



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na Mí

Fiúntas agus Nuálócht in Oideachas

County Meath VEC

Excellence and Innovation in Education

CUSTOMER SERVICE ACTION PLAN



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MISSION STATEMENT

County Meath VEC is committed to excellence and innovation in the education of young people and adults through the provision of dynamic services delivered by professional staff.

Customer Service

County Meath V.E.C. are committed to improving the level of customer service and accept that all public services should be designed and delivered to meet the needs of the individual citizen, business, or community. Organisations across the public service face the challenge of demonstrating their ability to deliver high quality performance outcomes. This requires individual organisations to set and achieve goals, to develop measures for assessing their success and to provide detailed information on their own performance. It also requires a greater devolution of responsibility to enable innovation and collaboration at local level, balanced by effective reporting mechanisms.

QUALITY SERVICE STANDARDS:

Our Staff are committed to providing a quality service in an efficient and courteous manner to all our customers.

When you visit our Offices we will ensure that:-

- You are treated with courtesy.
- Your privacy will be respected.
- Your enquiry will be dealt with promptly.

Our Reception, Waiting and Interview Rooms will be safe, clean and well maintained and accessible for people with disabilities.

We recommend that you make an appointment if you wish to meet a member of Staff.

Smoking is prohibited in all our Offices and Schools.

INFORMATION:

Commitment:

County Meath VEC is committed to providing information on its services, activities and programmes and this is being achieved through a number of different media – electronic, publications, forms, information leaflets, and through direct links to its parent Department (Department of Education and Science) and its representative body, the Irish Vocational Education Association and other appropriate agencies and organisations.

External:

Quality Customer Service takes a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. It ensures that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully utilised and that information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. It continues to develop user-friendly approaches with regard to regulations, forms, processes and procedures.

Internal:

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

Electronic:

County Meath VEC website is an important reference source for information about the organisation and its services. It includes links to the Department of Education & Science and other appropriate agencies and organisations. The website facilitates service users and clients through on-line information on all VEC services and through access to information regarding staff vacancies. Application forms for teaching staff vacancies are available on-line.

An intranet will be developed to better enable staff share information and have a single corporate-wide system for accessing information of common interest.

Publications:

County Meath VEC issues a number of publications dealing with its areas of responsibility. Following commencement of all sections of the Vocational Education Amendment Act 2001, County Meath VEC will also publish an Annual Report, Service Plan, and Codes of Practice. Information brochures, leaflets and press releases are also published. In addition, Department of Education & Science publications, the *IVEA News* and other internal publications serve as a useful means of updating customers and staff on both formal and informal matters relating to the VEC.

Forms:

County Meath VEC uses a number of forms to gather the information it needs to provide services in an efficient manner. As part of this Plan, a review of all forms was undertaken to ensure that only necessary questions are asked, that forms use clear language and are clearly laid out, that customers and users of the forms are involved in the review and design process, that the design of the forms meet the requirements of both the customer base and modern IT based systems, and that details of the complaints and appeals procedures are included on all application forms. Arising from this review, a number of changes have been implemented and others are planned.

Information Leaflets:

Information Leaflets produced by Meath VEC provide customers with details of services offered including programme and course outlines, eligibility criteria, conditions relating to grants, etc. As part of the preparation of this Plan, a review of information leaflets was undertaken to ensure that these are up-to-date, accurate, comprehensive and easily understood and that details of complaints and appeals procedures are included on all information leaflets. Arising from this review, a number of changes have been implemented and others are planned.

Freedom of Information:

The Freedom of Information Act, 1997 gives everyone legal rights to seek access to official information. The Act is designed to allow public access to information held by public bodies that is not routinely available through other sources. The Act has not yet been commenced within the VEC sector, however County Meath VEC will ensure that requests for information will be processed openly, fully and expeditiously.

Internal Customer:

County Meath VEC is committed to ensuring that staff are also recognised as customers. It appreciates that delivering a quality service to the public is only possible by meeting the needs of our own internal customers with similar standards of timeliness, courtesy, consultation, information, etc.

Training has an important role in recognising and supporting the needs of staff and in equipping them to provide better services to the public.

Over the period of this Plan we will:

- Upgrade the main website and ensure that information available is clear, timely and accurate;
- Introduce a ‘Help-Desk System’...This is happening already at a number of levels and need not be a fixed location, however, additional ‘Information Points’ may be required to assist with the development of a more ‘Customer-focused Culture’
- Keep all forms and Information Leaflets under review to ensure relevance etc. Develop a format and thematic approach to all leaflets produced by different centres/schools etc. over a period of time
- Develop systems to assist access to information in a format appropriate to all staff and all customers.

Performance Indicators:

(See evaluation)

To assess the achievements of these targets we will:

- Use the feedback system on websites to obtain customers’ view on the accessibility and standard of information;
- Carry out internal surveys to ascertain progress with reviews of forms and Information Leaflets;
- Seek the views of customers’ on the accessibility of information in any customer surveys undertaken.

TIMELINESS & COURTESY

County Meath V.E.C. is committed to delivering a quality service to all its customers by ensuring that they are dealt with promptly and with courtesy and sensitivity.

Most customer contact is by way of telephone, some by letter or e-mail, and some by personal visits to the office.

To ensure that all customers are dealt with properly, impartially, and with the minimum of delay it is proposed to foster a climate of mutual respect between Committee's staff and customers.

This aspiration can be best achieved by the implementation of the following practices:-

Telephone Calls:

Provide a courteous, helpful, friendly and prompt answering service;

Staff available to answer telephone calls at all times during office hours;

Staff will give full name and section when answering.

Letters/E-mails:

Where appropriate, acknowledge correspondence within 5 working days;

Where warranted, issue a definitive reply within 10 working days – If such a reply cannot be issued within this timeframe, then an interim reply will be issued, informing the sender that the matter is continuing to receive attention.

Ensure where appropriate that replies carry details of contact person and contact telephone number.

Personal Callers:

Ensure all personal callers are treated with courtesy and sensitivity;

Provide for comfort (seating, etc.) and privacy as appropriate.

Customer Assistance in ensuring the delivery of Quality service:

It is important that customers understand their role in the provision of a quality service and facilitate same as follows: -

- On initial contact provide as much information as possible;
- Where appropriate quote reference numbers on all correspondence/communications;
- Complete all forms carefully;
- Provide supporting information as requested;
- Ensure forms/submissions are signed and lodged in good time;
- Keep County Meath V.E.C. advised of changes in circumstances;
- Respond promptly to requests for further information/clarifications;
- If possible make appointments and be in time.

Evaluate:

To access the impact of these policy targets the following procedures will be put in place: -

- Carry out a survey, which would determine customer's views on timeliness and courtesy;
- Provide for internal surveys on a regular basis on progress in telephone answering, replying to correspondence, etc.;
- Develop a tracking system to assist in providing a timely response to correspondence;
- Update all staff on productive comments made by customers;
- Review procedures at Partnership/Staff meetings at least twice per year.

COMPLAINTS

County Meath V.E.C. will maintain a well publicised, assessable, transparent and simple to use system of dealing with complaints about **the quality of service** provided and ensure that such complaints are dealt with in a consistent fair and transparent manner.

Customers can direct comments, suggestions and complaints to the Chief Executive Officer who will:

- Have the complaints investigated in a fair and impartial manner.
- Conduct Customer surveys
- Monitor, review and advise on customer services/standards.
- Be responsible for the customer complaints procedure

Procedure:

1. All complaints must be submitted in writing or e-mail.
2. Forms to facilitate the public when making a complaint are available.
3. An acknowledgement letter confirming receipt of a written complaint will be issued within 5 working days of its receipt.
4. The Chief Executive Officer will investigate the matter and issue a decision to the complainant within 2 weeks or as soon as practicable thereafter.
5. The type, number and nature of complaints will be collated and analysed.

APPEALS

County Meath VEC will maintain a formalized, well publicized, accessible, transparent and simple to use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Procedure:

1. All appeals must be submitted in writing.
2. An acknowledgement confirming receipt of an appeal will issue within 1 week of its receipt.
3. If a customer remains dissatisfied with the response of the Chief Executive Officer/Delegated Officer they may lodge a complaint with the Committee for resolution.

C O M P L A I N T F O R M

To: Chief Executive Officer,
County Meath VEC,
Abbey Road,
Navan,
Co. Meath.

Details of Complaint:

Person or department dealing with you _____

Name (Block Capitals) _____

Signature _____

Address: _____

Telephone No.: _____

Date: _____

CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION

County Meath VEC is committed to providing, a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development,

delivery and review of services, and ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

The Committee is committed to consulting with its customers and to the evaluation of its services. In its different roles the Committee is sometimes service provider, client, promoter or independent adjudicator and must meet its responsibilities to all its customers across this diverse range. The Committee's approach will be to consult its customers and to continue to build on this over the period of the plan.

Consultation on Service Provision and Policy Issues:

The Committee is committed to creating opportunities for input to the policy formulation and service provision process and the Committee has hosted workshops and consultative fora on major policy and legislative issues such as the White Paper on Adult Education, The Education Bill, The Youthwork Act etc. The committee will consult with the main stakeholders as required by Vocational Education (Amendment) Act 2001 in relation to the preparation of its Education Plan.

Internal Customers:

The committee is committed to the further development of consultative processes internally.

The Committee's Partnership Working Group plays a significant role in internal consultation. The Partnership Working Group has a central role in the development of the Human Resource Management Strategy and other aspects of the internal change programme, and provides a channel for widespread consultation with staff.

General Feedback:

A comment card has been developed to obtain feedback on our level of service. This comment card will be made available at all of the Committee's public offices and on our website. A copy of the comment card is attached on page 22 of this document.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

County Meath VEC is committed to treating all its customers equally irrespective of differences based on gender, marital status, age, disability, race, sexual orientation or

religious belief. County Meath VEC will take all reasonable steps to provide ease of access to people who are physically disabled.

CHOICE

County Meath VEC is committed to providing choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times, we will endeavour to utilise available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

The Committee's public offices are open Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 5.00 pm. We will operate a voicemail service outside of these hours. Flexi-time gives the potential of a limited service through lunchtime.

It is now possible to ring any member of staff once you know the Direct Dial Inwards number (DDI number). A selection of direct dial numbers may be obtained from our website.

The Committee's web address is www.meathvec.ie and e-mail address is education@meathvec.ie Individual school/centre web and e-mail addresses may also be obtained from our website.

The Committee is implementing the following improvements to our services:

Payment Methods:

- Use of Electronic Fund Transmission for all payments including: Payroll, Suppliers, Travel and Subsistence and Travel Allowances.
- Accepting payments from debtors

Location of Contact Points:

Pilot a 'one stop shop' arrangement for a number of services e.g. dissemination and acceptance of Student Support and Job Application Forms

Establish intranet and internet to make information more accessible

Use of internet to download and accept application forms

Opening Hours:

Use the introduction of family friendly work policies such as flexi-time, annualised hours contracts to enable lunch-time and evening cover at critical times.

Information on Services Provided:

Establish a project working group to compile a list of all services provided, contact names and numbers for the key personnel involved, entries in telephone directories, IPA Diary, website, should be examined and improved where necessary. The working group should be representative, conduct annual reviews and ideally be led by head office receptionist.

Use of New Technologies:

Use of new technologies will be deployed to improve new service delivery. Methods which could be utilised as follows:

- Use of databases to store information on student support or job applicants
- Use of internet to download and accept applications
- Use of intranet as an internal information point

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES EQUALITY

The following has been prepared in the context of the **Official Languages(Equality) Act 2003**, the principal aim of which seeks to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

A Vocational Education Committee is listed as a public body under the terms of the Official Languages (Equality) Act 2003.

Historically, County Meath VEC has always had due regard for the provision of services through the medium of Irish and has always sought to extend due courtesy to those members of the public who wish to do business with County Meath VEC or who wish to avail of its services through the medium of Irish.

All teaching, secretarial and administrative duties are conducted through the medium of Irish only in the Committee's Gaeltacht Schools, as are all courses provided in the

Committee's Gaeltacht-based Further Education Centres; for example, Teagmháil na nÓg (Youthreach), VTOS, Literacy Schemes, Adult Guidance etc.;

All advertisements for posts in the Committee's Gaeltacht-based Schools are through the medium of Irish only;

All interview boards for positions in the Committee's Gaeltacht-based Schools are conducted through the medium of Irish only;

There is an Irish language requirement for all administrative appointments for County Meath VEC;

Irish language version of 3rd Level Grant Forms are available from the Grants Section;

The Coiste financially supports staff members who wish to pursue the Cúrsa Diplóma sa Ghaeilge at Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh (NUIG) or who avail of Irish classes to improve their proficiency in the language;

All Gaeltacht-based recipients of the Committee's Gradaim/Awards are introduced in Irish and the official citation is read in both official languages;

BETTER CO-ORDINATION

County Meath VEC is committed to ensuring a more committed and integrated approach to the delivery of its services.

Internal Communications:

Improving internal communications is considered essential to the process. This will be achieved by means of the following

- Regular cross functional meetings in the VEC
- Meeting of VEC representatives with other participating agencies, local community group representatives, local representatives, other interest groups, local and national stakeholders and service users and to report back on the outcomes of these meetings in a timely manner

- Design, development and production of an internal newsletter for all VEC staff on a quarterly basis.
- Involvement of all staff in the development of Education, Business, Service and other plans in an appropriate manner

The implementation of the recommendations of the Rochford Report and the modernisation of services, revised management structures will involve all staff. Intended changes must be clearly identified and communicated to all staff. This staff forum should allow sufficient time to exchange information, points of view and develop working arrangements.

The VEC will also create a notice board where staff can log comments, opinions and recommendations as to how any part of the service can be improved. These will be discussed by the partnership group and where appropriate ensure where actions are agreed that they are implemented in full.

INTERNAL CUSTOMER

Under the terms of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) each vocational education committee was required, to adopt a strategic management approach in its planning and development. An important element in that approach is the delivery and active promotion of a quality customer service that is responsive to the needs and requirements of customers. This work continues under the terms of the new National Agreement – Towards 2016.

It is important that the needs of internal customers are addressed in a meaningful way. To do this, we must firstly identify **who** our internal customers are ...

(I) Staff.

(II) Students.

(I) Staff :

- The V.E.C. Sector is committed to ensuring that staff are also recognized as customers,

- that delivering a quality service to the public is only possible if we meet the needs of our own internal customers with similar standards of timeliness, courtesy, consultation, information, etc.,

One vitally important category of internal customer is the front line staff, who are charged with delivering quality service to the public. The quality of service that can be delivered by these staff is greatly influenced to the extent to which they are given the necessary support, e.g. through training, IT etc.

However, all staff, should be made aware of the level of service they can expect from the organization:

- That any queries they may have will be treated with sensitivity and courtesy, in a prompt and timely fashion:
- That they be made aware of any delays that may occur in dealing with their query.
- That all staff be made aware of procedures, rules, regulations, forms and information pertaining to the services provided, and kept up-to-date on any changes instigated.
- That all staff receive the support they need to continue the delivery of a high standard of customer service to meet the expectations of an evermore demanding public.

(II) Students :

The V.E.C. Sector provides a range of educational and support services to the students in its schools/centres: to persons seeking second chance education opportunities: to community groups and youth organizations. These various groups are also internal customers of the V.E.C.

The needs of these groups differ somewhat and this should be reflected in the type of Customer Service made available to them.

Students should expect that the organization will provide:

- Easily accessible and up-to-date, accurate information on the services available:
- That allowances etc., are paid in a timely fashion, thus avoiding undue hardship:
- That the organization provides clean, accessible public areas that comply with occupational and safety standards and facilitates access for persons with specific needs.
- Support for people who wish to improve their employability.
- Administrative support for groups involved with young people at local community level

The provision of Quality Customer Service is not static.

In order for it to be successful, it must be responsive to the needs of its customers.

The organization can only be responsive if it can identify the weaknesses in its Customer Service: it can do this by getting ‘feed-back’ from its customer base by means of questionnaires.

It can also get ‘feed-back’ through the complaints process: The Vocational Education Sector believes that their customers have a right to complain if the appropriate level and quality of service is not provided.

This ‘feed-back’ can then be used to modify the services being offered. This work continues under the new National Agreement – ‘Towards 2016 ‘...

PHYSICAL ACCESS TO OUR SERVICES

(As adopted from the South Midlands Regional Group)

Current legislation requires all public bodies to ensure that all buildings are accessible to people with disabilities. County Meath VEC fully subscribes to these regulations and there is on going assessment of the current situations in all buildings and offices under the VEC control.

It is the intention of the Co. Meath VEC that all buildings used by the public, will be wheelchair friendly and accessible to all staff, teachers, students and the general public.

We encourage people with disabilities to apply for any position in the Co. Meath VEC for which they hold the basic entry requirements. It is our policy to ensure that

recruitment and selection activity is carried out in accordance with our core principles of fairness, equality and merit-based selection. We will ensure that applications are fully considered on the basis of abilities, qualifications and suitability for the work in question. We are also happy to make all reasonable efforts to accommodate any requirements or special needs, which may be in order to enable full participation and fairness in the selection process.

It may be helpful to know that when we recruit for key positions, we set up a list of applicants who successfully meet the selection requirements. This ensures that suitably qualified people with disabilities are available at all times to facilitate our client organisations in complying with Government policy on the achievement of a minimum of a 3% quota for the employment of people with disabilities within the public service.

ANNUAL REPORT

Consultation, Delivery and Evaluation and the Annual Report

The Committee is committed to a meaningful evaluation of its service delivery, using internal and external interventions.

It will continue to conduct annual surveys on specifically identified issues.

Introduce agreements on service levels with customers on a specific number of areas annually.

Develop and implement a framework for initiating regular customer focus groups.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The standards of service which you can expect from County Meath Vocational Education Committee are set out in our Customer Service Charter.

If you would like to make any additional comments, suggestions or make a formal complaint or if you have any query about the Committee's services please contact:

Ms. Lorraine Peyton,
Co. Meath V.E.C.
Abbey Road
Navan
Co. Meath
Tel: 046 90 68201
Fax: 046 90 29821
e-mail:lorraine.peyton@meathvec.ie



Customer Service Questionnaire

Our VEC is committed to providing a high standard of customer service and we would appreciate if you could take a few moments to complete this questionnaire and return it to us.

The standards of Customer Service for our VEC are outlined in our Customer Charter and Customer Service Plan which are located at reception and also available on our website www.meathvec.ie

We commit to:

Examine all feedback

Act where possible on suggestions

Deal with any complaints

Collate all feedback and **publish** a summary in our annual report

Please rate our service performance in the following areas:

	5-Excellent	4-Very Good	3-Good	2-Fair	1-Unsatisfactory
Availability of assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of Information delivered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of Service delivered	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were staff friendly and courteous?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was your query dealt with in a timely manner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Were the building and facilities clean and well maintained?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you have a disability/special need, were our services and information accessible to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any further comments on the service you received or suggestions to improve the delivery of our services are greatly appreciated:

Customer Service Representative

If you would like to make any additional comments or make a formal complaint or if you have any query about our services please contact our Customer Service Representative:

Name: Lorraine Peyton,
Address: County Meath VEC, Abbey Road, Navan, Co. Meath.
Email: lorraine.peyton@meathvec.ie
Phone: 046-9068201
Fax : 046-9029821

How did you make contact with our VEC? Date: _____

Called to office	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify) _____

Section/office which provided the service to you:

Do you find our opening hours customer-friendly? _____

If you answered "no", please suggest how we can improve them:

How did you hear about the services of our VEC?

Newspaper (name) _____

Referred from school (name) _____

Referred from other organisation (eg: FAS) _____

Referred from Adult Education Centre _____

Word of mouth _____ Radio _____ Leaflet _____

Other (please specify) _____

Contact Information (optional)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

County Meath VEC, Abbey Road, Navan, Co. Meath.