



Quality Service
Charter

Quality Service Charter Handbook

A number of departments have launched their Quality Service Charters in the first year of this initiative. The Charter Support Unit in the Office of the Prime Minister and the Management Efficiency Unit have collaborated throughout in assisting these departments in the various stages of the development of these charters.

A year after the first charter was launched, interest in this initiative is growing. More and more entities are seeking information and advice from the Charter Support Unit. The need was therefore felt to provide some reading material that departments could refer to and consult with ease when they consider developing their Quality Service Charter. The Management Efficiency Unit was entrusted with the drawing up of this Charter Handbook.

The handbook includes a step by step guide on how a department can assess when it is ready to draw up a charter and how it should set its goals, apart from the more basic information explaining what a charter is and what its development entails.

Another of the chapters deals with the actual writing of the charter text and how to communicate it, while the appendices include a self-assessment questionnaire and telephone customer service standards.

Departments must be aware that once their charter has been launched, they have to maintain the set standards and continuously seek to improve them, particularly by acting on the feedback they receive from their customers. For this reason, and as a result of the on-going changes in the public service, charters have to be updated regularly to retain their validity.

I must acknowledge the effort put into the preparation of this handbook by the Management Efficiency Unit, with particular thanks to Paul Caruana, and by the Charter Support Unit and the Government Printing Press.

Anthony C Mifsud
Director General

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Your Charter
 - 2.1 What is a Charter?
 - 2.2 Who can have a Charter?
 - 2.3 When should I think of having a Charter?
 - 2.4 Should a Charter cover the whole organisation?
- 3.0 Measuring up to a Charter
 - 3.1 The Charter Principles
- 4.0 Setting your goals
 - 4.1 Taking stock
 - 4.2 Your targets
 - 4.3 Consulting your staff
 - 4.4 Consulting your customers
 - 4.4 Comparing yourself to others
- 5.0 Getting there
- 6.0 Writing the Charter
 - 6.1 Consult your staff again
 - 6.2 Format and design
 - 6.3 Communicating the Charter
- 7.0 Maintaining your standards
 - 7.1 Internal Audits
 - 7.2 Measuring and monitoring
- 7.3 Customer feedback
- 7.4 Updating the Charter
- 7.5 Other points to consider

Appendix 1 - Self-assessment questionnaire

Appendix 2 - Telephone customer service standards

1.0 Introduction

This booklet is a practical guide to the principles of the Quality Service Charter initiative. It explains what a charter is and what should be included in the charter document. It also takes you through the steps that you need to follow when developing a charter. We have taken examples from other departments that have already worked on or even launched their charters, wherever we thought they were relevant.

This manual is intended as a help to all those who are interested in drawing up a charter. The Charter Support Unit, however, is ready to assist you with regard to this initiative and to give you all the guidance you may need. We will answer your queries and give you advice and help with any problem you might come across.





We also suggest that you visit our website at <http://www.magnet.mt/charters> and wish you every success.

2.0 Your charter

2.1 What is a charter?

A Quality Service Charter is your guarantee of good customer service. It is usually captured in a leaflet or booklet but may also be communicated in different ways, such as on panels in your reception area.

A charter normally consists of:

-  a guide to your services
-  a statement of the rights and responsibilities of your customers
-  the standards of service you aim to achieve
-  a formal complaints procedure

It may also include other information such as your plans for service improvement. However, you should be careful not to include too much information – you will only bore your customers. You should *never* sacrifice simplicity and brevity.

2.2 Who can have a charter?

Any organisation that has customers can have a charter. A charter may be relevant to a department, an agency, a unit or to a section as long as it provides a complete service to a group of customers. However there are some points to note.

Dealing with the public

Your customers should be ordinary citizens or specific groups such as traders, lawyers, parents of schoolchildren, taxpayers or farmers. They may also be organisations such as importers or hotels. 'Internal' customers such as government departments fall outside the scope of a charter.

Whole services

Charters only make sense if they are for complete services. Your charter should cover your entire service process – from the customer's original request to the final delivery of the service – and it should include all aspects relating to that service. For example, a charter for a clinic would cover the appointment system, waiting times, the quality of nursing and medical care and the communication of test results. Single aspects of care, such as nursing services, cannot be taken in isolation.

If your organisation issues, say, licences, you cannot have a charter for your cash office or your application processing unit alone. It would be akin to an airline giving guarantees on the speed of selling you tickets but not on the safety of its aircraft.

Similarly, if you provide a service that is dependent on, or closely linked to, the service of another organisation, it would be preferable to have a joint charter with that other organisation. For example, a charter for emergency services would involve the police, the fire brigade and ambulance services.

Inspectors

You may also have a charter if your organisation is an inspectorate. In this case your standards will deal with courtesy, equity, fairness, confidentiality and speed in giving feedback.

Good service

You can only have a charter if you have a good level of customer service.

In some cases, even though your standards of service may be good it would still be better not to have a charter. If you are unnecessarily asking customers to call at your office to submit an application when you could easily ask them to mail it or you could get this information from another organisation, or better still waive the requirement altogether, it matters little that you have short waiting times, courteous staff and pleasant offices.

2.3 When should I think of having a charter?

Not before a major change

It would be pointless to draw up a charter when your organisation is undergoing some major change. For example if you are planning to introduce (or discontinue) a service then it would be a good idea to postpone your charter. Similarly, if your organisation is to change as a result of a new law, regulation or EU directive then you should manage this change before proceeding with your charter.

After you've improved your service

The best time to draw up a charter is when you are certain that you have a good level of customer service. It doesn't make sense to make public commitments on standards of service that are below your customers' expectations. And to be in a position to meet good standards of service you must have the right resources and organisation.

Improve your service – then think of a charter. By ignoring the first step, you will only lose credibility.

2.4 Should a charter cover the whole organisation?

Preferably, yes. Your charter should guarantee minimum standards for all your services. Your customers will have little sympathy for you if you boast that your organisation has a Quality Service Charter when some of your services are below standard, even if you have not included them in your charter.

On the other hand you *may* choose to exclude some of your services from the charter but only if they are not relevant to the main customer group for whom the charter is intended.

Likewise, if your services are targeted to distinct groups of customers you may have separate charters for each service or unit.

The Legal Services Unit of Gozo decided to have separate charters for the Notarial Archives and for the Marriage Registry.

3.0 Measuring up to a charter

3.1 The charter principles








The Quality Service Charter Initiative is all about what its name suggests: quality in service. If you would like your organisation to have a charter, you must prove you can conform to a set of principles of good customer service and quality management, namely:

1. Speed and quality in service delivery
2. Defined targets and measurable performance
3. One-stop shopping
4. Information and simplicity
5. Customer care
6. Best use of technology
7. Welcoming premises

A set of indicators is linked to each of these principles, as shown in the table below. When you are confident that your organisation matches this profile you should complete the self-assessment form which you can find in Appendix 1 of this manual. This form is based on the principles and indicators explained here. You should fill in one form to cover all your services.


Once you have completed your self-assessment, you should contact the Charter Support Unit. The CSU will audit your compliance to the charter principles and advise you on how you should proceed with your charter.

1. Speed and quality in service delivery

-  queues, if any, should be short and orderly
-  backlogs should be rare, and quickly cleared
-  appointments should be readily available
-  customers should not have to wait long to be served
-  performance should be consistent – frequent 'bad days' are a sign that something is fundamentally wrong
-  access to the service should be at the convenience of your customers; for example by post, telephone or at local councils
-  customers should have various possibilities how to settle their payments

The Examinations Department gives students the possibility of paying their examination fees at the bank.

2. Defined targets and measurable performance

-  although making public commitments on standards of service comes with publishing a charter, your organisation should already operate against informal standards of speed and quality

- 📌 you should have the tools to measure your performance in meeting your standards; normally an IT system or manual record keeping
- 📌 your customers should be satisfied with your performance. Surveys should show that at least 80% of your customers are satisfied

3. One-stop shopping

- 📌 the number of times your customers should have to visit your offices to be served should be minimal; preferably never. Maximise the use of mail, telephone and e-mail service
- 📌 if your customers do visit they should not have to queue more than once. You *cannot* have one counter where customers lodge applications and another where they pay
- 📌 customers should be helped to the right desk directly
- 📌 you should not have to send your customers to another organisation to bring birth certificates, police conduct certificates, a stamp of approval or some other document. Get that information yourself.

4. Information and simplicity

- 📌 application forms should be simple and clear. Do not ask for information you will not use.
- 📌 when customers ask about the status of their application, you should be able to give them the information they need
- 📌 you should always inform customers of any delays or problems
- 📌 information about your services should be freely available and easily accessible
- 📌 your correspondence to customers should be polite and clear
- 📌 there should be clear signage in your offices (if relevant)

Staff of the Examinations Centre of Gozo visit schools to give students advice on sitting for exams.

5. Customer care






- 📌 all staff who deal with customers should be trained in customer care
- 📌 everyone should be dressed smartly
- 📌 all those who serve customers should wear a name tag or have a name plate at their desk
- 📌 you should have standards of telephone courtesy (see Appendix 2)
- 📌 you should have clear deadlines for handling complaints and an escalation procedure for difficult cases and appeals. Customers who complain should receive regular feedback and an apology (and a remedy) when you are at fault.

6. Best use of technology

- 📌 you can have good service without IT but if your customer service would significantly improve with an IT system, then that IT system becomes a requirement for a charter
- 📌 you should be continuously exploring the best use of internet technology for your services
- 📌 your telephone system should work well

Customers of the Central Office of Statistics may ask for information and apply for most services through the department's website.

7. Welcoming premises

-  clean, comfortable and tastefully decorated
-  adequate seating in waiting areas
-  preferably air-conditioned
-  your office doors should be kept open unless privacy is needed
-  welcoming counters. Avoid speaking to people through pigeon holes.




The Public Library of Gozo organises cultural activities such as concerts and art exhibitions on its premises.

4.0 Setting your goals

4.1 Taking stock

Your self-assessment should give you a good picture of your level of customer service. You should be able to tell which areas are up to scratch and which need improvement.

Your next task is to set the performance targets that will feature in your charter. You should do this by:



-  consulting your staff
-  consulting your customers
-  comparing yourself to others.

After that you should work on improving your services to be able to meet these targets. In the next chapter you will find some tips on improving customer service. But first, the targets.



4.2 Your targets

Your performance targets are perhaps the most important part of your charter. They set out the standards of service that your customers can expect from you.

You can set targets on:

-  **Quality** Standards of quality vary according to your circumstances. They could be anything from the accuracy of the information you provide to guaranteeing a personalised care programme if you are a welfare agency.
-  **Timeliness** For example, how long your customers will wait to be served or to receive a licence. Timelines should *always* be calculated from the point of view of the customer. If you are setting a standard for mailing a letter then say how long the customer should expect to wait to receive it – not the time it takes you to process that letter and pass it on to the registry section.

At the Central Public Library customers are served in 5 minutes. The Licensing and Testing Department renews licences received by post within 3 days. The Handyman Service of Servizz Anzjan is available within 5 days of a customer's request.

-  **Reliability** If you cannot meet your standards (especially those on timeliness) every time then say what you can do for the majority. Anything less than 8 out of 10 times is not acceptable. Remember that you should also set a target for the remaining 2 out of 10. Do not use percentages as many people do not easily understand them.
-  **Accessibility** Your hours of operation; the number and spread of service points; accessibility to people with special needs.

'Senior citizens and disabled persons who are unable to climb any stairs, will be served on the Office's ground floor. In case of persons using a wheelchair, a ramp will be provided to give them access to the Office'

Office of the Notary to the Government and Notarial Archives - Malta
Quality Service Charter, December 1999



Courtesy

You should guarantee that your staff will be courteous and helpful. If relevant you may also guarantee privacy and confidentiality.

The Central Public Library acted on the feedback it received from its customers – it has installed air-conditioning and lockers for its visitors.



Responsiveness

For example, taking action on your customers' complaints and suggestions.

Think through your services and identify all the instances in which you come in contact with your customers. Then come up with targets for those instances. You should start doing this by consulting your staff.

Key points

Are your standards:

- ◆ **relevant?** – they should clearly reflect the needs of your customers
- ◆ **meaningful?** – they should look at the service from the point of view of the customer and avoid management targets
- ◆ **challenging?** – they should be challenging but realistic
- ◆ **simple?** – they should be written in plain language
- ◆ **measurable?** – they should be measurable either directly as part of normal procedures, or by a customer survey
- ◆ **monitored?** – systems should be in place to support regular monitoring
- ◆ **reviewed?** – their effectiveness should be regularly reviewed, and standards updated

'We aim to respond to a general information request within 10 minutes from your request for service'

Land Registry
Quality Service Charter, June 1999

'If you ask for information by writing to us, we will reply within five working days of receiving your request'

Examinations Department
Quality Service Charter, October 1999

'We will send one of our staff to assess the damage you have pointed out and repair any damage within 48 hours'

Roads Section – Gozo
Quality Service Charter, July 1999

'We will acknowledge your complaint promptly and give you a full reply within 2 weeks'

Document Authentication Office
Quality Service Charter, July 1999

Consulting your staff

Your staff will be required to meet the targets you set out in your charter. Consult them in setting the performance targets and you will have their commitment and ownership. Impose your targets and you are likely to face resistance.

You should talk to your staff about your present standards and how realistic any new targets might be. Try to identify any problems and make a difference between restraints which cannot be lifted (like policy or budgetary restraints) and problems which can be solved (like better telephone manners or smarter dressing). Here are some tips about how to consult your staff:

- ◆ hold workshops with all your staff about the services you provide and the standards you currently
- ◆ work to
- ◆ consult your front line staff about customer satisfaction and problems they encounter
- ◆ encourage feedback by setting up staff suggestion schemes which guarantee anonymity

interest in the issue will respond. Self-administered surveys will also exclude illiterate or elderly people. If your customer base is made of this group then you should rule out this type of survey.

Tips

Some local councils publish newsletters which they mail to residents of their locality. If you'd like to limit your survey to a single town you could ask the council to insert your questionnaire in their newsletter.

Self-addressed envelopes, a good covering letter and a reminder a couple of weeks later should improve the response.

Key points

You may ask your customers

- ◆ *whether they are satisfied with your service in general (good / average / poor)*
- ◆ *whether they are satisfied with specific services and performance targets*
- ◆ *what they like least / most about your organisation and specific aspects of it (e.g. environment, courtesy, opening hours, customer care etc)*
- ◆ *what they would improve on*
- ◆ *whether they have ever had cause to complain*

Telephone interviews

Advantages Cheap, ensure a 100% response rate and more representative than mail surveys.

Disadvantages The telephone survey must be kept extremely short and simple as respondents will tire very quickly. Some respondents might question the legitimacy of the survey and the guarantee of anonymity.

Tips Avoid asking people whether they mind being interviewed – many may opt out.

On-site interviews

Your staff will ask customers a set of questions and record the results.

Advantages Ideal for getting a snapshot of your customers' views. They are relatively cheap and convenient to administer.

Disadvantages The sample will be biased as it will be up to your interviewer to select the respondents. It will exclude customers who do not come in person to your department.

You will have to keep your questionnaire short as people are usually in a hurry to leave once they have been served. And some people may shy away from giving negative feedback when dealing face to face with an interviewer.

On-site forms

Your staff will ask customers to fill in a questionnaire. They will not offer assistance unless the customer asks for it. Respondents may place the completed form in a box or hand it to your staff.

Advantages One of the cheapest and most convenient methods to administer.

As with on-site interviews, ideal for getting a snapshot of your customers' views. They guarantee anonymity, meaning that respondents may be more frank.

Disadvantages The sample will be biased as it will be up to your interviewer to select the respondents. It will exclude customers who do not come in person to your department.

You will have to keep your questionnaire short as people are usually in a hurry to leave once they have been served.

Some people may not understand the questions and give a flawed response.

Door-to-door surveys

Advantages Interviews are at the convenience of respondents and in the comfort of their own homes. Interviews can be quite long as once the interviewer has a foot in the door it is unlikely that the interview will be terminated.

Disadvantages They are expensive and take time to administer.

Focus groups

These involve a small group of customers in a discussion. They are suited to exploring complex issues and difficult questions.

The group leader would set a discussion topic – such as 'what are the department's problems and how can service be improved?' – and take note of the issues and ideas that emerge.

Complaint logging

Keeping a database of complaints – as well as the suggestions and positive feedback you receive – will give you a good idea of what people feel strongly about.

You should collect feedback from feedback forms, letters, e-mails or even letters to the newspapers on your service.

Naturally, this is an on-going exercise. And with this method alone you cannot accurately measure your customers' level of satisfaction.

4.4 Comparing yourself to others

Once you have consulted your customers, consulted your staff and set your targets, it may be useful to know what standards other service providers have set. Your targets should not be too different from theirs; certainly not significantly worse.

Do not restrict yourself to checking their performance targets alone. See how they do the job – you might get some ideas on how to improve your service. For example, you might find better ways of managing queues or processing applications.

The internet is an excellent source of standards for comparison. Here are a few links.

The Charter Support Unit's website includes copies of all Quality Service Charters published to date in Malta

www.magnet.mt/charters

This section of the website of the Federal Government of Australia has links to all published charters.

www.ctc.gov.au/publications/charters/completed.htm

The Service First unit of the UK has a website with links to many British charters.

www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index.htm

The website of the government of New Zealand does not group charters under a single link. Search the site for the charter you need.

www.govt.nz

5.0 Getting there

At this stage you should have decided on your performance targets. Next you will need to improve your service to meet those targets. Here are a few examples on how to do just that.

1. Simplify your forms. Check whether you really need all the information you are asking of your customers.
2. Make life easier for your customers by letting them make minor changes by phone rather than in person.
3. Have the receptionist tell customers about the expected waiting times and suggest less busy times.
4. Make sure customers have the right documents before they get in line by having the receptionist check their documents as they join the line.
5. If some of your customers have complicated requests which hold up queues then cater specifically for them.

The Licensing and Testing Department asks car insurance company representatives (who have hundreds of licenses for renewal) to call after normal opening hours.

6. If you have difficulty managing your queues, consider a ticketing system. This could range from simple numbered tickets to complex queuing systems that estimate waiting time and give you statistics on customer flow.

Health Centres issue numbered tickets to patients waiting at the GP clinic.

The Housing Authority has installed a PA system in the waiting area. A receptionist announces who is next, which avoids arguments among customers. Relaxing music is played over the system – a good idea if customers are likely to wait long.

7. Train your counter staff and delegate authority so that your customers get a complete service at one desk.
8. Train your staff to carry out their colleagues' duties. Redeploy them during peak workloads or when people take leave. You may also consider introducing split-shifts – one group of staff can begin early and take an early lunch break and another group can start later and take a later break.
9. Train your counter staff in customer care, with refresher courses at least once a year. This is a requirement for eligibility for a Quality Service Charter. Contact the Charter Support Unit for more information.
10. Redesign your service area layout to provide for more privacy (if relevant). Your customers will have a much better impression of your organisation if your premises are clean and tastefully decorated.
11. Make sure that your telephone system works well. If all the lines are busy your PABX should give a 'hold the line' message or at least an engaged tone rather than a dialling tone which gives the impression that there is no one to answer the phone.

Of course there may not always be a simple solution to your customer service problems. You may have a chronic lack of resources, your organisation may be inappropriately structured or your IT set-up may be inadequate. If this is the case then it is probably premature to consider a charter. You should try to identify solutions with your ministry's office of review.

6.0 Writing the charter

Writing your charter should be easy enough if you have followed all the steps in the preceding chapters. It is a matter of putting together all the information gathered from your self-assessment and from consulting your staff and customers.

Although there are no strict templates for writing a charter, your charter would normally include:

1. Brief information to identify your organisation; your name, purpose and customer base.
2. Information on how your customers can reach you – your address, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses.
3. The rights and responsibilities of your customers. Remember that rights are legally enforceable. For example, citizens have a right to free education. They may expect to wait less than 10 minutes in a queue, but this is not a right. Rights are normally set in law.

Responsibilities are what you require of your customers to be able to give them the service you guarantee in your charter. For example, it is the responsibility of patients at a health centre not to be late for their appointments, otherwise they cannot expect to be seen immediately, or at all.

4. A guide to your services. You should outline the services you offer but try to keep this as short and simple as possible.
5. Your standards of service. You may have a separate section for your performance targets or include them in your guide to your services.
6. A guide on how customers can give suggestions or lodge complaints. Your complaints procedure should have clear time-frames for your acknowledgements and replies. Include information on how customers can appeal and say how you will put things right when you are at fault.

Key points

- ◆ *Is your charter short and to the point? It should not be longer than 4 to 5 pages. The shorter the better.*
- ◆ *Have you used plain language? Avoid jargon and keep your sentences short.*

6.1 Consult your staff again

Once you have completed the first draft of your charter you should discuss it with your staff to make sure that they feel comfortable with its contents. Invite them to make suggestions to improve the charter.

6.2 Format and design

The Charter Support Unit will handle the formatting and design of your charter. However if your organisation is not a government department you will have to take care of this yourself.

You should publish your charter both in English and Maltese. Decide which version to print in greater numbers depending on your customer group.

6.3 Communicating the charter

Your final task is to make sure that your charter reaches your customers. There is no strict formula for distribution and publicity. Choose methods which are best suited to your customer group.

Think about the type of customers you have. For example, if your users are mainly students you could publish an article in a student magazine. If your customers are mainly from one locality you could ask the local council to distribute the charter. If you have a mailing list of all your customers then you could send them each a copy.

The Central Public Library gives a copy of its charter to each new customer.

One requirement of the Quality Service Charter Initiative is that you complement your charter booklets with panels in your reception area. On these panels you should write the key commitments and targets found in your charter. Contact the Charter Support Unit for help in communicating your charter.

The Land Registry was the first department to display its standards and performance on panels in its reception area.

7.0 Maintaining your standards

Working for a charter, of course, does not end with its publication. Internal auditors will regularly check whether you are keeping to your charter. And there are a few things you will need to do regularly to make sure that your charter remains relevant.

7.1 Internal audits

Every six months, your ministry's internal auditors will assess whether your organisation is meeting the standards of service set out in your charter. They are likely to ask for your records of the measurement of your performance (see below). They may also observe whether customers are being served in the way and to the timeframes you guarantee. Their audit will be similar to the self-assessment you first carried out when you applied for a charter.

The internal auditors will submit copies of their reports to the head of department, the permanent secretary and the Charter Support Unit.

If the report is negative then your permanent secretary will ask you to remedy the deficiencies identified. In extreme cases, where things have really gone wrong and you cannot put things right, your charter may be withdrawn.

7.2 Measuring and monitoring

There is little point in guaranteeing a standard of service if you are never sure that you are reaching the target. You should continuously measure and record your performance against your standards.

If you have an IT system then it is very likely that you can generate reports on your performance. For example, what percentage of transactions were processed within the target timeframe. If you do not have an IT system then you should keep some form of manual record of your performance.

'We will monitor our services and standards and find new ways of improving them'

Examinations Department
Quality Service Charter, October 1999

7.3 Customer feedback

Your charter is a guarantee of good service – a contract between you and your customers. If you do not actively seek out your customers' views on your service then your charter becomes meaningless.

You should repeat the customer consultation exercise you carried out to qualify for a charter at least once a year. The different methods you may use are described in Chapter 3 of this manual.

The Charter Support Unit will provide you with copies of a standard customer feedback form. You should encourage your customers to fill these in. Place them prominently in your reception area, hand them out to people waiting to be served, attach them to application forms. The more you receive, the better your idea of where you are performing well and which areas need improvement.

Much of the feedback you receive is likely to be positive or at least constructive. Most people appreciate being asked to give their views – that alone will go a long way towards improving your image.

7.4 Updating the charter





As your organisation changes, your charter may no longer remain valid. You may introduce new services and discontinue others. New laws and regulations may change some of your procedures and structures. You may gain – or lose – staff and resources, affecting your performance and rendering your targets irrelevant.

In short, you should regularly assess whether the contents of your charter still make sense. As you measure your performance you will get a better idea of how realistic your targets are. If you are performing well above your targets, it might be a good idea to tighten them. If your standards are too loose they are likely to be meaningless to your customers. On the other hand, if you consistently fail to meet your targets then do not simply lower them – investigate why you are not performing as well as you expected.

There are no rules on how often you should update your charter, although you are unlikely to publish a new version more than once a year.

7.5 Other points to consider

Having a charter should change the way you communicate with your customers in general:

-  when your staff deal with customers over the telephone, they should follow standards of telephone courtesy (see Appendix 2)
-  your staff should also use standard courtesies when dealing with customers in person
-  you may use the Quality Service Charter Initiative logo on your stationery
-  your correspondence should include relevant performance targets such as how long it will take to send a follow-up letter

Finally, it would be a good idea to nominate a staff member to see that you are keeping to your charter. Your charter 'champion' will regularly check that you are meeting your standards and will analyse and report on customer feedback.

Appendix 1 – Self-assessment questionnaire

Area under consideration:

1. Speed and quality in service delivery			
Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
Queues			queues, if any, should be short and well managed
Backlogs			backlogs should be rare, and quickly cleared
Appointments			appointments should be readily available
Waiting times			customers should not have to wait long to be served
Performance			consistent performance – few or no 'bad days'
Access			access to the service at customers' convenience; for example by post, telephone or at local councils

2. Defined targets and measurable performance

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
Informal standards of speed and quality			your organisation should already operate against informal standards of speed and quality
Measurement of performance			you should have the tools to measure your performance in meeting your standards
Customer satisfaction			at least 80% of your customers should be satisfied with your performance

3. One-stop shopping

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
Number of visits			the number of times your customers should have to visit you offices should be minimal; preferably never
Number of queues			if your customers do visit they should not have to queue more than once
Required information			do not send your customers to another organisation to bring birth certificates, police conduct certificates or some other document

4. Information and simplicity

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
Application forms			application forms should be simple and clear. Do not ask for information you will not use
Status of application			when customers ask on the status of their application, you should be able to give them the information they need
Delays			you should always inform customers of any delays or problems
Information about other services			information about your services should be freely available and easily accessible
Correspondence to customers			your correspondence to customers should be polite and clear
Signage			there should be clear signage in your offices (if relevant)

5. Customer care

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
Training			all staff who deal with customers should be trained in customer care
Dress			everyone should be dressed smartly
Identification			all those who serve customers should wear a name tag or have a name plate at their desk
Telephone courtesy			you should have standards of telephone courtesy
Complaints			you should have clear deadlines for handling complaints and an escalation procedure for difficult cases and appeals

6. Best use of technology

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
IT system			if your customer service would significantly improve with an IT system, then that IT system is a requirement for a charter
Internet use			you should be continuously exploring the best use of internet technology for your services
Telephone system			your telephone system should work well

7. Welcoming premises

Indicators	Assessment	Issues	Desired quality level
General atmosphere			clean, comfortable and tastefully decorated
Seating			adequate seating in waiting areas
Air-conditioning			preferably air-conditioned
Doors			your office doors should be kept open unless privacy is needed
Welcoming counters			avoid pigeon holes through which to speak to people

Appendix 2 – Telephone customer service standards

1. Receptionists in your department will respond to calls originating from outside with the following phrases:
“Good Morning, Good Afternoon, or Good Day” followed by the name of your department.
2. Following the initial response, Receptionists and Secretaries will continue the conversation in the language CHOSEN by the client.
3. Calls will be forwarded directly to the individual. Receptionists will NOT ask callers to identify themselves before connecting calls.

Employees who do not wish to be disturbed or who plan to be out of their offices for extended periods may programme their telephone sets to forward their calls to their secretaries or other designated back-up staff members.

4. The receptionist will respond to calls returning to the switchboard as follows:
“I’m sorry but neither Mr. / Ms. X nor his / her secretary is available to take your call. Would you like to leave a message or would you prefer to call back?”
5. All staff members will respond to calls (both internal and external) by stating their names.
6. Calls at unattended stations are to be answered by any employee in the same room. Such calls are to be responded as follows:
“Mr. /Ms. X’s office, Y speaking. May I help you?”
7. When staff members are away from the office on holidays or for any other reason, no detailed information is to be released to callers. Calls will be answered as follows:
“I’m sorry, Mr. /Ms. X will be away from the office for the next.....Would you like to leave a message for him / her or can someone else help you?”
8. Secretaries are to arrange their schedules so that at least one person is always available to provide a back-up answering service for all members of the office / department. When there is only one secretary in attendance and s/he must be away from her / his desk, s/he should programme her / his telephone to revert to another secretary or receptionist.
9. Internal staff wishing to call another internal extension are not to call through reception. All such calls must be made by dialling the internal extension number or by using the direct dial-in service if calling from external locations.

10. Staff is not to call reception to make enquiries regarding internal extension numbers. You should provide an internal directory which is updated and made available to all members of the staff.