Customer care standards

What you said

Customer care survey

Between May and August 2010 we carried out an online survey to invite views from NHS staff and the public on the proposal to publish customer service standards for employees and volunteers working in NHS Ayrshire & Arran.

We would now like to tell you what we have learned.

Who took part?

The survey was completed by 746 people. The majority of these were employees of NHS Ayrshire & Arran (446). However, 98 people said they were patients or members of the public and 207 people did not tell us about themselves.

Do we need to improve customer service?

We asked what people felt about the current customer service in NHS Ayrshire & Arran and if we needed to improve.

The majority of people (525) said that the standard of customer service delivered in NHS Ayrshire & Arran was good or excellent. However 90 per cent* of people who responded (553) also said that we need to improve.

*(111 people did not answer this question and were excluded)
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Do we need standards?

When asked if NHS Ayrshire & Arran needed customer care standards, the overwhelming answer was Yes (90 per cent).

In addition, a large number of people thought that introducing standards would make a positive difference to the experience of service users. (88 per cent).

How much do you think the introduction of standards for customer care would enhance the experience of service users? (123 people did not answer this question)

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We went on to ask if the title ‘customer care standards’ was a suitable term, and 67 per cent of people agreed that it was.

Many of the comments received on this point were understandably around the term being most commonly used within a ‘commercial’ setting rather than a healthcare setting.

Although this is certainly the case, we notice more often that our service users, including our patients and their families, are influenced by their private sector experiences and increasingly expect the same level of...
service and attitude in the healthcare setting that they receive elsewhere, such as in hotels or stores.

We asked people to help us consider this by giving suggestions for alternatives to the term ‘customer care’.

Some of the most common suggestions we received were:

- **Patient care**
  
  **Our remarks:**
  Although this term may at first appear more fitting to a healthcare environment, its meaning is one of ‘delivery of medical attention, care, or treatment’ rather than one of behaviours and attitude to service users. In addition, these standards would be designed to not only affect patients, but also NHS staff, volunteers and other types of service users.

- **Care standards**
  
  **Our remarks:**
  This term could easily be confused with the National Care Standards used by the Care Commission.

- **People care**
  
  **Our remarks:**
  This term may be too general to give an indication of what the standards are about. For example, it would be unlikely that people would consider using this term as a search criterion when looking for our standards on handling telephone calls.

**What is exceptional customer service in a healthcare setting?**

It is vital that everyone understands what we hope to achieve by developing our customer care commitments. We needed to develop a vision that we could share with NHS staff, and our patients and service users.

More than 500 people told us what exceptional customer service within a healthcare setting would feel like for them, so we have used their thoughts on this to help us define our customer service vision.

**Our customer service vision is …**

An NHS Ayrshire & Arran where everyone is welcomed by friendly people who treat them as individuals, people who listen carefully to what they have to say as well as showing them courtesy and respect.

This customer care vision will help us realise our ambition to see exceptional customer service as the normal level of service delivered by staff and volunteers working in NHS Ayrshire & Arran.
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What you said

What is most important?
To help focus our staff training and customer service messages our survey asked people to rate what aspects of customer service were most important to them.

The aspects of customer service people said we should focus on first, in order of importance were:

- Communication skills
- Awareness of service user’s needs, regardless of age, gender or disability
- Clearer information
- Being more respectful
- Being more helpful

We will focus on these aspects in our new customer service training programme. It will be designed to support staff to apply the customer care commitments.

What will happen now?
We would like to say thank you to everyone who participated in this survey. If you didn’t get a chance to do so, there will be other opportunities to get involved over the next year, so please look out for these opportunities.

The information from this survey will continue to inform our guidance to NHS staff as well as our training programmes.

Our next steps will be to:

- Develop a final set of customer care standards to be launched by the end of 2010
- Produce guidance for NHS staff and volunteers on how best to apply these commitments
- Produce information for both NHS staff and members of the public explaining the commitments and what they mean for them
- Continue to talk with NHS staff and patients about how best to implement these commitments in NHS Ayrshire & Arran
- Implement our customer care commitments throughout NHS Ayrshire & Arran and monitor our performance against them

Contact us
If you would like any further information on the results of this survey, or would like to provide any hints, tips or suggestions on how best to implement these standards, please contact us using one of the following methods:

freephone: 0800 169 1441

e-mail: CustomerCare@aapct.scot.nhs.uk

write: Customer Care
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text: Tellus with your name and comments to 88008

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