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# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council GovMetric Customer Feedback Annual Equalities Report 2017/18

Data 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31 March 2018  
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# Introduction:

This report looks at service user experience when engaging with the Council through its three main channels, which are;

- Customer Service Centre - service users can access information face to face, on-line in a dedicated area and over the telephone
- Telephone – to Customer Service Centre staff
- On-line Service – Southend-on-Sea Borough Council website and MySouthend

Information is recorded against the following protected groups/characteristics

- Gender (Sex)
- Race (Nationality and Ethnicity)
- Age
- Disability
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation

This narrative looks at the overall experience of service users when engaging with the Council on-line or through the Customer Service Centre; examines any key learning, and identifies opportunities to continue providing a positive experience for all the communities which make up Southend when engaging with the Council.

As customer equality feedback is provided with an assurance of anonymity, it is not possible to distinguish multiple ratings, perhaps on different occasions, from the same person. Therefore, for statistical purposes in the following narrative, each instance is assumed to relate to a different individual, even though there may be indications that this is not the case.

This report supports the Council in considering how the decisions we make, and the services we deliver, affect people who share different protected characteristics.

Demographic information about the population of Southend can be found [on our website](#).

## Data Source and Use

When customers contact us, whether face to face, on the telephone or through our on-line options, letting us know how they felt about the service we give plays an important part in helping us improve and maintain our standards of service.

GovMetric © is a system which provides a quick and easy way for customers to provide us with feedback. It is completely anonymous unless the customer chooses to provide contact details.

Visitors to our Customer Service Centre on the ground floor at the Civic Centre will find a touch screen in the waiting area. At the conclusion of their visit, they can press the screen to show what service they have used, how they rate the service received, their reason for that rating and a comment. They can also supply data regarding their protected characteristics. A comment card option is also provided for those customers who prefer not to use the touch screen and these ratings and comments are later input to the GovMetric system. These cards do not collect protected characteristic data.

When telephoning our Customer Service Centre, at the end of the customer's call they will be offered to be put through to the GovMetric telephone survey system. If they agree, they will then be connected to an automated system where they use their telephone keys to give feedback. The questions should take less than 60 seconds to complete and there is an option to provide more detailed feedback by leaving a voice message. They can also supply data regarding their protected characteristics.

When using our Website, there are GovMetric "smiley faces" on the web pages. To give feedback on a web page, customers simply click on the appropriate face. This takes them to a short survey where reasons for their rating will be requested. They also have the option of leaving a more detailed free-text comment and supplying data regarding their protected characteristics.

**The GovMetric system compares the responses received over a given period and provides a Good, Average or Poor rating.**

To compile this report, the above data is collated and then examined in relation to each protected characteristic.

The Benchmark rating given throughout the tables below is the rating arrived at when feedback from all respondents is taken into account, regardless of whether they specified a protected characteristic.

Ratings in relation to each protected characteristic are then compared with the Benchmark. Where ratings fall below the benchmark, GovMetric data is further interrogated to identify whether there appears to be a connection between the protected characteristic and the reason for rating.

Over the period of this report, 15,024 GovMetric ratings were recorded by customers along with 1306 associated verbatim comments.

# Face to Face Service

## Overall Service

Having reviewed the 260 comments recorded by customers of the Face to Face service, there are many (approximately 50) expressing appreciation with the help being provided with completing on-line activities, particularly forms. Most of these reviews have been written by hand on comment cards, rather than input to the kiosk, this preference may indicate that they have come from older customers although the card does not capture this data.

Many customers describe themselves as 'not computer literate', 'technically challenged', having 'limited IT skills' and 'scared' or 'daunted' by using computers and a number of customers regret the modern lack of availability of face to face contact.

Although a minority of customers find fault with staff attitude, the overwhelming majority are very appreciative of the help and support they receive from the advisors, with their kindness and friendliness being highly welcomed.

This demonstrates that, although the face to face service is small in volume in relation to telephony and on-line services, it is of vital importance to and highly valued by some members of the community.

<b>Face to Face Benchmark</b>	<b>Average</b>
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<b>Gender</b>	
Male	Average
Female	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to gender as opposed to the quality of service being received. There are a small number of comments which express appreciation of the staff's ability to deal professionally with male customers who were behaving aggressively.

<b>Nationality</b>	
British	Good
English	Average
Irish	Average
Northern Irish	Average
Scottish	Good
Welsh	Average
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to nationality, as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	Good
Mixed	Average
Asian or Asian British	Average
Black or Black British	Good
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	Average
Other Ethnic Group	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to ethnicity, as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Age</b>	
17 and under	Average
18 to 29	Average
30 to 39	Good
40 to 49	Average
50 to 59	Good
60 to 64	Good
65 to 79	Good
80 and over	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no direct indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to age, as opposed to the quality of service being received.

Some commenters specified that they were elderly and unused to having to use computers so were grateful for the help provided. On two occasions children recorded their thanks to staff for helping their mother.

<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	Average
No	Good

Having reviewed the comments, there is no obvious indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to disability, as opposed to the quality of service being received. One customer was happy to have received help with the Customer Service Centre computers as they would otherwise have struggled due to their disability.

<b>Religion</b>	
Buddhist	Average
Christian	Good
Hindu	Average
Jewish	Good
Muslim	Good
Sikh	Average
No religion	Average
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to religion, as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Heterosexual/Straight	Good
Lesbian or Gay Woman	Average
Gay Man	Average
Bisexual	Average
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication within them that the level of satisfaction with the face to face service is related to sexual orientation, as opposed to the quality of service being received.

## Telephone Service

### Overall Service

Having reviewed the 522 comments recorded by customers of the telephone service, comments show that even where customers are unhappy with a service or decision, the vast majority of telephone callers are extremely happy with the manner in which Customer Service Centre staff speak to them, characterising them as helpful, polite and kind. Speaking to a person rather than having to conduct their business on-line is valued by many.

One commenter said that they were unhappy that the Council was 'getting rid of the phone service and turning everything digital' and many customers were grateful for the help that they were given either to navigate complex issues or where staff had completed an on-line form on their behalf as they had found it difficult.

A number of commenters were unhappy that not all back office services were available all day and consequently their call to the Customer Service Centre could not be transferred. Some frustration with the voice recognition telephone option was expressed and with the failure to return telephone calls.

The importance of the services provided by the Council was expressed by one customer who said they had received assistance and benefits 'a couple of years ago... you saved my life...and I won't forget it'

<b>Telephone Benchmark</b>	<b>Good</b>
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<b>Gender</b>	
Male	Good
Female	Good

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to gender as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Nationality</b>
Ratings are not collected regarding Nationality in the telephone survey.

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to nationality as opposed to the quality of service being received. One commenter was pleased that advisors from a variety of backgrounds were available as this was helpful for those whose first language was not English.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	Good
Mixed	Good
Asian or Asian British	Good
Black or Black British	Good
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	Not recorded
Other Ethnic Group	Good

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to ethnicity as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Age</b>	
Ratings have not been collected regarding Age in the telephone survey.	

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to age as opposed to the quality of service being received. One commenter expressed their gratitude for the 'great patience' of the operative 'because being elderly I am not very expressive with what I want to say'.

<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	Good
No	Good

Having reviewed the comments, there is little indication from the comments that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to disability as opposed to the quality of service being received. However, comments do indicate that a number of customers find the blue badge application process difficult to manage on-line and telephone for assistance. A customer with learning difficulties commented how helpful they had found it to be able to talk to a member of staff. Another commenter said that they had found the text on the on-line form to be too small and the colour hard to see so had telephoned for assistance.

<b>Religion</b>	
Buddhist	Good
Christian	Good
Hindu	Good
Jewish	Good
Muslim	Good
Sikh	Good
No religion	Good
Other	Good

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to religion as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Heterosexual/Straight	Good
Lesbian or Gay Woman	Good
Gay Man	Good
Bisexual	Good
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the telephone service is related to sexual orientation as opposed to the quality of service being received.

## **On-Line Services**

### **Overall Service**

Having reviewed the 523 comments recorded by customers of the on-line service, it can be seen that over 100 Average or Poor ratings related to customers struggling to find or use on-line forms. It would appear that the transition to MySouthend is proving difficult for some, although not specifically related to any particular protected characteristic.

Similarly a number of customers had had difficulties with the new Mobon car parking payment facility.

While some customers regret the move to greater use of on-line services, conversely, some commenters expect a fully on-line service and have expressed dissatisfaction when it is not available, particularly with having to complete PDF versions of forms.

13 customers commented on the change to library services, these appear to relate to teething problems with the new systems and are not linked to a particular protected characteristic.

It would appear that the move to on-line services is welcomed by many, but they expect those services to be comprehensive and easy to use. Where services change, customers have an expectation that they will be consulted, kept well informed and supported during the transition.

<b>On-line Benchmark</b>	<b>Average</b>
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<b>Gender</b>	
Male	Average
Female	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to gender as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Nationality</b>	
British	Average
English	Average
Irish	Average
Northern Irish	Average
Scottish	Poor (based on 1 rating)
Welsh	Average
Other	Poor

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to nationality as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	Average
Mixed	Average
Asian or Asian British	Average
Black or Black British	Average
Gypsy/Irish Traveller	Poor
Other Ethnic Group	Poor

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to ethnicity as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Age</b>	
17 and under	Average
18 to 29	Average
30 to 39	Poor
40 to 49	Average
50 to 59	Poor
60 to 64	Poor
65 to 79	Poor
80 and over	Poor

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to age as opposed to the quality of service being received. Of those age groups who rated the service poor, a consistent theme is not being able to locate their required information but there is no indication that this is related to their age. Such comments are passed to service areas to review their on-line content.

<b>Disability</b>	
Yes	Poor
No	Average

Having reviewed the comments, it can be seen that there are a number of customers who are dissatisfied with the decision to charge out of Borough Blue Badge holders for parking, some saying that they found it discriminatory and unwelcoming towards those with disabilities. One commenter said that they found the Council site to be one of the 'best blue badge sites in the country' and one that 'all other councils should copy'.

<b>Religion</b>	
Buddhist	Good
Christian	Average
Hindu	Average
Jewish	Average
Muslim	Average
Sikh	Poor (based on 4 responses)
No religion	Average
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to religion as opposed to the quality of service being received.

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Heterosexual/Straight	Poor
Lesbian or Gay Woman	Poor
Gay Man	Average
Bisexual	Average
Other	Average

Having reviewed the comments, there is no indication from them that the level of satisfaction with the on-line service is related to sexual orientation as opposed to the quality of service being received.

## Conclusion

Having reviewed the 15,024 ratings and 1306 associated comments, I have concluded that while there are expressions both of dissatisfaction and satisfaction within them, there is little indication that the differences between ratings are related to the protected characteristics of the customers concerned. Rather they are a product of the quality or nature of the service being received.

However the effects of some changes to policy, such as the decision to remove free parking for disabled badge holders from outside the Borough and the move to more on-line services are being reflected in the feedback being received, particularly in the verbatim comments of customers. This highlights the importance of Equality Analysis being undertaken when policy decisions are made.

# Glossary

## **Protected Group/Characteristics:**

### **Age**

This refers to a person belonging to a particular range of ages (e.g. 18 - 29 year olds).

### **Disability**

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Race (Ethnicity)**

This refers to the protected characteristic of Race, that is, a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

### **Religion and belief**

Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief affects life choices or the way a person lives for it to be included in the definition.

### **Sex**

A man or a woman

### **Sexual orientation**

This refers to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

You can see a more in-depth definition of these protected characteristics on the [legislation.gov.uk website](https://legislation.gov.uk)

We do not collect GovMetric data in relation to the following protected characteristics:

- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity