Staff intending to produce written information (letters, on the NHS Lanarkshire website or information leaflets for patients or the public), which might include the use of clipart or images, should refer to it beforehand.

### 10. **Face-to-Face Enquiries**

- 10.1 The impression the public will form of the efficiency, professionalism and helpfulness of NHS Lanarkshire will be based on the way they are dealt with or approached. Whether meeting the public or colleagues for meetings, training, seminars etc. every effort should be made to attend and be punctual. Apologies will be given if non-attendance or being late is unavoidable.

#### ★ Good Practice Standards ★

- Staff will be polite and courteous when dealing with all customer enquiries
- All staff will wear an identity badge.
- All staff will deal with customer enquiries to the best of their ability and attempt to resolve enquiries fully. If an answer cannot be given, customers will be referred to the appropriate service.
- Staff will ensure they minimise delays for face-to-face and telephone customers when dealing with both at the same time. Where delays occur staff will offer an apology to the customer.
- Customer access needs will be met in line with DDA requirements, physical access to buildings, offices, rooms, availability of loops (hearing device), other languages, signage, etc.
- If a customer has an appointment an offer of a private meeting space will be made otherwise the visitor will be met in an appropriate place.
- If they are attending an appointment and the service/ member of staff is delayed and offer, the customer will be offered an explanation and choices eg.
  - An estimated waiting time.
  - An alternative employee to deal with them.
  - The member of staff will contact the customer at home.

#### 10.2 Site Visits or Visiting a Customer's Home ★

- Site visit protocols will be checked before making a visit and an assessment of risk made. Any doubts or concern will be referred to the supervisor/ manager.
- Staff will show their identity badge before entering the property.



- Visits will usually be arranged in advance and customers will be notified of any changes.
- Before entering a property the purpose of the visit will be made clear unless the purpose needs to be dealt with sensitively.
- Any customer concerned about an employee identity should be encouraged to call a neighbour or telephone NHS Lanarkshire to receive confirmation. Tact and courtesy should always be used.
- Cultural differences will be respected when making visits in particular:
  - Religious and festival dates.
  - Appropriate gender visits.
  - Age.
- At the end of a visit the next steps will be explained.
- Any actions required following the visit would be undertaken as planned or as soon as possible.

### 10.3 Reception Areas and Offices ★

- Reception areas (any area, including offices, where customers may be received) will be kept clear and tidy.
- Seating will be provided in waiting/ interview areas and customers will have the right to private meeting space if appropriate.
- Welcoming statements will be displayed that demonstrate NHS Lanarkshire's commitment to providing high quality services.
- Relevant information leaflets and forms etc. will be available and kept up-to-date by the manager responsible for the area.
- Customers will be welcomed with courtesy and tact.
- Information displayed on walls should be appropriate to NHS Lanarkshire or the work undertaken in that area such as health promotion information, current initiatives etc.

## 11. **Dress and appearance**

Staff employed by NHS Lanarkshire are responsible for providing high quality care to all customers. An important aspect of this work is promoting the customer's confidence in our ability to deliver excellent services in a professional manner. It is recognized that the appearance and standards of dress adopted by staff are an influential factor. This is particularly relevant to staff, both registered and unregistered, who work directly with customers. Consequently, NHS Lanarkshire wishes to ensure that all staff maintain that confidence. The Standards of Dress Policy outlines reasonable and acceptable standards of dress with which all staff employed by NHS Lanarkshire must comply. The emphasis of this policy is on ensuring a common standard of decorum and clinical safety. [The Standard of Dress Policy can be found at http://firstport/sites/humanresources/Policies-Procedures-Guidelines/Forms/AllItems.aspx](http://firstport/sites/humanresources/Policies-Procedures-Guidelines/Forms/AllItems.aspx)

## 12. **Signage / Corporate Identity / Colours**

- Signs, identity cards, vehicles, stationery etc. will use the corporate logo in accordance with NHS Scotland guidance to ensure that NHS Lanarkshire's identity is maintained.
- Format, words and colours will be in line with NHS Lanarkshire guidelines. Available at [http://www.nhsscotlandci.scot.nhs.uk/nhs\\_la.htm](http://www.nhsscotlandci.scot.nhs.uk/nhs_la.htm)

### **13. Customer Service Training**

- All staff are involved with customers whether they be other staff members or external customers, therefore training should be given to all staff. The amount and content will vary according to requirements.
- All employees dealing directly with the public whether by telephone or face to face will be trained in customer care.
- Training will be provided in varying levels of detail, ensuring a corporate, consistent approach to customer care and customised to specific needs.
- Employees who are authors or editors of content on the NHS Lanarkshire website will be trained in customer care, writing for the web and use of the content management system.
- Training will be through personal development, on the job training, sharing of good practice, training courses, workshops, leaflets etc and will be updated on a regular basis. Employee development needs will be identified through Personal Development Plan discussions in relation to the KSF outline for their post and, where needs are identified, employees will agree appropriate development plans with their line manager or reviewer.

### **14. Performance Measures & Monitoring Arrangements**

As a learning organisation, NHS Lanarkshire needs to know how well it is meeting its customer care standards and whether these standards are “fit for purpose”. The Customer Care Policy Statement & Guidelines will therefore be monitored through a set of key performance measures. Some of these measures are legal requirements and some are locally set. The key performance measures are set out in Appendix 1.

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**S Welton / K Hamilton**  
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## Key Performance Indicators and Monitoring Arrangements

Paragraph	Area	Performance Indicator	Responsibility
4	Data Protection	Requests for information covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Access to Health Records Act will be complied with within 40 days Number of staff receiving Data Protection training	Performance monitored by the Data Protection Manager Training & Development staff
5	Freedom of Information	Requests for information covered by the Freedom of Information Act will be complied with within 20 working days	Performance monitored by the Data Protection Manager
6	Security of Information	Files will not be left where they could be accessible to the public Passwords will not be given out to other staff or the public Computers will be locked whilst staff are away from their workstation Appropriate stationery will be controlled and kept secure Confidential information will be destroyed in line with NHS Lanarkshire's Record Retention Policy Customers and /or their business will not be discussed with any unauthorised person. Compliance with Information Governance Standards and IT Security techniques.	Line managers Line managers Line managers Line managers Line managers Line managers
7	Telephones	Calls will be answered within 5 rings/ 15 seconds  Concerns and complaints about the courtesy and competence of staff Contingency arrangements to maintain telephone access in place Time to respond to calls by the Referral Management Service	Response times for calls to main switchboards monitored by Property & Support Services Response times for calls to internal extensions monitored by line managers as part of service delivery arrangements Line managers in conjunction with complaints officers General Manager – IM&T Health Records Manager Line managers in conjunction

		Concerns and complaints about being wrongly connected to an internal extension	with complaints officers
8	Email/electronic access	Compliance with Good Practice Guide to Written Communications Compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Legislation	Line managers Line managers
9	Written Enquiries	Compliance with Good Practice Guide to Written Communications Compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Legislation	Line managers Line managers
10	Face-to-Face Enquiries	Concerns and complaints about the courtesy and competence of staff Compliance with requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act in relation to physical access to services Concerns and complaints about Sign Language facilities  Concerns and complaints about a failure to respect customers' religious or cultural beliefs Concerns and complaints about the availability and / or quality of information leaflets	Line managers in conjunction with complaints officers Property & Support Services  Line managers in conjunction with complaints officers Line managers in conjunction with complaints officers Line managers in conjunction with complaints managers
11	Dress and Appearance	Compliance with Standards of Dress Policy Concerns and complaints about the standard of dress and appearance of staff	Line managers Line managers in conjunction with complaints managers
12	Signage / Corporate Identity/ Colours	Compliance with NHS Scotland guidance	Property & Support Services
13	Customer Service Training	All appropriate staff receiving website content management training Each department has a training plan All staff receiving customer care training at the appropriate time and to the appropriate level	Web Manager  Line managers Line managers in conjunction with Organisational Development
14	Overall Effectiveness of Implementation of Customer Care Policy and Standards	Mystery shopping exercise to identify compliance with Customer Care Standards	Chair of SEG in conjunction with Public Partnership Forums