

Introduction

This document has been written for all employees of Nottinghamshire County Council to use as a **practical guide** to providing good customer service.

The document contains:

- **The Code of Practice and Standards**
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Information**
and a
- **Training and Development pack**

It is important to say at the very beginning of this document that these standards have been brought together in one document for the whole Authority in order that we may bring some consistency to customers who contact the County Council. However, it is also very important to say that these standards are not intended as a straight-jacket to force employees and their managers to meet them no matter what. We appreciate that local circumstances and tight resources may make it difficult for employees to, for example, answer the telephone in 4 rings. What needs to be emphasised is that we should be **aiming** to achieve these standards, thinking about how that might be possible and setting **realistic targets** for how often these standards can be met.

Improving customer service is the aim of this Authority and setting standards makes it possible for us to measure by how much we have improved.

Acknowledgements

The “Improving Customer Service” Team would like to thank everybody who gave their time to making this document possible.

We would particularly like to thank:

The Education Department, Operations and Community Services Division for allowing us to use a great deal of their Customer Care Code of Practice

Legal Services for the Legal Status of Communications

Social Services for their letter layout

We should also like to thank the Community Services Disabled Workers Group for their permission to use extracts from their Disability Awareness Document.

Equal Access

This document can be made available in other formats.

Please contact Corporate Communications on (0115) 977 3177 if you need a disk, cassette or Braille copy.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Endorsement from the Chief Executive	5
What is Customer Service?	5
Why Does the Authority Need a Code of Practice?	6
Who are our Customers?	6

Standards, Targets and Performance Measures 7

What are Standards, Targets and Performance Measures?	7
---	---

Customer Service Code of Practice 8

Telephone Customer Service Standards 9

Hands-Free Telephones	10
Messages	10
Answering Machines	11
Voice Mail	11
Textphone	12
Typetalk	12

Customer Service Standards for Written Communications 13

Absence	13
Redirecting Mail	14
Letters	14
Confidential Letters	15
Further Information	15
Email	15
Redirecting E-mail	15
Confidential E-mail	16
E-mail Security	16
Legal Issues	16
Facsimile (Fax)	16

Face to Face Customer Service Standards 17

Driving	18
Video Conferencing	18
Public Facing Computer Systems	18

Gaining Customer Feedback 19

Complaints and Comments	19
Consultation	19

Table of Contents

Appendices

Appendix A - Charter Mark	21
Appendix B - Call Logging Form	22
Appendix C - What is a Disability?	23
Medical Model	23
Social Model	23
What is Disability Equality?	23
Further Information	24
Appendix D - Access Facilities	25
Braille, Large Print or Audio Tape	25
Textphone	25
Typetalk	25
Sign Language Interpreters	26
Translation and Interpretation Services	26
Appendix E - Fax Cover Note	27
Appendix F - Comments and Complaints Contacts	28
Departmental Representatives	28
Appendix G - Legal Status of Communications	30
Appendix H - Letter Layout	32

Endorsement from the Chief Executive

“Since the launch of the County Council’s Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards in March 2001, the Authority has continued its commitment to improve and modernise public services to provide high standards of customer service to the people of Nottinghamshire.

Following the IDeA Peer Review, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Connecting with Communities Review in 2002, it became clear that there was a need to develop our effectiveness and efficiency in order that we reach our vision of being a top 20 council.

Putting the customer at the heart of our business will help us achieve this vision.

The Standards have now been reviewed and reprinted taking on board your comments and the County Council remains committed to the principles of customer service. Ensuring the standards are embraced and adopted by all employees will enable us to provide our customers with the level of personal service that we would expect to receive ourselves”.

Roger Latham
Chief Executive

What is Customer Service?

Customer Service is ensuring that we give our customers the sort of personal service and response that we ourselves would want, if we were in their place.

Our customers have a right to expect from us the best possible standards of personal service. They should be treated with equal respect, listened to and responded to in a manner which is polite, helpful and timely.

Why does the Authority Need a Code of Practice and Standards?

There is already a lot of good customer service practice within the Authority, for example a number of services have already attained the prestigious Charter Mark (see Appendix A). There is however, a need to formalise this good practice ensuring that the principles are embraced and adopted by all employees.

This will allow us to respond to and communicate with our customers in a consistent manner no matter whom they contact and the method they choose to do so.

Also, the Government is committed to improving and modernising public services and is keen for us to provide high standards of customer service to local citizens. Through Best Value and the Nottinghamshire Improvement Plan (NIP) the Authority has embarked on a programme of continuous improvement so that our customers can expect us to get better at delivering the services they pay for. The Government has set national and local performance criteria which measures how we perform. We need therefore to be confident that we consistently deliver high standards of customer service.

The Code of Practice sets out the way in which we should deal with our customers whether by letter, telephone, face to face, e-mail or another form of communication.

Who are our Customers?

Our customers are all the people and organisations for whom we provide a service. This includes citizens of Nottinghamshire, visitors to Nottinghamshire, businesses and partnership organisations.

It is important to note that **internal colleagues** serving these groups are also customers. What are standards, targets and performance measures?

Standards, Targets and Performance Measures

What are the standards, targets and performance measures?

This document sets out the standards for the Authority.

Standards are the promises that we make to service users about the level and quality of service they can expect. They should form part of the business planning process and should be set like objectives:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Timely**

Targets are commitments that are made in advance to achieve a stated level of service.

Performance Measures are systems to collect data that demonstrate how well a standard is being achieved or whether a target is being met.

For example

Standard:

“We promise to answer all letters within 10 working days”

Target:

“We aim to meet this standard 85% of the time”

Measure:

“This year we answered 85% of all letters within 10 working days”

Customer Service Code of Practice

Our Promise to You

The Code of Practice applies to all forms of communication and states the following:

When you make contact with us we will:

- Be welcoming and courteous
- Be fair and respectful
- Be helpful and responsive
- Provide good quality information suited to your needs
- Communicate clearly
- Let you know what we can provide, who to contact and how
- Let you know how to make suggestions for improvements
- Keep you informed

To help us achieve this we ask that you:

- Are courteous and respectful towards us
- Provide the information we need
- Make suggestions on improving our service

In addition:

- All employees need to work within the Data Protection Act, confidentiality guidelines and the Equal Opportunities Policy
- The Data Protection Act requires that any information we keep about our customers must be accurate, up-to-date and relevant. Information must only be used for the purposes for which it was obtained and not disclosed to anyone except those noted in the registration
- There are a number of legal implications when communicating with others and these are outlined in Appendix G

Telephone Customer Service Standards

The telephone has become one of the most powerful tools in business and government today. The Henley Research Centre determined that people prefer to make contact by telephone in 70% of instances, so it is vital that we make the best use of it.

Here are the **minimum standards** the Council aims to achieve:

When you answer the telephone, you should:

- Aim to answer within 10 seconds or 4 rings
- Greet the caller in accordance with the Customer Service Code of Practice, in a welcoming manner.
- Use good morning/afternoon to give the caller the opportunity to get accustomed to your voice and pace, but keep the introduction short and concise
- Identify your department and yourself early in the conversation
- Log the call if appropriate (see Appendix B for an example)
- Use clear, positive language
- Listen carefully to what is being said and summarise the conversation for clarification

It is not necessary to have a fixed “script”. However, a simple framework for a call can often be useful, for example:

“Good Morning/Afternoon, Education Department.”

Caller gives reason for call

“My name is Julie and I will do what I can (to help you).”

“Can I ask who is calling and your address/telephone number.”

“To summarise, what you said was/what you need is”

When passing callers on to other people, either through referral or wrong number, the caller should:

- Find out to whom they need to speak and make the call for them if they have already been passed on more than once
- Apologise for the need to pass them on
- Let them know what you are doing and the person you are passing them on to
- Identify yourself to the person you are transferring the call to, making sure that he/she is the person who will deal with the query. Inform them of who is on the telephone and why they are calling. If the line is engaged, inform the caller of the direct line number to call later.

Telephone Customer Service Standards

If a telephone number is not known, the person answering should take all reasonable steps to ensure that the caller is transferred appropriately.

Options may include:

- Transferring the call to a switchboard operator
- Checking the telephone book
- Using the Intranet on <http://web.nottscc.gov.uk/phone/index.htm>
- Referring to the A-Z Guide to Nottinghamshire County Council or departmental guides where these are used
- Calling County Contact Officers

Hands-Free Telephones

Hands-free telephones, which have a speaker broadcasting the caller's voice, should ideally only be used for calls to internal customers. Alternatively, headphones could be used to ensure confidentiality.

When using a hands-free telephone with a speaker broadcasting the caller's voice, always:

- Confirm that the caller is happy for it to be used
- Let them know who else is present and close the door if you are in an office

Messages

When someone makes a call, it is frustrating when a telephone is not answered or is answered by someone who cannot deal with the query and asks you to ring back.

If you are going to be away from your usual work area for some time, you should always:

- Let team members know where you will be where possible, how you can be contacted, and when you are likely to be back
- Make arrangements where possible for calls to be redirected either to you or to someone who can take a message
- On your return to work, ensure calls are returned within 1 working day where practically possible
- Remember to use voice mail if available

If you take a message for someone else:

- Make sure it is clear and concise. Take a note of the caller's name, location, designation, telephone number, date, time and when the caller is available to receive the return call
- Be prepared to slow the caller down and ask for difficult spellings or complex points to be repeated
- Check with the caller that the message covers the points at issue
- Don't make promises for other people unless you are certain they can keep them

Answering Machines

Answering machines should only be used when no one else is available to take a message and to give the caller an opportunity to make some contact with you.

Answering machines should:

- Only be used for overflow calls, if the number dialled is engaged, when there is no other way of receiving messages or when the work area is closed
- Be set up to receive messages. Where this is not possible, for example on a busy switchboard, a clear message should be left -informing the caller of when they could call again
- Be switched off when you are back in the work area
- Contain a welcoming greeting and a clear message about whose answerphone has been reached and, where possible, when you will be returning if it is likely to be more than 1 day
- Contain a message where appropriate informing the caller of an emergency number
- Be checked upon return to the office and messages acknowledged within 1 working day or when practically possible
- Be checked regularly to make sure it is in working order

If you are likely to be absent for whatever reason, make sure that your answerphone is checked and responded to by someone else.

Voice Mail

If you have access to voice mail, it can be used when you are away from the work area to pick up messages from a different location:

Voice Mail should:

- Contain a welcoming greeting and a clear message about whose voice mail has been reached and, where possible, when you will be returning
- Contain a message where possible informing the caller about when to expect a call back or, where appropriate, an alternative number, or emergency number is appropriate
- Be checked as often as possible
- Be responded to within 1 working day where practically possible

If you are likely to be absent for whatever reason, make sure that your voice mail is checked and responded to by someone else.

Textphone

Textphone is a system, which allows deaf people to use specially adapted telephones to communicate by sending text through the telephone lines. It is simple to use and there should be full instructions next to the system.

If departments have textphone systems, they should:

- Publish the number on all advertising material
- Ensure sufficient employees are trained in its use

Typetalk

RNID Typetalk is the UK's national telephone relay service which enables deaf, hard of hearing, deafened and speech-impaired people to communicate with hearing people using the telephone network.

It is run by the RNID and funded by BT, and relays conversations between UK textphone (textphone) users and voice telephone users all over the world. It is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, all year round. It enables a hearing person to make a call to a deaf person without the need for a textphone, and likewise, a hearing person does not need to have textphone in order to receive a call from a deaf person.

Written communication can take a variety of forms and we need to ensure that we answer appropriately and professionally. Performance standards are set for how quickly we should respond to mail. Where mail can be responded to sooner, all efforts should be made to do so.

Customer Service Standards for Written Communication

When responding to any written communication you should:

- Reply within 10 working days
- Reply to an enquiry using the community language/script within which it was received (see Appendix D)
- -Produce the reply and supporting documents in an appropriate format where necessary in Braille or large print (see Appendix D)
- -Reply in plain jargon-free language
- -Be accurate, especially when using or referring to names
- -Use a salutation which is appropriate to the degree of formality required and to the ethnic origin of the respondent
- Include a subject/heading
- -Include a "signature" with the name, job title and service area of the person responding
- -Check for grammar and spelling before sending

If a reply requires detailed research or translation:

- Acknowledge the enquiry within 5 working days and keep the customer informed about when to expect a full response
- Send a detailed response within 20 working days

If this is not possible, you should

- Agree a date with the customer by when they can expect a response.

It is important at all times to keep the customer fully informed about their enquiry

Absence

If the addressee is not available to respond to their mail due to absence, provision should be made to deal with that person's mail for the time they are absent. An acknowledgement should be sent within 5 working days. If someone is not in a position to deal with the enquiry, a reply should be made to the customer, saying when the enquiry will be dealt with.

Redirecting Mail

Sometimes it is necessary to redirect correspondence as customers may be unsure where to send mail. It is poor customer service to move documents around the Authority without dealing with them effectively.

If mail needs to be redirected:

- You should check to see if the mail has already been forwarded to you and make all efforts to find the right addressee
- You should aim to do so within 1 working day where practically possible
- You should check that the person is the correct recipient and that you have their correct contact information
- The redirected correspondence should include an explanation saying from where and to whom it has been sent
- Where appropriate, an explanation should be sent to the customer stating what action you have taken, together with the name and contact details of the person who is dealing with the enquiry

Letters

Letters should be dated when received and passed on to the addressee or appropriate person within 1 working day where practically possible.

Responses should:

- Be typed on standard County Council letterheaded paper
- Contain a telephone contact number
- Be typed using the font Arial for clarity and be at least 12 point (and provide a disk, cassette, large print or Braille copy if requested)
- Quote any references

See example in Appendix H of how to layout a letter

Confidential Letters

If an item of correspondence is confidential, then this must be written on the letter and/or the envelope when responding. If the mail is for the addressee only, then the letter and/or envelope should be marked personal.

Further Information

The Nottinghamshire County Council Communications Strategy sets out how to use the logo and what else can be included in NCC documentation. The “Checkbook” is available from Corporate Communications and is also published on the Intranet.

E-mail

The e-government agenda requires local authorities to respond quickly and effectively to enquiries sent electronically.

E-mail is becoming a common form of communication, however, it is often seen as informal, but all e-mail correspondence should be treated with the same attention to customer service as with other forms of communication. Training and development in the effective use of e-mail is advisable.

E-mails should:

- Be typed using the font Arial in 12 point and in basic text where possible as formatted e-mail cannot be read by some e-mail clients

Users of e-mail should regard this as a formal communication and adhere to the same levels of formality as for paper correspondence.

A document on the protocols of creating an e-mail address at Nottinghamshire County Council is published on the Intranet.

Redirecting e-mail

If you do not know to whom you should redirect e-mail:

- Check the internal e-mail directory on the intranet
- Check the website - <http://www.nottscc.gov.uk/council/contacts/emails.htm>
- Check the A-Z Guide to Nottinghamshire County Council or a departmental guide if available

Confidential e-mail

If there is doubt about whether a reply would remain confidential to the recipient, it may be appropriate to send a letter.

E-mail Security

Employees should be cautious when accepting e-mail from unknown sources and make regular use of anti-virus software.

A set of Internet Usage Guidelines is sent to every new user. This document is also available on the Intranet. Users are required to sign and return a slip to IT Operations Support to acknowledge that they will abide by these guidelines.

A disclaimer is automatically added to the bottom of all e-mails sent outside Nottinghamshire County Council.

Legal Issues regarding e-mail

Although e-mail can often be considered a very informal way of communicating, it is important to note the legal implications outlined in Appendix G.

Facsimile (Fax)

When sending a fax, you should:

- Send a cover sheet containing the Nottinghamshire County Council logo, date, address, telephone number and fax number
- Include the name, organisation, department and fax number of the person receiving it
- State the number of pages being faxed (including the front sheet) and any message or action to be taken. If necessary, the fax front sheet should be signed. (See Appendix E for an example of style)

Face to Face Customer Service Standards

Across the Authority we have a range of different public service points. When visiting the Council, customers should be treated in accordance with the standards set out in the Customer Service Code of Practice. The Authority has a duty to provide reasonable access to all users of the service using clear signs about where to go and what services are available at each location.

When dealing with customers at the first point of contact, you should:

- Aim to greet or at least acknowledge, customers as soon as they enter the building or approach an enquiry desk
- Speak clearly and face the customer. If the customer needs an interpreter, guidance should be sought (see Appendix D)
- Make customers feel welcome and find out how they can be helped
- Not keep customers waiting for more than 20 minutes once they have made initial contact at a reception point. If this is not possible, they should be given the option of waiting until they can be seen (and told how long this will be) or making a specific appointment

If the customer has an appointment with you, you should:

- Be on time

If the customer has an appointment with someone else, you should:

- Let the member of staff know that they have arrived

If for any reason, you are unable to keep an appointment, you should:

- Make arrangements for the customer to be seen by someone else
- Or make another appointment with as much notice as possible

If you are visiting the person's home or place of work, you should:

- Make sure you have an appointment and present an identity badge
- Fully explain the reason for the visit to their home/business
- Treat them and members of the household/business and their property with respect

Driving

When driving on County Council business, you should:

- Drive in a safe and responsible manner and within the legal requirements, for example speed limits
- The 'Driving Well?' message should be included on all County Council vehicles together with the complaints hotline telephone number.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing is increasingly used as an alternative way of providing face to face contact with a customer who would find it difficult or expensive to travel to meet you.

Training in the effective use of video conferencing is advisable and is available from the equipment supplier.

When using video conferencing:

- Decide the nature and content of the call
- Check the link and technical set up before making the call
- Set up the video camera on top of the unit, not at the side
- Check the person is sitting in the correct place and that their head and shoulders can be seen
- Check sound level
- Make a telephone call first to arrange the link
- Wear clothing which contrasts with the physical background to ensure clarity of picture
- Make the call
- Introduce yourself and anybody else in the room especially those who may not be on camera
- Ensure that the quality and sound is acceptable to the other party(ies)

Public Facing Computer Systems

Public facing computer systems are available throughout the County They should be:

- Switched on during normal opening hours
- Checked regularly to ensure they are working properly
- Checked regularly for paper if printing is available
- Be accessible to all (check location, height for wheelchair users and make sure that audio or text enlargement is available for visually impaired people)

Gaining Customer Feedback

Complaints and Comments

Complaints and comments are an essential way of gaining feedback from our customers. They allow us to review and evaluate our services and should be acted upon.

The County Council has a procedure for gathering complaints, compliments and comments from customers. The full procedure is outlined in the leaflet "Listening to You" which should be available in your place of work. Anybody can telephone, write, e-mail, send in the leaflet or come in person to make a comment or complaint about Nottinghamshire County Council.

Complaints should be dealt with within 5 working days (acknowledgement) and within 20 working days (full and final written response). A list of people to contact for further information is attached in Appendix F.

Consultation

In order to check how good our customer service is from the users point of view, it is possible to gain feedback using consultation.

A consultation strategy and guidelines document has been written for the Authority. This gives guidance and best practice on who and how to consult and can be found in the Best Value Companion on the Intranet.

Appendices

The following appendices have been provided as a means of supporting the Code of Practice and Standards.

Some of the appendices like the call logging form and fax cover sheet are intended as examples for people to use if they wish and not as a standard to conform to.

- A Charter Mark
Criteria List**
- B Call Logging Form**
- C Language and Disability**
- D Access Facilities**
- E Fax Cover Sheet**
- F Comments and Complaints Contacts**
- G Legal Status of Communications**
- H Letter layout**

Appendix A – Charter Mark

Charter Mark is the Government's award scheme for recognising and encouraging excellence in public service.

There are 10 criteria to meet in order to achieve the Charter Mark. These are:

- Set standards of service
- Be open and provide full information
- Consult and involve
- Encourage access and the promotion of choice
- Treat all fairly
- Put things right when they go wrong
- Use resources effectively
- Innovate and improve
- Work with other providers
- Provide user satisfaction

Further information can be obtained from:

Charter Mark & Beacon Unit
Kirkland House
4th Floor
22 Whitehall
London
SW1 2WH

Tel: 020 7276 1755
for general enquiries

Tel: 0845 304 0430
for the application helpline

e-mail: chartermark@cabnet-office-x.gsi.gov.uk
website: www.chartermark.gov.uk

Appendix B – Call Logging Form

Call Logging Form

Date:	<input type="text"/>	Time:	<input type="text"/>
Caller's name:	<input type="text"/>		
Caller's telephone:	<input type="text"/>		
Caller's address:	<input type="text"/>		

Query description (who, what, when, where, why, how)

Response to caller (what you said)

Referral (if necessary)

Who:	<input type="text"/>
When:	<input type="text"/>
Why:	<input type="text"/>

Follow up action (if necessary)

Completed by:	<input type="text"/>	Time:	<input type="text"/>
Date:	<input type="text"/>		

Appendix C – What is a Disability?

We have a responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act to consider all areas of disability so that we provide equal access to all our customers whatever their needs.

There are two models of disability: the medical model and the social model.

Nottinghamshire County Council has adopted the social model.

Medical Model

This model looks at disability from the point of view that it is an individual problem facing people with a medical condition or disease. The solution to disability is seen as treatment/cure and/or other professional intervention.

Social Model

This is when the disability is not caused by impairment but by the physical barriers presented by society. This then excludes people with disabilities participating in activities, thus causing them to be discriminated against. Therefore if these barriers were to be removed by reorganisation or redesign this discrimination would then no longer stand in the way.

The Social Model has been developed by Disabled People's organisations and is now accepted by the United Nations and European Commission.

What is Disability Equality?

Employees should be aware of the following factors:

- The importance of valuing people for what they are and for the abilities and skills which they have
- The variety of disabilities, including physical, sensory, learning and hidden
- Negative language and dangers of "stereotyping" and "labels" - by which society often sees all people with disabilities as the "same" and makes negative assumptions about them
- The needs which people with disabilities may have and the extra support which they may need
- That people's impairments are not the disability but the attitudes of society
- The importance of access and of barriers which prevent exclusion, for example structural barriers, barriers of communication, barriers of attitude and so on.

Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards

- The “hidden” discrimination which people with disabilities often face - for example, invitation to share in meetings which take place in inaccessible rooms with no communication aids; lack of involvement in decision making, especially things which affect them
- The necessity to meet with, work with and listen to people with disabilities - that is how awareness develops
- That “disability equality” should be seen as one aspect of an equal opportunities policy rather than as “special provision”.

Further Information

A number of publications have been produced by:

Employers Forum on Disability

Nutmeg House

60 Gainsford Street

London

SE1 2NY

Tel: 02074 03 30 20

Website:

www.employers-forum.co.uk

e-mail: website.enquiries@employers-forum.co.uk

Including the following publications:

“Managing the Disability Discrimination Act - You and Your Disabled Customers”

“Customer Access - Policy, Technical Aids and Buildings”

“The Disability Communication Guide - The Triple Audit - Communicating with Disabled Colleagues and Customers”

“Welcoming Disabled Customers”

Courtesy of Community Services Disabled Workers Group

Appendix D – Access Facilities

To make our services and documentation accessible to all the citizens of Nottinghamshire, the County Council provides the following services:

Braille, Large Print and Audio Tape

Almost any material can be produced in Braille. **The Braille Bureau** is located behind the main reception at County Hall. This service is available to anybody wishing to produce information in a format suitable for the blind or partially sighted. A Braille sheet (2 sides of A4) would cost £2 with additional sheets costing 50p each. Written documents can also be produced in large print and on audio tape.

Contact: The Braille Bureau on (0115) 977 3157.

Additionally, the **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)** can provide services for Braille, large print or audio tape. They will quote over the telephone, but a standard A4 folded leaflet produced in Braille will be around £30 for a master copy with extra copies at £3 each. For tape it will be £25 for a master and £1.10 for additional tapes. The RNIB also operate a Rapid Business Transcription Service for urgent items.

Contact: The Business Liaison Team on 01733 375370 or e-mail - businesslink@rnib.org.uk

All of the above quoted prices are current at time of going to print and are likely to change.

Textphone

Textphone is a system which allows deaf people to use specially adapted telephones to communicate by sending text through the telephone lines.

Typetalk

(a BT/RNID service)

Typetalk is a confidential relay service to put text phone users in contact with hearing people.

A text phone is a special telephone (like Textphone) with a screen and keyboard. If a hearing person has no access to a text phone and needs to ring a deaf person with a text phone, the only way of contacting them is through Typetalk. The spoken message

Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards

is translated into text by highly trained operators and the text phone user reads it off their screen. Responses are then relayed by the operator to the caller using the telephone.

Contact: Typetalk Customer Services on 0800 7311888.

If you already have an account with Typetalk and you want to make a call to a deaf person:

Contact: Typetalk on 0800 515152 and quote your account number.

Sign Language Interpreters

The County Council has a contract with the Nottinghamshire Deaf Society to provide sign language interpreters. This contract covers the whole of the County. If you require an interpreter or would like to know the cost of this service:

Contact: the Nottingham Sign Language Interpretation Service on (0115) 978 6984

This is a very busy service with only a few interpreters so you should book as early as possible.

Translation and Interpretation Services

These services are part of Design, Publications and Print. An extensive range of languages is available.

If you require a document to be translated or the services of an interpreter you should:

Contact Translation and Interpretation Services on (0115) 977 3877.

Translation: Short pieces of work can be translated fairly quickly but longer pieces of work require 3 weeks' notice. The cost is between £13 - £18 per 100 words. Telephone for an estimate.

Interpretation: 2 days notice is usually sufficient. The cost is £36 per hour.

The above prices are current at time of going to print.

Appendix E – Fax Cover Sheet

Nottinghamshire  County Council
Department
Director **Name**
Full address
Website: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

FAX TRANSMISSION

To:	From:
Company:	Fax No:
Fax No of Recipient:	Tel No:
No. of Pages Sent: (including this sheet)	File Ref:
Subject:	
Signed:	Date: Time:
Please notify us immediately if all sheets are not received or fax is unclear	

Appendix F – Comments and Complaints Contacts

Nottinghamshire County Council
Chief Executive
County Hall
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7QP

Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
York
YO30 5FZ

Tel: (01904) 663200

Chief Executive's Representative/Corporate Complaints Officer

Joanna Rawsterne
County Hall
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 7QP

joanna.rawsterne@nottsc.gov.uk

Tel: (0115) 977 3096

Freephone hotline: 0500 355191

e-mail: complaints@nottsc.gov.uk

Departmental contacts

Chief Executive's Department

Jayne Francis

Head of Law and Democracy

Centenary House

Wilford Lane

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 7QZ

jayne.francis@nottsc.gov.uk

Tel: (0115) 977 3748

Sarah Edwards

Head of Customer Management

County Hall

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 7QP

sarah.i.edwards@nottsc.gov.uk

Tel: (0115) 977 4334

Resources Department

Aaron Lawrence

County Hall

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 7QP

aaron.lawrence@nottsc.gov.uk

Tel: (0115) 977 4183

Children and Young People's Department

Alison Holloway (Special Educational Needs) / Viv Veasey

County Hall

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 7QP

Tel: (0115) 977 2558 / 3037

alison.holloway@nottsc.gov.uk

viv.veasey@nottsc.gov.uk

Communities Department

Rob Bayley

County Hall

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 7QP

rob.bayley@nottsc.gov.uk

Tel: (0115) 977 4542

Adult Social Care and Health Department

Pati Colman

Service Manager

Customer Relations Service

Adult Social Care & Health

County Hall

West Bridgford

Nottinghamshire

NG2 7QP

customer-relations-service@nottsc.gov.uk

0115 977 2788

Appendix G – Legal Status of Communications

Implications for Electronic Communication

All types of communications have potential legal consequences. Any communication can make a legal commitment, and can be demanded as evidence in any subsequent legal dispute. This is regardless of the:

- Means of communication (including hard copy, e-mail, NEO, facsimile, Internet, Intranet, telephone calls, face to face conversations, etc)
- Intended recipient (whether internal or external)
- Intended circulation (whether private or official)
- Purpose (whether formal or informal)

In view of this, all staff must remain cautious in their communications, particularly when using communication channels known to be prone to a casual approach (for example telephone call, conversations, e-mails, NEOs)

- E-mail is no different from any other form of communication and can make binding commitments
- If an e-mail clearly intends to make an official statement or instruction, etc, then any disclaimer automatically put on the e-mail will be voided
- Paper documents are not more or less binding in law than electronic ones
- Post and faxes are presumed to have arrived, if the sender can produce evidence of having correctly sent it. This can be refuted though if the intended recipient can demonstrate that the post/fax was not in fact received
- No rules have been developed regarding sending/receiving e-mails, and so e-mail should not be relied upon as the sole medium for transmitting binding documentation
- Hand-written signatures do not add any extra authority, so long as the communication came with a typed name and from the appropriate source
- The key danger for any electronic communication medium (telephone, NEO, e-mail) is they can be used in a conversational style, an officer may express themselves unguardedly in a way they would not in a typed letter
- NEO and e-mail are documents that can be produced in court as evidence, and in a dispute an opponent would have the right to see them. The Ombudsman also has such a right. NEOs and e-mails are not regarded as private

- NEOs and e-mails containing defamatory statements could be used to found libel court actions, including when such communication were used internally
- A council may be “vicariously” liable for the acts of an employee, carried out in the course of employment, even though the act was unauthorised and contrary to council policy
- The Data Protection Act 1994 applies equally to e-mail as it does to data held on a computer. The Act gives certain rights to the individual to ensure that data is processed fairly, lawfully and is kept secure. The Data Protection Act 1998 came into force in March 2000. This strengthens the individual’s rights and places further restrictions on personal data processing

Other dangers for councils and their staff include:

- E-mail harassment where individuals are harassed with constant disparaging, racist or sexist e-mails
- Offences under the Obscene Publications Act 1959 and the Protection of Children Act 1978 (as amended) - this covers the sending of indecent photographs of adults or children as an attachment to an e-mail
- Transmitting viruses via e-mail
- Copyright issues where articles are downloaded and circulated by e-mail

Conclusions: legal issues

- All staff should be trained in the proper use of e-mail
- A clearly worded e-mail policy should be in place
- The material their employees are sending and receiving should be audited
- The policy adopted must respect employees’ privacy, comply with data protection law and observe the implied duty of trust between the parties

Courtesy of Legal Services who wrote the above guidelines as a response to the Correspondence, Recording and Processing Working Party which reports to the Environment Department Marketing and Communication Board.

For this reason the following standards should be adopted when producing letters on behalf of the Authority.

Margins

Left	-1 inch (25 mm) minimum
Right	-same size or smaller than left but 0.5 inches (12.5 mm) minimum
Top	-Header 1 inch (25 mm) minimum
Bottom	-Footer 1 inch (25 mm) minimum

Spacing

- Single spacing in the main body of the document

Page Numbering

- Letters that continue over more than one page should be numbered from 1 to x (x being the final number of continuation pages)
- Letters that continue over more than one page should use both sides of the paper

Address Format

- Type addresses using standard Arial 12pt font and aligned to the left of the label
- Avoid using hand written labels. (Royal mail prioritises machine-readable mail and hand written mail is sorted last, which could delay it, even first class.)
- Addresses should include the following address elements, Recipient and/or Organisation name, Premises name, Street/Road name, Town name and full two-part Post Code.
- Town and Post Code should be typed upper case.
- County names are only required when a Post Code is not known.

Post Codes

- All mail must include a Post Code.
- Mail without a Post Code could be returned to sender or delayed, and costs extra to post.
- Post Codes can be found at www.royalmail.com
- The Post Code must be on its own on the last line of the address

Label Positioning

- Addresses and labels should be placed approximately 5cm (2 inches) at the top of the envelope and 2.5cm (1 inch) from the left hand side.

- Large size letters (C4) should have the address placed with the envelope in a “portrait” position. The top of the envelope being the shortest length.

Punctuation

- Addresses on letters and envelopes should not use punctuation.

[View the guide on how to improve the quality of your mail \[PDF 222KB\]](#)

Greetings and Signing off

- Letters addressed to organisations and for “Dear Sir/Madam...” should be signed “Yours faithfully”
- Letters addressed to individuals should be signed “Yours sincerely”
- The sender’s name and job title should be in lower case. The sender’s name may be in bold
- A formal letter should include the sender’s name title for example Ms, Mrs, Miss or Mr in brackets after the sender’s name, for example Juliet Smith (Ms)
- If the letter is marked “Private”, “Confidential” or “Personal” then this should appear on the envelope

Enclosures

- Where enclosures are to be attached type “Encs” at the end of the letter at the bottom of the page.

Envelopes and Sticking Tape

- Think carefully which size envelope you select to send your letter. Whenever possible use “Letter” size envelopes (DL or C5). “Large Letter” size envelopes (C4) are over 50% more expensive to post. Save money by simply folding the letter in half and place in a C5 envelope.
- Sticking tape should not be used on the front of envelopes.
- Be careful to ensure there are no sticking up edges when sealing envelopes because this can catch on machinery and tear open the envelope.

Internal Mail

- Wherever possible internal mail should be sent using the internal courier service.
- Reduce waste by using reusable green internal transit envelopes or recycling envelopes (marked Internal or Courier).
- The envelope must clearly state the recipient name, department and building name.